North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy
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Glossary

**Amenity sites** – green space sites that have no specific function or typology (either functional or non-functional) but are generally in public ownership or are open to public access.

**ANGSt model** – English Nature’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) Model that was published within English Nature’s *A Space for Nature* (1997) and sets out recommendations for accessibility to semi-natural green space.

**Area Action Plan (AAP)** – are Supplementary Planning Documents that are produced for specific areas that will be subject to significant change. They contain more detailed proposals for relatively small areas of an Authority compared to the Core Spatial Strategy which looks at broader issues over a wider area.

**Area of Major Intervention (AMI)** – a term adopted for those areas of the conurbation where it is proposed that significant intervention will take place to stimulate the housing market and regenerate the economy.

**Area Regeneration Framework (ARF)** – is a document that sets out the spatial strategy for the regeneration of the AMIs.

**Audit** – refers to the North Staffordshire Green Space Audit, completed in 2005, and the precursor to this Strategy.

**Biodiversity** – the number and variety of organisms found within a specified geographic region.

**BME Communities** – Black and Minority Ethnic Communities.

**Core Spatial Strategy (CSS)** – is a planning policy document that will form a part of the Local Development Frameworks and will replace the Borough Local Plan and the City Plan. The Borough and City are producing a joint CSS, which will set out the key planning policies for North Staffordshire.

**DBERR** – the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

**DCLG** – the Department for Communities and Local Government.

**DEFRA** – the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

**Demography** – the study of the characteristics of human populations, such as size, growth, density, distribution, and vital statistics.

**Developer Contributions** – see Planning Obligations.

**Development Plan Documents (DPDs)** – planning policy documents that make up the core of the Local Development Framework, including the Core Spatial Strategy.

**Functional Green Space** – is the green space that serves specific functions for general public use. For the purposes of this strategy, functional green space means the typologies of Parks & Gardens, Play facilities, Outdoor Sports facilities and Semi-Natural.

**Green Belt** – a statutory designation within planning policy that protects identified land from any development other than that which is in keeping with the nature of the green belt in...
order to check urban sprawl, safeguard the countryside and to encourage the regeneration of brownfield sites in urban areas

**Green Corridors** – routes through the urban area that are characterised by being green in nature and that enable pedestrian and cycle movement through the conurbation by way of a safe and attractive environment

**Green Flag Standards** – are the qualitative national standards for parks and green spaces. Parks can apply for an award of Green Flag status to show that they achieve these standards.

**Greening for Growth** – is a programme of environmental improvement for North Staffordshire and is the largest environmental regeneration programme in the West Midlands. The focus of Greening for Growth is on physical environmental improvements in key locations.

**Green Routes** – see Green Corridors

**Green Space** – is space that is set aside for the enjoyment of leisure and recreation, both formally and informally, and that is open in nature with elements of nature present

**Greenway** – see Green Corridors

**Housing Market Renewal (HMR)** – is the tackling of low housing demand and housing abandonment by sustained action to turn round areas where housing markets have failed.

**Limited Access** – is a term used in the North Staffordshire Green Space Audit and this Strategy to define green space sites that are only accessible to the general public at limited times

**Local Area for Play (LAP)** – is a type of play facility defined by the NPFA – see Appendix C

**Local Area Agreements** – set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. They simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local circumstances

**Local Development Documents** – planning policy documents that comprise the Local Development Framework

**Local Development Framework** – the suite of documents that comprise the planning policy for a given Authority

**Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)** – is a type of equipped play facility defined by the NPFA – see Appendix C

**Local Nature Reserve (LNR)** – is a place with wildlife or geological features that is of special interest locally. They offer people special opportunities to study or learn about nature or simply to enjoy it.

**Local Strategic Partnerships** – are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships that match local authority boundaries. They bring together the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors at a local level, allowing different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively.
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) – is a type of equipped play facility defined by the NPFA – see Appendix C

Non-functional Green Space – is the green space that is not classed as functional in this strategy. It is often characterised by being in private ownership and / or is not generally accessible to all parts of the community. For the purposes of this strategy, this includes Allotments.

North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (NSRP) – is a local delivery partnership that has been created to deliver the physical, economic and social regeneration of North Staffordshire. The NSRP brings together RENEW North Staffordshire, the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s regeneration functions.

North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone (NSRZ) – is a local delivery partnership that seeks to transform the economy of North Staffordshire

Open Space – see Green Space

Planning Gain – is the process being considered by Central Government by which a levy may be placed on development proposals partly in place of a section 106 agreement in order to mitigate against the impacts of that development

Planning Obligations – is the term used to describe the current approach to achieving section 106 agreements on development proposals in order to mitigate against the impacts of that development

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Notes – national planning policy guidance notes that set the policy context for planning policy and planning decisions and regional and local levels

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) – national planning policy, PPS are gradually replacing the PPG notes and serve the same function

Regeneration – the physical, economic or social renewal and restoration of a geographical area

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) – a regional planning document that provides the planning policy for a given region that local planning policy should be consistent with

RENEW – refers to the RENEW North Staffordshire Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, the partnership of local organisations that are working together to deliver a multi-million pound investment programme to revive the housing market where it is struggling in North Staffordshire

Restricted Access – is a term used in the North Staffordshire Green Space Audit and this Strategy to define green space sites that are not accessible to the general public

Section 106 Agreement – a legally binding agreement between a local Planning Authority (LPA) and a land developer whereby the developer agrees to contribute financially or in-kind to mitigate against the impacts of their proposed development

Semi-Natural – is natural habitat that is affected by human management (e.g. grazing, burning or coppicing)
**Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)** – a local development document within the local development framework that sets out the Local Authorities approach to consulting the local community on planning matters.

**Strategy** – a systematic plan of action leading to the achievement of a specific goal or result.

**Structure Plan** – is a planning policy document that sets the planning policy for a County. Under the new planning system Structure Plans are gradually being phased out in favour of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.

**Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** – is a type of Local Development Document that sits within the Local Development Framework. An SPD provides additional detailed guidance to explain policies and proposals and can be area-specific or cover an entire Authority.

**Sustainability** – meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**Tree Preservation Order (TPO)** – is an order made by the Council which in general makes it an offence to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree without the planning authority’s permission.

**Typology** – classification according to general type and use of green space.

**Unrestricted Access** – is a term used in the North Staffordshire Green Space Audit and this Strategy to define green space sites that are freely accessible to the general public at all reasonable times of the day.

**Wildlife Corridors** – are strips of habitat connecting wildlife populations separated by human activities (such as roads or development). This allows an exchange of individuals between populations, lowering inbreeding within populations and facilitating re-establishment of populations that have been decimated or eliminated due to random events.
1. **Introduction**

1.1 The provision of good quality parks and green space is an essential element in creating sustainable communities. The development of good quality parks and green space should be recognised as having a significant contribution in attaining wider environmental, economic and social regeneration ambitions:

- **Environmental benefits:** by promoting biodiversity, improving environmental quality and responding to the need to adapt to, and mitigate the effects of, climate change

- **Economic regeneration:** by creating attractive settings for inward investment and elevating housing market values

- **Social benefits:** by providing space for recreation, play, exercise and relaxation, by providing health benefits, by creating safer environments and reducing crime, by presenting opportunities to experience and learn at first hand about our natural environment and by providing a community focus and common ground where people can come together to demonstrate and celebrate diversity

1.2 Urban North Staffordshire has a rich history of providing green space, from formal public parks created during the late 1800’s to significant land reclamation schemes implemented during the 1970’s. Today the sub-region has a wealth of parks and green space and this green asset forms one of its key strengths.

1.3 Despite being highly valued by local communities, the quality of many green spaces in urban North Staffordshire has declined, particularly over the last twenty years. The evident spiral of decline has begun to be tackled by conurbation wide initiatives such as Greening for Growth and smaller individual community based projects, all of which depend on the attainment of external grant aid and the use of funds secured through developer contributions. However, to realise the potential offered by the conurbation’s green assets, more must be done.

1.4 The coordinated delivery, management and maintenance of the region’s green assets will help realise their mostly latent potential to help ensure that urban North Staffordshire is a vibrant and attractive place in which people will choose to invest, live, learn, work and play.

1.5 Like many areas, North Staffordshire faces a number of environmental, economic and social challenges. In April 2002, the Government announced the creation of nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders in the North of England and the West Midlands. North Staffordshire was one of these areas. In particular, North Staffordshire exhibits evidence of slow and persistent weakening of housing markets, evidenced through extensive problems with relatively low house prices, high levels of voids and consistent population loss.

1.6 This green space strategy is one of a number of strategies and initiatives that are being coordinated to deliver successful housing market renewal (HMR) across the conurbation. Research and policy used to inform HMR has identified that the region’s green spaces have a significant role to play in its successful delivery. It also forms a key part of the evidence base required to meet PPG17 requirements for developing local spatial planning policy in the Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.7 To capture this value, a coordinated strategy for the protection, enhancement, management and delivery of green space needs to be adopted. This green space strategy builds upon recent work, which comprehensively audited the quality, quantity, accessibility and value of
the conurbation’s green space assets. The strategy will provide a set of standard typologies, a framework and an action plan for the provision of good quality and accessible green space, which can form part of a coherent and well-managed network, providing the right kind of spaces for the needs of the local community.

1.8 Whilst the strategy document will provide the route map toward delivering the appropriate type, mix and quality of green space in the context of housing market renewal, it is intended that the approach will be embedded into the inter-departmental policies, development plans and strategies adopted by North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (NSRP), Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to ensure a co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to the delivery and management of an appropriate mix of good quality clean and safe green spaces across the conurbation. In order to realise the full potential of the region’s parks and green spaces, it will be necessary to ensure that their development, improvement, use and, in some cases, potential disposal forms an essential part of coordinated physical, environmental, economic and social regeneration strategies.

1.9 It is clear that the realisation of the potential of the conurbation’s green space will require additional resources and further investment in terms of improvement, development, management and maintenance. It is clear that there are finite resources available within both local authorities and NSRP. Therefore, the focus should be concentrated on:

- Identifying and agreeing clear priorities;
- Arranging and using existing internal resources as efficiently and effectively as possible;
- Working in partnership with other agencies;
- Targeting use of revenue raised through disposal or planning gain to maximise its impact on the quality of green space and the degree to which it meets community need; and
- Maximising the amount of grant assistance that can be accrued, particularly by working in partnership with local communities.

1.10 To be effective, the above efforts must also be fully coordinated. This task should not be underestimated in terms of its complexity. Without clear priorities, clear lines of responsibility and communication and sufficient internal resource to coordinate, seek and secure required levels of assistance (particularly through partnership arrangements) a step-change in the quality and level of contribution made by the conurbation’s green space across a range of agendas is unlikely to be achieved.

1.11 There is real potential to create a good quality network of green space that can raise the image of the conurbation and provide facilities that meet the diverse needs of its modern local communities. There is also opportunity to provide linkages between these green spaces through, for example, the development of wildlife corridors through urban areas and linkages between urban areas and the surrounding countryside and green belt. These green spaces should include a range of sites from large multi-functional sites providing a range of facilities that serve wide catchment areas, to smaller local sites with fewer facilities geared more to local need. The key is to ensure that there is the right mix of green space types and that the function of respective sites is identified. This will ensure that the diverse range of community need is met and that respective sites are designed / improved and maintained appropriately. However, irrespective of function, each site must be equally inclusive and available to all members of the community.
1.12 It is recognised that whilst the information provided in this document is strategic in nature and correct at the time of production, in reality rapid internal and external change is now a fact of 21st Century life and work and although strategic in nature, its impact will be felt strongly at the local level. Therefore, it is important that the development and implementation of green space actions are not considered in isolation from other local issues and hence, this green space strategy sets out a strategic framework that should be fully considered at a local level prior to implementation.

1.13 This strategy advocates a comprehensive and inclusive approach to green space development and management, across authorities, departments and agencies, underpinned by real and effective community involvement, appropriate information collection and management and a concerted effort to tackle barriers to the wider and increased use of green space.

1.14 This strategy does not recommend internal structures, lines of responsibility or communication within the respective authorities (all of which are undergoing significant internal structural change at the time of writing) but it does highlight the fundamental requirements and issues that that should be taken into account. These are highlighted within chapter 10.

The Value of Parks and Green Space

1.15 Parks and green spaces are amongst the largest and most familiar assets controlled by local government. However, the significance of these green assets has been underestimated for many years, both within North Staffordshire and across the nation in general. This underestimation, combined with the non-statutory status of parks and green space, has led to a reduction or curtailment of their development. In addition, maintenance has been a prime target for cost savings across local government during the past twenty years. However, rising Central Government concern about the condition of the nation’s green space is driving improvement to parks and green space through wider urban renaissance, particularly in light of our the Urban White Paper, Our Towns and Cities: The Future - Delivering an Urban Renaissance (2000).

1.16 To understand the value and importance of parks and green space it is worth considering the significance and benefits of these assets compared to other assets traditionally controlled by local government. It is hard to identify other local government assets that:

- Attract as much regular, local public commentary
- The entire community has greater daily contact with, either directly or indirectly
- Offers a more effective, constructive rallying point for partnership work, community involvement, capacity building and effective consultation
- Can engender a sense of local pride, community cohesion and sense of belonging
- Offers potential to draw communities together, celebrate diversity and accommodate shared celebrations, from cultural events to community carnivals and fun days
- Offers potential to impact positively on the general mental and physical health of our communities and the environmental quality of the areas in which they live
- Offers potential to impact positively on perceived reduction of anti-social behaviour within urban areas, particularly associated with young people
• Offers the opportunity to impact positively on the effects of pollution and help combat climate change
• Can bring nature to the urban environment and can help define the structure of urban settlements
• Offers potential to impact positively on the quality of life of all members of the conurbation's communities
• Offers potential to help create an overall, positive image of the conurbation
• Are more accessible or provide wider appeal to the entire community

1.17 In order to deliver a robust strategy that achieves what has been introduced here it is crucial that a clear Vision is established, supported by realistic, yet ambitious, Aims and Objectives that are measurable. The following chapter sets out these for this Green Space Strategy.
2. **Scope of the Study**

**Purpose of the Green Space Strategy**

2.1 The purpose of the green space strategy is to ensure that the green space asset base in urban North Staffordshire fulfils its potential to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits through a strategic approach to planning and management.

**Vision**

2.2 There is already considerable political and local support for a Green Space Strategy. During May 2005, officers from Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, the City of Stoke-on-Trent and RENEW North Staffordshire drew up a vision statement that could be used to inform the management and delivery of green space across the conurbation.

2.3 This common vision, endorsed by local politicians, community representatives and other stakeholders at workshops held during September 2005 and February 2006, is to:

> “Create and promote a balanced network of community-focused, valued, safe, sustainable, accessible, interesting and well-managed green spaces that enhance the quality of life, local identity and economic prosperity within urban North Staffordshire.”

**Aims**

2.4 The green space strategy aims to:

- Ensure that the strategic planning, management and maintenance of the conurbation’s green space supports the environmental, economic and social regeneration of urban North Staffordshire.

- Improve the quality, accessibility and coherence of green spaces within urban North Staffordshire.

- Promote the co-ordination of responsibilities and resource allocation across agencies, authorities and local groups to improve service delivery and to maximise the potential of available funding.

- Raise the profile and importance of quality green space as a key ingredient in the delivery of sustainable communities and housing market renewal.

- Create a strategic framework that facilitates a coherent and co-ordinated approach to the creation, improvement, protection, disposal, management, maintenance and funding of green spaces within urban North Staffordshire, which can be embedded within strategic and local policy by provision of a robust, coherent and clear set of tools for delivery at a local level.

- Highlight the value of green space in contributing to corporate strategic aims and objectives.
Objectives

2.5 The objectives of the green space strategy are to:

- Define a set of comprehensive, coherent and locally applicable green space standards, which can be embedded in conurbation and local spatial planning policy and can be used to inform masterplanning and development processes.

- Define a set of green space standards that will allow green spaces to be created and maintained to a good quality and form part of a coherent and well-managed green space network that responds to the needs of the local community.

- Define the spatial framework for the application of green space standards, taking into account existing and proposed planning policy, existing strategic landscape initiatives and existing landscape and ecological designations, as well as the development priorities emerging from large-scale regeneration and renewal work of the NSRP.

- Create a clear action plan for the co-ordination of green space management and delivery that responds to and informs the creation of sustainable communities and the objectives for local housing market renewal.

- Review organisational structure to seek to clearly define hierarchies and responsibilities for delivering and managing good quality green space involving all relevant agencies as well as local and neighbourhood groups.

- Calculate capital and revenue costs for delivering the local standards for quantity and quality of green space in urban North Staffordshire.

- Identify the investment priorities and potential funding sources that could be accessed or reassessed to support the management, delivery and enhancement of green space for existing and future populations.

- Establish a set of performance indicators that can be used to measure and review the performance of service delivery in relation to green space provision.

- Identify clear links with parallel strategic initiatives that will have an impact on or will be informed by the green space strategy.

2.6 As has emerged from several of the above Aims and Objectives, the context in which this Strategy is being developed is key and, in fact, they cannot be achieved unless the development of the strategy pays heed to the various activities in progress and planned for the North Staffordshire conurbation that have any link to green space. In particular, the planning policy context is very influential and the following chapter provides an overview of this.
3. Policy Context Review

3.1 National Policy and Guidance Context

3.1.1 Green space is an important theme running through much national, regional and local policy and guidance. It is proven that the right kind of green space greatly improves urban areas and most policy and guidance highlights this fact. For example, PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) states:

“The condition of our surroundings has a direct impact on the quality of life and the conservation and improvement of the natural and built environment brings social and economic benefit for local communities. Planning should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space.” (DCLG, (2005: paragraph 18))

3.1.2 This quote highlights how green space can benefit an area and its inhabitants. It also sets out the general principles that planning should adhere to in terms of green space and mentions ‘positive policies’. The North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy would come under the definition of a positive policy.

3.1.3 National policies that are not specifically about green space have a general message of support for the creation and enhancement of green space in urban areas, and the protection of countryside and greenbelt. For example, the Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) supports the principles of the Green Space Strategy, and therefore lends weight to the proposals in it, when it states that:

“We will promote more and better publicly accessible green space in and around our communities, for example through the creation of new country parks and networks of green spaces within towns and cities. ‘Green wedges’ and ‘green corridors’ will be given further protection through the planning system.” (DCLG, (2003:Page 44))

3.1.4 PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) expresses how green space can contribute towards sustainability and what planning should do to assist this:

“Planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole. A high level of protection should be given to most valued townscapes and landscapes, wildlife habitats and natural resources.” (DCLG, (2005: paragraph 17))

3.1.5 The Green Space strategy will help achieve what PPS1 requires and will assist the delivery of sustainability. It will create a balance between built and green environment, provide opportunities for biodiversity and recreation and generally improve quality of life in the area.

3.1.6 PPS1 also mentions Community Involvement as one of its key aims. Community involvement is essential in delivering sustainable development and creating sustainable and safe communities and will be included in the Green Space Strategy. As an ongoing element of monitoring of this Strategy, it is expected that local communities will be consulted in terms of green space provision. The results of this will inform the evolution of standards and recommendations as circumstances and expectations change. Additionally, the guidance coming out of this Strategy will feed into the preparation of the Local Development Framework.
3.1.7 High quality design is also a key theme of PPS1 and the Sustainable Communities Plan. PPS1 mentions public and open space specifically:

“High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well-planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation.” (DCLG (2005:14))

3.1.8 One of the 'challenges' in the Sustainable Communities Plan relates to good design and public space:

“We are raising the profile of good design, which gives form and quality to public spaces, housing and other buildings.” (DCLG (2003:14))

3.1.9 PPG17, Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation (2000), recognises the importance that sport and recreation play in the quality of life for people. It also highlights that sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives such as the urban renaissance, promotion of social inclusion, community cohesion, health and well being and more sustainable patterns of development.

3.1.10 In terms of managing and planning for the provision of open space, PPG17 identifies that it is essential for local authorities to know and understand the needs of local communities. In doing so, it advises that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of both the existing and future needs of communities. As a standard, it suggests that assessments should include an audit of existing open space.

3.1.11 The Audit stage has been completed in North Staffs and this Strategy seeks to build on this to achieve the provision of services that meet the identified needs. Like PPG17, this strategy will place emphasis on the qualitative nature of provision as well as quantitative issues, allowing the identification of the potential for increased use of existing open space through better design, management and maintenance. This Strategy will also provide valuable land use planning input in the creation of effective policies in Local Development Documents.

3.1.12 PPG17 advocates that local authorities should establish their own local standards, although the guidance does not go so far as to identify how these should be quantified. It does indicate that local standards should include:

- A quantitative element, to assess how much new provision may be required;
- A qualitative component to assess whether existing facilities may be enhanced; and
- An accessibility measure.

3.1.13 This Green Space Strategy will include these elements, alongside others that are appropriate to the North Staffordshire sub-region. Particular emphasis will be placed on quality, which is in accordance with PPG17. Paragraph 18 states that under-use of facilities does not indicate a lack of need but may result from the poor quality of facilities in an area. As such, the guidance suggests the enhancement of existing facilities and the use of planning obligations to secure improvements, where there is an identified need.

3.1.14 A number of general principles are listed at paragraph 20 for the provision of new sports and recreational facilities. These include:

- Promoting accessibility by non-motorised forms of transport as well as public transport;
- Locating intensive forms of use where they can promote town centre vitality and viability;
- Avoiding loss of amenity or biodiversity;
- Improving quality through good design;
- Adding to and enhancing the existing range of facilities;
- Considering security and personal safety; and
- Meeting regeneration needs of areas and social inclusion.

3.1.15 In considering these principles, a number of general criteria can be applied to the provision of new facilities. These include:

- Locating major generators of travel and activity in central locations where they can be accessible to a range of public transport modes;
- Where local facilities are proposed these should be in locations that are well served by public transport; and
- Best use should be made of urban fringe land where there is an absence of land within the urban area to meet provision. Again such locations should be accessible and well related to public transport provision.

3.1.16 Planning obligations are discussed within paragraph 33, which states that they should be used to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of local open space provision. In so doing, the guidance again highlights the requirement for an assessment of need and an audit of facilities in order to set local standards that justify planning obligations. In this Strategy, the use of Planning Obligations will be a key component of delivering a better quality provision of green space in North Staffordshire.

3.1.17 Planning Obligations: Practice Guidance (DCLG (2006)) gives further guidance on this. This Guidance sets out the type of contribution that can be sought as part of a planning obligation, whether it be “in-kind”, a financial contribution for a specific facility, a financial contribution to a pooled fund for a larger facility or maintenance payments. It also includes details of what contributions can be sought for, including community facilities such as open space. This Guidance accompanies the latest policy on planning obligations, which is set out in Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations (ODPM).

3.1.18 The Companion Guide to PPG17 stresses that the delivery of a network of high quality open spaces depends on creative urban and landscape design, effective management and good planning. In many areas improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing open space will be the key to delivering the aims of PPG17, rather than new provision. This is sometimes the case in North Staffordshire, where the overall quantity of provision for some typologies is more than adequate but the quality and accessibility is sometimes poor.

3.1.19 PPS25 Development and Flood Risk (2006) gives some relevant policy guidance and, along with the Stoke-on-Trent Rivers Strategy (2004) (see local policy section below), is relevant to urban watercourses. The guidance discusses the importance of urban drainage plans at local levels and the dangers of flooding in urban areas. It also recommends that flood plains be used for uses such as water (flood) storage and recreation.

3.1.20 PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2004) sees the provision of ecological networks of natural habitats as a priority measure. Specifically, local planning authorities will be expected to incorporate policies in Local Development Documents, linking sites of biodiversity importance. This is an aim that this Strategy wishes to integrate into the green space provision for North Staffordshire.
3.1.21 PPS9’s three key objectives can be achieved at a local level through the green space strategy. They are:

- The integration of biodiversity with other economic, social and environmental considerations;
- The conservation, enhancement and restoration of the diversity of England’s wildlife and its geological and geomorphological sites; and
- The incorporation of biodiversity into developments, as part of a healthy functioning ecosystem. (DCLG, 2004)

3.1.22 These broad aims, are echoed in the first aim of this Green Space Strategy:

"Ensure that the strategic planning, management and maintenance of the conurbation’s green space supports the environmental, economic and social regeneration of urban North Staffordshire."

3.1.23 Aside from Planning Policy Guidance and Statements, the Government have a wealth of literature and research on green spaces and their implementation and contributions to urban areas. One such report is ‘Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces’ (2002). This research report explored people’s views and interpretations of green spaces and identified several findings relevant to this Strategy, which are discussed below.

3.1.24 The five main barriers deterring people from using urban green spaces identified in this report are:

- Lack of, or poor condition of, facilities (including play facilities for children)
- Other users (including anti-social behaviour)
- Concerns about dogs and mess
- Safety and other psychological issues (e.g. feelings of vulnerability and inertia)
- Environmental quality issues such as litter, graffiti and vandalism

3.1.25 Most of the barriers are resource issues, which relate to the location, accessibility or environmental quality of urban green spaces and could therefore be overcome if planners, designers and managers of these spaces were to address them satisfactorily.

3.1.26 In investigating what users want from urban green spaces, the most frequently mentioned characteristics of the ideal urban green space were vegetation, play opportunities, comforts, good access, sport and events. The Green Space Strategy Audit took on board the information in ‘Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces’ and included its own, detailed assessment of green space users in the area and their requirements.

3.1.27 Local Authorities were asked about funding. The study showed that Heritage Lottery Funding and Section 106 Agreements were seen as the most valuable external sources for capital development and in most cases private sponsorship is not significant. This concurs with the approach that the Green Strategy will use to seek capital funding.

3.1.28 The research also identified that environmental enhancement through higher quality green space provision not only makes places more attractive but also has additional benefits and a wider role, including community strengthening and local economic stimulation.

3.1.29 The ‘Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces’ research was commissioned to inform The Urban Green Spaces Task Force Report: ‘Green Spaces, Better Places’ (2002). Following the Urban White Paper, the Urban Green Spaces Task Force was established to develop proposals to improve urban parks, play areas and green spaces. It reported in 2002 and set out 52 recommendations to Government.
3.1.30 The Task Force’s report emphasises the diverse value of urban open spaces and highlights the decline in quality of many urban parks and green spaces. The report states that action is urgently required if they are to deliver their many benefits. The report argues that parks and open spaces have the potential to make a major contribution to urban regeneration by enhancing the environment, facilitating social inclusion, contributing to healthy living and providing educational opportunities.

3.1.31 The Task Force’s first recommendation relates to providing high quality green spaces to meet the needs of people in disadvantaged areas. It recommends that ‘green space planning’ should be placed at the heart of urban regeneration. Notwithstanding the potential of urban parks and green spaces, the Task Force identified significant obstacles to realising this potential. Most importantly the report identifies that the majority of urban green spaces have suffered neglect and decline as a result of significant under investment over the past 15-20 years.

3.1.32 These issues lie at the heart of what this Strategy will seek to achieve, revitalising the urban core of North Staffordshire by creating high quality green space alongside housing market renewal and economic regeneration.

3.1.33 Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener (2002) is a ‘best practice’ guide which not only deals with parks and public open spaces but with the whole of the “public realm” including streets and indeed “everywhere between the places we live and work”. It recommends adopting an holistic approach: ‘holistic’ in that the various responsible organisations work together, and ‘holistic’ in that the public realm should be seen as a comprehensive network.

3.1.34 The report calls for an end to “creeping deterioration”, the process by which incremental decisions, or lack of action, have led to a decline in the quality of open spaces. The authors reiterated the importance of quality open spaces for disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The report also pointed to the need to respond to changing patterns of demography and development.

3.1.35 Since this report’s publication, the Government have promoted relevant organisations to work in partnerships to achieve these aims. The Green Space Strategy will seek to do the same, by encouraging responsible organisations to work in partnership to deliver the Strategy.

3.1.36 The Green Space Strategy will also encourage these partners to look at green spaces as part and parcel of their surrounding area and not as separate entities within the public realm. This will encourage linkages to green spaces and allow for a more sustainable approach.

3.1.37 More recent green space literature includes Start with the Park (2005) by CABE, which is a good practice guide for everyone involved in the processes of sustainable growth and renewal in England. It is particularly relevant to the creation and care of green spaces in housing growth areas and housing market renewal areas. This guide demonstrates that meeting the demands of housing growth and renewal is not just about units of housing, it is about transforming neighbourhoods.

3.1.38 The key aim of Housing Market Renewal is to deliver sustainable communities and via this process, can assist in the delivery of improved green spaces and networks. This is discussed further in regional and local policy.
3.2 Regional Policy and Guidance Context

3.2.1 Regional strategies for the West Midlands give more area specific policy recommendations. The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy is probably the broadest regional planning document, cutting across all development and sustainability related themes.

3.2.2 Open space is discussed specifically within Chapters 4 and 8 of the RSS, titled ‘Urban Renaissance’ and ‘Quality of the Environment’ respectively. These chapters (through policies UR1, QE2, QE3, QE4 and QE7) underline that the environment should be regarded as a major asset to the region, with everyone having access to high quality green space, so creating more sustainable communities. This should be achieved through multi-agency/multi-disciplinary approaches and with the involvement of the local community. This reflects PPS1’s key aim of Community involvement and the ‘holistic’ partnership approach recommended in ‘Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener’ (2002).

3.2.3 Policy QE4: Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces, outlines what Local Authorities need to do to improve significantly the overall quality of green space:

“Local authorities and other agencies should undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision, and develop appropriate strategies for greenspace to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality urban greenspace with an emphasis on:
   i) significantly improving the overall quality of public space, especially in city and town centres;
   ii) enhancing the setting of local residential neighbourhoods in built up areas;
   iii) increasing the overall stock of urban trees;
   iv) improved accessibility and community safety; and
   v) maintaining and enhancing sports, playing fields and recreation grounds.”

3.2.4 The above-mentioned, “…assessments of local need and audits of provision…” are essential to the Green Space Strategy to ensure it delivers exactly what is required, both now and in future.

3.2.5 All the points i) to v), above, are reflected in the aims of the Green Space Strategy and, in particular, points i) and ii) are important in HMR areas and should assist, and be assisted by, the HMR programmes.

3.2.6 Further guidance is given in QE4 for development plan policies, which should ensure that adequate protection is given to key features such as parks, footpaths and cycleways, river valleys, canals and open spaces and that they are linked together. Again, these principles for the region have been synthesised into the local development plan and the Green Space Strategy, which both intend for versatile green space networks to be formed. These networks will be more easily accessible, where people can travel safely by foot or bike, use them for recreational purposes, as well as to enhance mobility of wildlife and enhance biodiversity.

3.2.7 Policy QE7, ‘Protecting, managing and enhancing the Region’s Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Resources’, states that:

“All the plans and programmes of local authorities and other relevant agencies should: … i) encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the Region’s wider biodiversity resources … ii) include policies and proposals which enable the West Midlands to achieve its minimum share of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan
3.2.8 The West Midlands Regional Sustainable Development Framework (2006) is more centred on sustainability principles and sets out objectives for achieving its vision. The Vision is as follows:

“Our vision for a sustainable West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region, rich in culture and environment, where everyone, working together, is able to enjoy well-being and quality of life, meeting their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the ability of others, now or in the future, to do the same.” (Sustainability West Midlands (2006:8))

3.2.9 Objective 3.5 of the Framework states how green space can contribute towards its vision of sustainable development:

“Encourage land use and development that creates and sustains well-designed, high quality built environments that incorporate green space, encourage biodiversity, and promote local distinctiveness and sense of place.” (Sustainability West Midlands (2006:12))

3.2.10 The Green Space Strategy is a key element in creating and sustaining high quality built environments across North Staffordshire and therefore, is contributing to the Sustainable Development agenda. Referring back to the principles of sustainable development in PPS1, and the key aims for achieving them, the Green Space Strategy contributes in many ways, including:

- Environmentally: Enhancing the natural environment, which in turn benefits wildlife and increases biodiversity;
- Economically: improves the aesthetics of the area, which attracts new residents, investment and leads to rising property prices; and
- Socially: improving sports and recreation facilities, which in turn improves people’s health and quality of life and encourages community cohesion and social involvement.

3.2.11 The West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy 2004-2010, also has a vision, which is that:

“The West Midlands is recognised as a world-class region in which to invest, work, learn and live and the most successful in creating wealth to benefit all of its people” (Advantage West Midlands (2004:10))

3.2.12 Although the strategy is focussed on investment and development, the RES also identifies the importance of environmental quality and its need for tourist development, inward investment and quality of life. The challenge is to ensure that economic development enhances, and is in turn enhanced by, the environment, which is one of the aspects of implementation the Green Space Strategy examines.

3.2.13 The Green Space Strategy emphasises the importance of the economy of the area and the great benefits it could have on improving HMR areas and encouraging further investment into the area. This Strategy recognises that the majority of urban green spaces have suffered neglect and decline as a result of significant under investment over the past 15-20 years. These issues lie at the heart of what this Strategy will seek to achieve, revitalising the urban core of North Staffordshire by creating high quality green space alongside housing market renewal and economic regeneration.
3.2.14 The RES sets out four priorities for action (in developing sustainable communities) through Local Strategic Partnerships and regional partners. As with the Green Space Strategy, one of these priorities for green space is to improve the cohesion of communities as a whole, as well as the quality of life of individuals:

“... promotion of environmental awareness and improvement; enhancement of cultural opportunities; and maintaining and developing green spaces to provide better living conditions and improve perceptions of local areas.” (Advantage West Midlands (2004:35))

3.2.15 The Green Space Strategy will help to create sustainable communities by ensuring partnership working between all relevant authorities and organisations. It will require the benefits of working in partnerships, to deliver manage and maintain green space. In implementing the Strategy the possibilities of public-private partnerships will be investigated.

3.3 The Sub-Regional Context

3.3.1 The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan 1996-2011 will influence local policy and the Green Space Strategy quite significantly. Policies D1, D8, NC6, R1 and particularly R6 impact on the development of green space in North Staffordshire.

3.3.2 Policy R6: Open Space in Urban Areas, sets a baseline level of open space provision of 2.43 ha per 1,000 population and seeks the retention of existing public open space and playing fields. This policy has been adopted at a local level and therefore is particularly relevant to the Green Space Strategy, as proposals must comply with these standards.

3.3.3 Policy D8: Providing Infrastructure Services, Facilities and/or Mitigating Measures Associated with Development, discusses the role of planning obligations in ensuring provision of community services / facilities, which would include:

“... (c) educational and community facilities, open space and other recreational facilities;
(e) high quality landscaping and/or woodland planting;
(f) where damage to protected habitats or those frequented by protected species is unavoidable, the replacement of significant natural habitats or introduction of other appropriate mitigation measures.”

3.3.4 Planning obligations to provide things like this will be an essential part of implementing the Green Space Strategy and as such the strategy will follow the guidelines set out in this policy, national policy Circular 05/05 ‘Planning Obligations’ (ODPM) and local policies discussed below.

3.3.5 RENEW North Staffordshire is one of the nine Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder schemes in England, consisting of a partnership of three local authorities – Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – and other key organisations across the region.
3.3.6 The RENEW North Staffordshire Market Renewal Prospectus Scheme Update (2005) is the principal strategy document for RENEW, setting out both the problems of the North Staffordshire Pathfinder area as well as RENEW’s aims and objectives and identifying the Areas of Major Intervention, where most renewal activity will be concentrated. The overarching aim of the Prospectus is:

“To promote the restructuring of the North Staffordshire conurbation, thereby providing a highly competitive urban form which is capable of retaining its population with a green and landscaped environment and facilitates the growth of an economy which has employment and income levels comparable to the regional average.” (RENEW (2005:64))

3.3.7 The original Prospectus (2004) highlighted the need for “radical environmental improvements”, stating:

“The conurbation also has a wealth of green space, but there are issues around the quality of this space and the poor quality of connections between the green spaces and greenways which characterise the locality.” (RENEW (2004:39))

3.3.8 Although the specific strategic objectives and responses vary for each Area of Major Intervention and General Renewal Area, the importance of quality open space is a constant theme whether on a site specific or on a non site specific basis. Provision and access to a good quality environment is seen as one of RENEW’s key drivers in the regeneration of North Staffordshire.

3.3.9 The North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy is being jointly prepared by Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council and will form part of their Local Development Frameworks. It is currently at ‘Revised Preferred Options’ stage (March 2007).

3.3.10 The purpose of the North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy is: “…to establish a distinctive, long-term vision for the form, function and character of the North Staffordshire area.” (Newcastle BC & Stoke CC (2007:5)). Although the core spatial strategy is only in draft, it gives a good indication of the direction that the long-term vision and strategic aims for North Staffordshire are moving in. The Vision for the Core Spatial Strategy is that:

“North Staffordshire will be a sub-region of choice by 2026. It will be an area transformed into an attractive, safe, healthy and better place to live, work, visit and do business with” (Newcastle BC & Stoke CC (2007:36))

3.3.11 Relevant policies include CP2, CP12, CP24, CP25, CP26, CP27, CP28, CP29 and CP30, with CP28 and CP29 being of particular relevance. Policy CP29 states:

“We will protect, enhance and seek to secure the development of North Staffordshire’s green network as an important amenity, recreational and wildlife resource as follows:

a) Extensions to structural green space and link up other areas of green space will be encouraged. This could involve allocating land to form part of structural green space and improving connections, improving signage, information and maintenance to link up areas of open space.

b) Co-ordinated action will be taken to improve their biodiversity, landscape and recreational value through appropriate forms of habitat creation and
landscape management, and projects to promote quiet enjoyment of the countryside

c) Development proposals that prejudice the function and character of the green network or access to it will not be permitted. Where proposals close to the network are acceptable, they may be required to provide enhancements to the network as part or all of their contribution to public open space” (Newcastle BC & Stoke CC (2007:174))

3.3.12 The reasoned justification of this policy discusses the requirement to identify large-scale green space enhancement and improving the biological, visual and recreational value of the green space, which is a key aim of the Green Space Strategy.

3.3.13 Policy CP28 covers Open Space, Sport and Recreation, stating:

The Councils will work with its partners and other agencies to secure the provision of good quality, well maintained leisure, recreation and open space facilities which meet the needs of local communities. In particular, provision will be sought which addresses identified deficiencies or will benefit deprived groups and communities.

A new hierarchy and categories for open space, sport and recreation should be defined in accordance with PPG17 Planning for Open Space. Local standards should be defined for provision, quality accessibility, and maintenance, to be met through regeneration schemes and development proposals.

Proposals which will result in the loss of an existing leisure or recreation facility or open space will not be supported unless satisfactory alternative provision is made or the facility is no longer needed. All open space which is no longer considered to be required for its existing use, or is proposed to be developed for other purposes, should first be considered for its ability to meet other needs arising from local or wider shortfalls, through a needs assessment in accordance with PPG17.

Developers will be expected to make an appropriate contribution towards necessary improvements or additional provision for recreation facilities and open space arising from their development proposals, in accordance with the local standards set out in the Local Development Framework.

Recreational routes for walkers and cyclists should be maintained and extended as part of a network linking parks and green spaces, and improving accessibility for everyone. (Newcastle BC & Stoke CC (2007:171))

3.3.14 The Green Space Strategy will seek to support this Policy and will reinforce the requirements of providers of green space and developers that this policy stipulates.

3.3.15 Policy CP2 covers the use of planning obligations to secure appropriate developer contributions, specifically mentioning the need to meet social and environmental requirements:

Developers are expected to have regard to the consequences that may arise from development. Development proposals should, therefore, include provision for necessary on site and off site infrastructure, community facilities and/or mitigation measures where this is necessary to ensure comprehensive
3.3.16 Any scheme within the boundaries of the Green Space Strategy study area will not be deemed acceptable should they have an adverse effect on current or planned green space, or hinder the implementation of the strategy. Therefore, in order for schemes to be acceptable, many developers will have to make agreements or contributions, which the local authorities and implementing organisations deem suitable.

3.3.17 The Green Space Strategy recognises that developer contributions and planning obligations will play a big part in securing funding and resources for creating, enhancing and maintaining green space and sets out its own guidelines on what kind of agreements will be appropriate in different circumstances.

3.3.18 Policy CP12 is about new housing development and states that any new housing development should “Demonstrate that existing community facilities, key services and infrastructure have the capacity to absorb the additional demand arising from the development, or where necessary be accompanied by proposals to increase such provision.” (Newcastle BC & Stoke CC (2007:118)).

3.3.19 Policies CP24 to CP27 cover ‘leisure, culture and tourism’, the ‘historic environment’, ‘natural assets’ and ‘environmental sustainability and climate change’ all of which have relevance to what the Green Space Strategy will seek to achieve and could be impacted by the proposals arising from the Strategy.

3.3.20 Policy CP30 is a generic policy, which states that all development should have a high quality of design in terms of its layout, resource efficiency, form and contribution to the character of the area. The Green Space Strategy will ensure any new green space development is of high quality design, easily accessible, versatile in terms of use, and that it contributes to comprehensive green space network, thus complying with these principles of good design.

3.4 The Local Context

3.4.1 The Strategy covers two administrative areas; the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the City of Stoke-on-Trent. As such, there are two saved local plans and two Local Development Frameworks in production.

3.4.2 Firstly, policy and guidance for the area of Stoke-on-Trent will be reviewed, starting with the statutory local plan.

Stoke-on-Trent

3.4.3 Although out-of-date, the City of Stoke-on-Trent Local Plan 1990-2001 (adopted 1st Sept 1993) is still the main development plan and planning policy basis in the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The plan contains several policy sections of interest that affect the provision of open and recreational space in Stoke-on-Trent, in particular:

- Greenscape – Policies GP3, GP5-12
- Community Facilities – Policies CP2, CP4, CP5 and CP8
- Implementation & Monitoring – Policy IP1
3.4.4 Policies GP5, GP6 and GP9 address various open space issues, seeking to protect and improve the existing network of green space and create new green space. Additionally, Policy GP7 requires residential developers to provide 7 acres of open space per 1,000 population for developments of 30 dwellings or more (excluding high density town centre residential developments).

3.4.5 Alongside the requirements of GP7 are the requirements of Policy IP1 (Developer Contributions). This seeks contributions from developers “towards the provision of community facilities and environmental improvements when these are directly related in scale and kind to the development or use of land after development”.

3.4.6 The City Plan is to be superseded by the Local Development Framework. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the over-arching “folder” that will encompass the Local Development Documents (LDDs) that are planned as part of the new planning system. In the case of Stoke-on-Trent this will include the North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy discussed above, a new style of development plan document (DPD) that will eventually replace the City Local Plan currently in place, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that has been adopted and a series of Area Action Plans (AAPs), discussed below, and supporting Supplementary Planning Documents.

3.4.7 Area Action Plans (AAPs) are used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. The key feature of AAPs will be to focus on implementation. There are currently three AAPs in development in Stoke, all at the draft stage, which all coincide with RENEW 7 Areas of Major Intervention (AMIs). They are for:

- City Centre & the Etruria Road Corridor
- The Inner Urban Core (incorporates City Centre South, City Centre North West and East, Stoke, South Shelton, and Burslem, Etruria Valley & Middleport AMIs)
- Meir

3.4.8 In relation to green space, these AAPs do not propose significant new green space but include several existing parks and areas of under-used derelict land. Debate over the final plans for these AAPs is ongoing and while it is certain that the existing parks will remain, it is unclear to what use any derelict land will be put to at this time. The Green Space Strategy will influence this. Currently, Area Regeneration Frameworks (ARFs) are being prepared for areas encompassing the AMIs. These will provide a basis for the further development of the AAPs.

3.4.9 The Stoke-on-Trent Corporate Plan 2006-2009 outlines the vision, core values and priorities that the Council will work to until 2009, highlighting five Strategic Priorities:

- Creating a vibrant city with thriving communities
- Building a safer and stronger city
- Delivering better outcomes for children and young people
- Promoting health and independence
- Improving service delivery and delivering value for money

3.4.10 All five priorities are partially influenced by the quality, accessibility, provision and maintenance of green space and so the Green Space Strategy will have a significant impact on how the Strategic Priorities of the Corporate Plan are achieved.

3.4.11 Stoke-on-Trent has also produced a Local Area Agreement (March 2006), setting out a series of targets on a range of issues, some of which are related to green space. These include more fulfilled, inclusive and healthier lifestyles for children and young people, increasing the involvement of young people in sport, recreation and other positive activity,
creating safer and stronger communities, creating healthier communities, to attract inward investment into the city and performance management in delivering services.

3.4.12 The Stoke-on-Trent Community Strategy 2004–2014 is the first Community Strategy to be produced for Stoke-on-Trent. It is a plan for the future, developing 24 ideas or strategic proposals, which will transform the City over the long term. A revision process is now underway to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy for Stoke-on-Trent.

3.4.13 With regard to open space, play facilities and a greener environment, local people have identified several needs that will improve the quality of life for all residents, which they want the City to provide. These include:

- More cultural and leisure facilities;
- More local facilities for young people;
- A clean city with maintained parks and green areas;
- A strong sense of community spirit; and
- Access for all in the decision making process.

3.4.14 The strategy is divided into 6 major categories, one of which is ‘A Green City’. The Council’s vision for this is:

“A Green City that provides well maintained open spaces, good quality play facilities for our children and a quality environment for future generations” (Stoke-on-Trent CC (2004:31))

3.4.15 This vision embodies what the Green Space Strategy is trying to achieve and it is obvious that the sub-region and local levels of policy all have specific policies and visions for improving quality and provision of green space to accompany improvements in housing and business development that have already started to take place.

3.4.16 Current green space issues identified within the city include poor quality open space, poor quality public space within the city centre, poor quality footpaths and access to the Trent and Mersey and the Caldon canal, lack of use of the City’s Parks and lack of children’s play facilities. In addition to these problems, there are core issues such as unhealthy lifestyles and the damaging effect that this overall image is having on the city as a whole. This sort of information, provided by local research and documents, is used by the Green Space Strategy to tailor-make area-specific solutions to green space issues.

3.4.17 The Community Strategy mentions tools for achieving the ‘Green City’ vision. The Council will implement a ‘Greening for Growth’ programme to begin addressing these issues. The ‘Greening for Growth’ scheme is a £20 million package of park and landscape improvements, which will help change the image of the area, improve quality of life and restore community pride.

3.4.18 Specifically, the ‘Greening for Growth’ strategy aims to establish:

- A series of well used and maintained landmark parks, which offer real choice across the conurbation in recreational provision and attract residents to live nearby;
- A conurbation wide network of safe, attractive off-road routes for pedestrians and cyclists along canals, rivers and disused railways linking green spaces with homes and places of work; and
- A landscape to be proud of where major transport routes and new developments are framed by interesting, high quality landscapes and a wider fabric where woods, water and wildlife are part and parcel of urban life in North Staffordshire. (Stoke-on-Trent CC (2004:32))
3.4.19 The Greening for Growth strategy will be absorbed into the wider strategic proposals coming out of this Strategy and funding will be identified within this Strategy to that end.

3.4.20 Other more topic-specific strategies for the area of Stoke-on-Trent include, the Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (2002-2007) and the Rivers Strategy (2004). The Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (2002-2007) was produced by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and is the first strategy of its kind, which sets out the vision and means of developing sports programmes and facilities.

3.4.21 One of the four themes of this Strategy is “Providing and improving facilities and green spaces – enhancing locations and contributing to the local environment”, while Aim 16 of the Strategy is “To improve the local environment through the development of natural resources and green space for sport and recreation”. As such, the Green Space Strategy supports what this Sport & Active Recreation Strategy wishes to achieve.

3.4.22 The Rivers Strategy (2004), also produced by Stoke-on-Trent City Council is a Supplementary Planning Guidance Document and therefore must be considered when determining planning applications or examining other proposals that might affect watercourses, (other than canals), in the city of Stoke-on-Trent. The strategy sets out a series of aims and objectives along with twelve clear guidelines for urban watercourse management. These cover a variety of issues, including nature conservation, restoration of the natural character of the river channel, sustainable drainage, access, recreation and appropriate development in riverside locations.

3.4.23 The Rivers Strategy also discusses the opportunities for people, nature and the built environment, which urban river restoration and enhancement can achieve. They are summarised below:

Opportunities for people include:
- Provision of new, safe, traffic-free walkways and cycleways.
- Places to sit, relax, play and fish
- Educational activities – a place to observe wildlife

Opportunities or nature include
- Places to live and reproduce with food and water sources
- Creation of more diverse habitats
- Corridors for wildlife to travel along- whether in the water or along river banks

Opportunities for built environment include
- Reduce flooding and tackle pollution through engineering
- Take advantage of water as assets to increase property prices and attract investment
- Re-introduce watercourses as a focus to enhance existing development.

(Stoke-on-Trent CC (2004:4))

3.4.24 This Green Space Strategy aims to create the above opportunities. It summarises the benefits and opportunities that will come with the implementation of this Strategy, which reflect the opportunities mentioned in the Rivers Strategy above:

- “Flood management
- The ability for an urban area to respond to climate change
- Improving local biodiversity
- Creating a more robust and locally distinctive landscape character
- Enhancing movement networks within urban areas and
- Making green space more accessible.” (see page 65)
3.4.25 Stoke set out a Strategic Vision for Parks and Green Space in June 2003. This document set out what a green space strategy should achieve and the City Council’s vision for green space in the City.

“Our aim is to sustain and manage Stoke-on-Trent’s green space resource so that it:

- Becomes a source of civic and individual pride;
- Involves and serves all sectors of society;
- Plays a key role in the regeneration of the City; and
- Contributes in a major way to the ecological and environmental health of the City.” (p.4)

3.4.26 What this strategy (and the audit prior to it) will achieve meets the requirements of a green space strategy set out in this Strategic Vision document and this strategy shares the essence of the Vision and Principles of the Strategic Vision in the aims and objectives set out in chapter 2 of this strategy.

Newcastle-under-Lyme

3.4.27 The current main planning policy document in Newcastle is the ‘saved’ Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan (2001-2011). The Community Facilities section of the Local Plan contains the majority of the relevant policies to this Strategy. In particular, the following policies are especially relevant:

- C1: Development and Open Space;
- C4: Open Space in New Housing Areas;
- C6: Recreation and Leisure – Built Facilities; and
- C7: Recreation and Leisure – Land Extensive Activities

3.4.28 The local plan states that; “The NPFA standard is easily exceeded across the Borough though clearly this conceals local deficiencies.” (Newcastle BC (2003:1xix)). This is one of the main concerns of the Green Space Strategy, which recognises that the enhancement, function and joining up of green spaces is a bigger issue than simply creating new green space.

3.4.29 Policy C1: Development and Open Space aims to safeguard open space and playing field provision in order to ensure that provision is appropriate to the needs of the community.

“If development is proposed on any open space or playing field, permission will not be given unless it can be shown that the present and future catchment community will not be under provided for, in terms of its particular needs, should the facility in question be closed, or alternatively unless a suitable replacement facility is provided.” (Newcastle BC (2003:1xx))

3.4.30 The policy will safeguard areas of amenity and recreational space and retain them according to their local need. Furthermore, areas that are under-provisioned will have their current level maintained.

3.4.31 Policy C4: Open Space in New Housing Areas sets out quantitative targets for open space provision within new housing areas. The policy sets the target at 0.1 hectares per 50 houses for sites of 0.4 hectares or above. It recommends that the amount of equipment required will be appropriate to the size of the development, leaving it to the developer to decide how much equipment should be provided. Where new play areas are provided it should not be more than 0.4 kilometres for a child to walk nor should they have to cross a main road to get to the
The explanation of Policy C4 also states how, where a private developer transfers a green space to the council for maintenance, the developer is still responsible for contributions to this maintenance.

Policy C6: Recreation and Leisure – Built Facilities encourages the location of built recreation facilities in town centres, limiting the use of private transport. However, out-of-town facilities will be allowed if it can be demonstrated that they will be close to the population or they would provide relief for over-used and/or more remote facilities.

Policy C7: Recreation and Leisure – Land Extensive Activities ensures that land extensive activities do not affect the environment in an adverse manner and that they are linked to other open space sites and do not cause unnecessary car trips. Policy C7 states that any development should be in an appropriate location in relation to its catchment and that any traffic generated by the development should be accommodated by the public roads system without adverse effects. This policy ensures that any new land extensive developments will not have an adverse effect on the environment and will work in tandem with other open space facilities.

In addition, Policy IM1 ‘ Provision of essential supporting infrastructure and community facilities’ covers the need for planning obligations and how they should be used. The policy states that:

“Where a development proposal would require improvements to infrastructure or essential facilities to make it acceptable then the developer will be required to carry out or contribute to the funding of appropriate works.” (Newcastle BC (2003:cvi))

Educational and recreation facilities are specifically mentioned as an example of a developer contribution, in line with the more detailed policy CP2 of the North Staffordshire Core Strategy (mentioned above) which will eventually replace core local plan policies as part of the LDF.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Development Framework is currently under production. Newcastle-under-Lyme’s LDF will include the joint Core Spatial Strategy discussed above, a new Development Plan Document (DPD) that will replace the current “saved” Local Plan, a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and a series of Area Action Plans (AAPs), discussed below, and Supplementary Planning Documents. There are various LDDs completed or under development in Newcastle, with the notable exception being the new Development Plan.

The Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in August 2006. Some of the main aims that the local authority is seeking to achieve through this document are:

- To gain a better insight into the demands and needs of communities in the area and enhance community safety.
- To use community involvement to help to tackle social exclusion in disadvantaged communities.
- To attain effective services through proactive community involvement.
- To improve ‘sustainability’ of communities, development and service provision.
- To attain high standards of design in land use through proactive community involvement. (Newcastle BC (2006:2))

3.4.39 The Green Space Strategy, when specifically applied to Green Space assets and services, shares such aims. It is a central element of the Strategy that high quality provision of Green Space can help tackle social exclusion and increase sustainability when the people that provide it listen to the needs of the local communities. Therefore, the Green Space Strategy has taken on board the views of the local community gathered in the Audit phases.

3.4.40 **Area Action Plans** are used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. The key feature of AAPs will be to focus on implementation. There is currently one AAP for Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre, which was submitted to Government in May 2007.

3.4.41 In addition to these LDF documents a **Local Area Agreement** has been produced for Staffordshire that sets a series of targets, including for issues related to green space, which Newcastle will contribute to. Most notably this includes the number of Parks with Green Flag Status, the amount of Local Nature Reserves and public satisfaction with green spaces. The Green Space Strategy will seek to incorporate these targets into the Programme of Actions it sets out and in terms of increasing public satisfaction with green spaces.

3.4.42 The **Newcastle-under-Lyme Corporate Plan 2007/8 to 2011/12** sets out the vision and outcomes that the Borough want to achieve for all parts of the community through service delivery and partnership working over a five year period. One of the core aims is to create a cleaner, greener and safer borough by improving the environment, including green spaces. Another of the core aims is to create a healthy and active community, which includes improving the quality of and access to facilities, such as green spaces and sports facilities. Therefore, the Green Space Strategy has a crucial role to play in contributing toward the achievement of these aims in the Corporate Plan.

3.4.43 The **Newcastle-under-Lyme Community Strategy** (2005) discusses how Newcastle will seek to sustain the Borough as a place where people want to live and work through partnership working. One of the key activities that comes out of this strategy states that:

> Action will be taken to sustain and improve bio-diversity in the Borough such as ensuring there is no further loss of important woodland, grassland, ancient / diverse hedgerows and where possible increase the amount of such natural resources. A comprehensive green space audit will be carried out in order to develop a strategy for future open space provision. (Newcastle BC (2005:36))

3.4.44 Therefore, the development of this Strategy is fulfilling one of the actions within this community strategy and supporting other actions within it.

3.4.45 Newcastle-under-Lyme has produced a **Parks and Green Space Strategic Plan** (2003). This Strategic Plan sets out a vision: “To provide an exciting range of safe, well used, high quality parks and green spaces that actively improve the quality of life for all citizens of Newcastle-under-Lyme”. It sees the provision of such green spaces as a significant step towards sustainable communities and meeting shortfalls in service provision for a range of themes. It also supports community involvement in parks and open space issues.

3.4.46 There is also a **Newcastle-under-Lyme Leisure Strategy Report** (2003). This Leisure Strategy, produced by Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council, covers the provision of leisure, including parks and open spaces. The strategy focuses on indoor facilities, outdoor sport and recreation facilities, parks and open spaces.
3.4.47 The Strategy reports that sport and recreation provides a force for regeneration and can also aid social and neighbourhood renewal and tackle cultural isolation. In order to assist any process of regeneration and renewal, tackling anti-social behaviour and disorder is a key issue. The implementation of the Leisure Strategy, along with the Council’s emerging Parks and Green Space Strategic Plan, presents an opportunity to engage people who have been socially excluded. This is also an important aim of the Green Space Strategy.

3.4.48 An important aspect of the emerging ‘Parks and Green Space Strategic Plan’ is to involve community voluntary groups within the local management of their open spaces. This will undoubtedly assist in enabling social interaction and allow a sense of identity and ownership for the local community.

3.4.49 These two plans (Parks and Green Space Strategic Plan (2003) and Newcastle Leisure Strategy (2003)), along with Stoke-on-Trent’s Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (2002-2007) and Rivers Strategy (2004), have similar aims and objectives and therefore will together complement and assist the implementation of the Green Space Strategy and vice versa.

3.4.50 It is a common statement through the literature in this policy review that parks and open spaces are an important cultural service to the community. Newcastle-Under-Lyme Cultural Strategy (2000), like the Leisure strategy, recognises the importance of community involvement, with local people supporting the idea of adopting local parks and being involved in their protection and maintenance.

3.4.51 The Green Space Strategy reflects the aims in the Cultural Strategy. It is centred on involving the community and creating benefits for social cohesion and improved quality of life. The common vision Strategy, endorsed by local politicians, community representatives and other stakeholders, reflects this.

3.4.52 The Cultural Strategy outlines four specific strategy actions; one within the short-term, incorporating the cultural benefits of parks and open space (1-2 yrs) and three within the medium term (2-5 yrs), encompassing the establishment of new network groups, supporting established groups and the continuous promotion of cultural benefits.

3.4.53 In terms of ‘Play and Play activities’, the Cultural strategy reports that there are 41 areas designated for children’s play in the Borough’s parks and open spaces. In order to provide best value, the Council co-ordinates their efforts with the public, private and voluntary sector and recognises the importance of consultation with parents and children.

3.4.54 The Cultural strategy outlines 3 strategy actions for play activities, within the medium term, which encapsulate new development, increased funding and provision of a one-stop shop. Local residents expressed their concern at the lack of play facilities and parks and thus, the Strategy seeks to ensure that everyone has equal access to a parks and open space facilities/services.

3.4.55 Newcastle has also produced a Leisure Needs Assessment & Playing Pitch Strategy (2006). The study considered quantity, quality, accessibility and value factors in relation to indoor and outdoor sports provision across the Borough, undertaking an identification of local needs and an audit of local provision and setting and applying provision standards.

3.4.56 The Strategy identified that there is adequate quantitative provision of outdoor sports facilities to meet current and future demand, subject to re-distribution, rationalisation and improvements to quality. This suggests that the local quantity standard for the Borough should be the current level of quantitative provision and that there is no need for a higher quantitative standard.
3.4.57 Newcastle also has a Policy for Unsupervised Children’s Playgrounds 2005-2010. This Green Space Strategy concurs with the general approach to, and support for, the provision of children’s play facilities set out in the this Policy but updates the future provision and priorities with regards provision of play facilities in the Borough in line with the wider strategy being developed here for urban North Staffordshire and in line with current needs.

3.5 Policy Summary

3.5.1 This policy review has shown that the Vision, Aims and Objectives of the Green Space Strategy are in-line with wider policy and guidance, reflecting a wide range of aims covering environmental, social and economic aspects. Also, the Government’s demand for the principles of sustainable development to be central to all plans and policy, right down to local level, will be met within this Strategy.

3.5.2 At a national level, all relevant reports and guidance have informed the production of this Strategy. Green space ‘standards’ are set out in the Strategy, informed by the guidance in PPG17 and The Urban Green Spaces Task Force Report: ‘Green Spaces, Better Places’ (2002). Also, guidance on biodiversity (PPS9) and flooding (PPS25) have been taken into account.

3.5.3 The ‘holistic’ approach recommended in Living Places, Cleaner, Safer, Greener (2002) has been incorporated into the Strategy. The green space is being viewed, not as individual parks but as a network, extending into the public realm and street design also. The second meaning of ‘holistic’ in the Living Spaces document referred to partnership working. This is also mentioned in the Regional Economic Strategy, when referring to funding and implementation and as a result has been included in the Green Space Strategy.

3.5.4 At a sub-regional and local level, the Green Space Strategy has been informed by a wealth of previous information and studies, which include the Structure Plan, Local Plans for Newcastle and Stoke, Stoke City Council’s River Strategy and The Sport & Active Recreation Strategy, and Newcastle’s Leisure Strategy Report and Cultural Strategy. Together these plans have provided a comprehensive base of guidance, covering information on; recreation, sports and play facilities, parks and gardens, biodiversity and wildlife habitats, community and culture, rivers and the sub-regional river network, jobs, investment and the economy of the area.

3.5.5 The Green Space Strategy conforms with, and complements, all levels of policy and guidance, from its broad general principles of improving the environment (to, in turn improve the social and economic aspects of the area), down to its fine details, such as its green space ‘standards’ and specific definitions of different types of park, which reflect national standards and best practice guidance.
4. The North Staffordshire Green Space Audit & Needs Assessment – A Summary

4.1 In April 2005, a conurbation wide Green Space Audit (referred to as the Audit in the remainder of this Strategy) was carried out on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and RENEW North Staffordshire. The audit methodology was based upon the requirements outlined in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Sport, Recreation and Open Space and its companion guide. However, the audit methodology also recognised the need to link the audit and resulting strategy with the process of housing market renewal in the sub-region.

4.2 The Phase 1 and 2 Report issued in September 2005 summarised the findings of this audit and reviewed policies (local and national), best practice and case-studies (local, national and international) to synthesise a series of principles that could underpin a green space strategy for the conurbation.

4.3 The audit teams visited 932 sites across the sub-region, the smallest site being 0.1 ha in size, and recorded the typology (e.g. park) and function (e.g. biodiversity). The audit teams also recorded information about the site’s condition, its potential for improvement and the distance that visitors are likely to travel to use it. This data was then compared with the results of a household survey, carried out alongside the Audit, to identify key themes and issues that characterise green space provision and use across the conurbation.

4.4 The Audit identified 6.6 ha per 1,000 population of unrestricted green space across urban North Staffordshire. This figure remained the same for both Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent as Authorities but varied significantly between wards.

4.5 The larger sites tend to appear towards the edge of the urban area and there are more deficiencies in green space in the south of the conurbation in relation to typology and function than in the north.

4.6 In addition, particular areas seem to provide more of one type of green space. For example, this is seen in the concentration of semi-natural sites in eastern Stoke-on-Trent and concentration of amenity sites in the Greater Chesterton area of Newcastle.

4.7 Analysis of the responses to the household survey showed that almost 75% of respondents used their most frequently used space at least weekly. Key reasons for using green space given were walking, relaxing and experiencing nature – all passive forms of recreation.

4.8 Responses regarding travel time and method of travel were combined to form an accessibility hierarchy of effective catchments, which were then compared with the benchmark distance thresholds used in the Audit. This showed that despite the above average amount of green space across the conurbation there is a perception that there is too little green space. This suggests that quality and / or accessibility issues are obscuring public opinion.

4.9 Overall, people were least satisfied with children’s play and provision for teenagers. In Stoke, overall satisfaction with all types of green space was less than 50% across all areas. In Newcastle-under-Lyme, the East area showed the highest level of satisfaction with children’s play, parks and natural green space.

4.10 In addition, to the analysis of quantity and quality, the household consultation sought to identify key barriers to the use of green space. These key barriers were identified as:
Safety
Vandalism/graffiti
Dog fouling
Lack of facilities
Lack of time
Standards of maintenance
Quality of facilities

4.11 There was variation between the two authority areas in terms of the ranking of these issues. Standards of maintenance and quality of facilities ranked higher as key barriers in Stoke while in Newcastle lack of time and lack of facilities were more significant. However, overall the same barriers were generally identified.

4.12 When people are asked about why they don’t feel safe, the key issues were:

- Young people hanging around
- Young people drinking
- Lack of site-based staff
- Vandalism / graffiti
- Lack of lighting
- Drug use

4.13 In summary, the audit, consultation and needs assessment has identified some key themes and headlines that need to be addressed within this strategy. In this way green space provision can be improved and can fulfil its potential as a resource for local residents and an integral asset to the process of urban renewal. These key headlines are:

- Improve the distribution of sites so that all residents have reasonable access to sites of different typologies
- Improve the quality of sites so that residents are more likely to use them
- Improve provision for children’s play and activities for teenagers
- Review maintenance operations to ensure that green spaces are clean and safe and resources are deployed in a sustainable manner
- Tackle the effects of anti-social behaviour and the perception of crime in public spaces to encourage more residents to use their local green spaces

4.14 This Strategy has been informed by the findings of the audit, the survey information and extensive local knowledge and has developed an appropriate response to this information. The following chapter sets out how this was done and some of the assumptions made and limitations that emerged in developing this Strategy.
5. **A North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy – Methods, Assumptions & Limitations**

5.1 **Methodology**

5.1.1 The methodology used for the creation of this Green Space Strategy has been in line with the approach recommended by the Companion Guide to PPG17. The Needs Assessment and Green Space Audit described in the previous chapter fulfilled Steps 1 and 2 of this method and this Strategy moves on to Step 3: Setting Provision Standards and Step 4: Applying Provision Standards and should also provide a basis for Step 5: Drafting Policies.

5.1.2 The Key Actions of Step 3 are listed as:

- Determine the quantitative component
- Determine the qualitative component
- Determine the accessibility component
- Determine the minimum acceptable size component
- Determine the site area multiplier component
- Determine the cost components

5.1.3 In this Strategy, Chapter 6 is the central chapter in relation to setting provision standards. Within Chapter 6, national guidance is interrogated to enable a comparison with the existing provision of green space in North Staffordshire and so indicate how North Staffordshire is performing and how green space, strategically, might need improvement. This then provides the basis for establishing the Local Standards. In setting local standards, this strategy has determined the quantitative, qualitative and accessibility components for the "functional" typologies as well as an additional connectivity component for them.

5.1.4 The Audit established a minimum site size of 0.1 ha, which has been carried forward to this Strategy and, for outdoor sports facilities in particular, has adopted a site multiplier approach in assessing current provision and proposed future provision. Appendix Q outlines the indicative unit costs for each typology and these have been used to arrive at indicative costs for actions in the Action Plan Programme for both quantitative and qualitative capital improvements and to calculate the contributions (planning obligations) that should be required of developers.

5.1.5 The Key Actions of Step 4 are listed as:

- Identify deficiencies in accessibility
- Identify quality deficiency
- Identify areas of quantitative deficiency or surplus
- Identify the spatial distribution of unmet needs
- Forecast future needs

5.1.6 Chapter 8 of this Strategy identifies the existing deficiencies for each typology in relation to the local standards for quantity, quality and accessibility and sets out area-specific actions that seek to meet these deficiencies and ensure that the entire population of the conurbation has access to the right types and amount of high quality green space in line with the local standards.

5.1.7 In relation to forecasting future needs, it is important that ongoing reviews take place at regular intervals to ascertain local needs in relation to the different typologies of green space and to monitor how green space is achieving in meeting these needs. Mechanisms
have been set in place to facilitate this through several of the General Actions in Chapter 7 and the monitoring techniques outlined in Chapter 13.

5.1.8 In general, the Vision, Aims and Objectives have provided a “golden thread” throughout the methodology and have been a constant point of reference to ensure each element of the strategy is working toward the same end. In particular, this “golden thread” led to an additional strategic element of the strategy in Chapter 7, which sets out a series of general actions that will enable the creation of the right environment for fostering high quality improvements to the green space network and the way it is managed and maintained.

5.1.9 Having established a schedule of site-specific and general actions the final element of the strategy is to convert this into a robust and deliverable Action Plan Programme, with the actions divided into phases of work and with indicative costs. Chapters 9-13 set out the various elements of the Action Plan Programme.

5.2 Assumptions & Limitations

5.2.1 As with any methodology and in the course of producing any strategy there will always be limitations to overcome and assumptions that must be made. These have not undermined the robustness of the methodology or the resulting work but are outlined below with an explanation of how the effect of them has been mitigated.

5.2.2 The Audit Data collected in 2005 is considered to be as reliable a picture of the provision of green space in the conurbation at that time as possible. Since 2005 the database has been updated to reflect known changes to green space with available information. However, in an exercise as extensive as the North Staffordshire audit it is likely that some human error in data collection would have occurred. Data have been amended where possible but there are still likely to be some minor inaccuracies. It must also be recognised that changes to green space are constantly evolving and such an auditing exercise can only ever reflect a snapshot in time. The strategy and action plan must be read with this caveat in mind.

5.2.3 In terms of the calculation of the provision of outdoor sports facilities in the audit only whole outdoor sports sites were identified. Individual facilities within a site were not counted. In addition, sites of other typologies, such as a park, that may have had individual sports facilities incorporated within them were not counted towards the overall level of sports provision. Therefore, data from the two Authorities Playing Pitch Strategies was subsequently used to identify the number of pitches and non-pitch facilities there are in the study area. In order to quantify this provision in hectares an assumed standard size (site area multiplier) was applied to each type of facility (pitches, bowling greens and tennis courts). This standard size took into account peripheral space and facilities associated with a facility (e.g. changing rooms) and an average of size where there were different sizes of facility (e.g. mini, junior and senior pitches).

5.2.4 In other typologies, only minor changes were made to the audit data based on local expertise and knowledge. This included alterations such as the typology of a site where it was not obvious from a visual survey in the audit or where development had happened since the Audit changing the typology of the site.

5.2.5 It emerged as the audit data was adapted and added to, and as proposed actions emerged, that many sites serve more than one function. For example, a play facility counts toward the provision of play space but also towards the provision of park space because the size of the play facility is not subtracted from the overall size of the park in calculating provision of park space. Similarly, many outdoor sports facilities are located in parks and, while the
individual sports facilities have been identified and drawn out so that they contribute to the outdoor sports provision, they are not subtracted from the total size of the park.

5.2.6 This is acceptable in relation to totalling a given typologies provision because an area of green space can serve more than one function but what it means is that an overall total of proposed functional green space provision is difficult to calculate because it is not simply a case of adding together the individual typology provision totals as this would lead to double-counting. Therefore, a limitation that arose was that this total proposed functional provision cannot be calculated.

5.2.7 A further limitation has emerged in measuring the improvement of quality when implementing the site-specific actions. The audit gave many sites a quality rating score and this has been used as a starting point for improving quality. For example, where a site was given a 60% quality score in the audit, this may have led to an action requiring a 20% improvement to that site in order to achieve a rating of 80%. The limitation in this approach is that, without exploring the detail of the quality scores for each and every site, it is difficult to quantify what a percentage improvement might consist of. Such detail is inappropriate for a Strategy such as this and so this limitation can only be overcome when the action comes to be implemented and site management plans are drawn up. At that time, the audit quality scores should be explored to ascertain what improvements are necessary on any given site.

5.2.8 In the companion guide to PPG17, the final part of Step 4 involves forecasting future needs. As discussed in paragraph 5.1.7 above, ongoing review of local needs should be undertaken and as part of this the changing demography of North Staffordshire should be considered. A limitation of the way green space typologies, particularly play, are measured nationally is that they are measured in hectares per 1,000 population. This does not take account of the different groupings within the population and which types of green space they use.

5.2.9 For example, play facilities are exclusively used by children but are still measured in hectares per 1,000 population, as opposed to hectares per 1,000 children. Therefore, what is difficult to account for in a Strategy such as this is where there may be a hidden need in a specific location above and beyond the typical need because, in this instance, there are a greater proportion of children in the population in that neighbourhood. Conversely, play facilities may be over-provided in areas with fewer children.

5.2.10 The change in demographics may influence provision of specific typologies as well. With regard play facilities, the proportion of children in the population is decreasing nationally, so this might require a reduction in play facilities. However, in the case of North Staffordshire the work being undertaken to rejuvenate the conurbation’s housing market involves a desire to attract more families to live in the area, which would negate this national trend.

5.2.11 This limitation could be extended to other types of green space, though the definition of who uses the facilities may be less well defined. For example, Bowling Greens are typically, but not exclusively, used by those approaching, or in, retirement and so it could be argued that the proportion of pensioners or over 50’s in a neighbourhood’s population might determine the level of provision of Bowling Greens and that this might increase in coming years as people live longer and the proportion of elderly people in the population increases.

5.2.12 Ultimately, this is not a simple issue to resolve but it is one that should be considered when reviewing this strategy and when building upon it in future years and therefore it is prudent to raise it as a potential limitation at this stage.
5.2.13 The above provides an overview of the methods used in developing this green space strategy and some of the issues that have arisen within this process but where appropriate a detailed method is provided in the relevant chapter or the appendix related to that chapter. Having established the process used, the following chapter details how the local standards, a central element of the strategy, have been reached for urban North Staffordshire.
6. Local Standards

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 With the aims and objectives of this Strategy in mind, the Local Standards become the central element upon which the rest of the strategy hangs. This chapter will assess current provision against national standards (where they exist) to establish a baseline position and identify appropriate local standards for quantity, accessibility, quality and connectivity to meet future requirements.

6.1.2 In establishing the Local Standards, the following process has been followed:

1) Identify current quantitative provision of Green Space by typology
2) Identify any National Standards for Green Space
3) Compare Current Provision with National Standards
4) Consider whether National Standards are appropriate to North Staffordshire and set standards to a locally appropriate level
5) Set Local Standards and identify appropriate and achievable targets for green space

6.1.3 The process of developing the local standards has therefore been informed by reference to national standards in combination with an analysis and understanding of the local context of North Staffordshire.

6.2 Identifying Current Provision of Green Space

6.2.1 Step one of this process, identifying the current provision of green space across the North Staffordshire urban conurbation, has already been undertaken during the Green Space Audit carried out in 2005. The overall provision can be divided into typologies and by geographical area. This data is tabulated in Appendix A and a summary of green space provision by typology and Authority area is found in Table 6a below.

6.2.2 For the purposes of this Strategy, ‘Functional’ green space is defined as a site that has one or more uses directly associated with being a Park, a public play space or facility, an outdoor sports facility (e.g. a pitch, bowling green or tennis court), a green corridor or that has value as a semi-natural space.

6.2.3 ‘Non Functional’ green space is therefore any other green space that does not have a use directly associated with those above. This includes those classified as “amenity” by the Audit as these are not capable of satisfactorily acting as one of the uses above as they currently exist.

6.2.4 For the purposes of interpreting the Audit data in a relevant manner that allows appropriate application of standards to the data, typologies considered “functional” in this Strategy are Parks & Gardens, Playgrounds, Outdoor Sports, Semi-Natural (including Nature Reserves) and Green Corridors, while those considered “non-functional” are Amenity Space, Allotments and the “other”, remaining typologies.

6.2.5 In addition, those outdoor sports sites considered “limited” access in the Audit should actually be viewed as “unrestricted” for the purposes of applying the standards in this Strategy because the public generally have access to them informally or formally during daylight hours. For the same reason, all Parks & Gardens, Green Corridors and Amenity Spaces identified in the Audit are considered “unrestricted” for the purposes of this Strategy.
### Table 6a: Existing Green Space Provision (ha per 1,000 population) from the Audit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Urban Conurbation</th>
<th>Stoke-on-Trent</th>
<th>Newcastle-under-Lyme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNCTIONAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Gardens</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports (unrestricted)</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports (limited)</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports (restricted)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Reserve</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Semi-Natural (unrestricted)</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Natural (limited)</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Natural (restricted)</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Corridors</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON-FUNCTIONAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity Green Spaces</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allotments (limited)</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (unrestricted)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>Other (limited)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (restricted)</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Green Space</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>12.55</td>
<td>12.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (unrestricted) Green Space</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>9.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Functional (unrestricted) Green Space</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>7.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Does not include Golf Courses
2. Includes Golf Courses
3. Includes limited access Outdoor Sports (not Golf Courses) and all Parks & Gardens, Green Corridors and Amenity Space
4. Includes limited access Outdoor Sports (not Golf Courses) and all Parks & Gardens and Green Corridors
6.2.6 The above breakdown identifies **5.46 ha per 1,000 population** of unrestricted functional green space in the urban conurbation (this includes the whole of sites that straddle the border of the urban conurbation, such as Apedale Country Park and Parkhall Country Park, both of which are extremely large sites).

6.2.7 The figure for unrestricted green space (i.e. both functional and non-functional) identified in Table 6a above (7.91 ha per 1,000 population) is greater than the 6.6 ha per 1,000 population identified in the Audit because, in reviewing the Audit data, it was deemed appropriate to include limited access sites for some typologies (outdoor sports, all amenity spaces and some "other" typologies) as unrestricted for the purposes of developing this Strategy.

6.2.8 In addition, the Audit identified 6 NEAPs and 39 LEAPs in Newcastle and 8 NEAPs and 67 LEAPs in Stoke. These are found on sites of various typologies and so are not counted separately within the above figure in order to avoid double counting. This highlights the limitation of trying to calculate the total amount of unrestricted functional green space given that so many green spaces serve several functions. Therefore, this strategy will not provide a total figure for such green space because, where multi-functional sites are identified, this strategy will not be so detailed at a site-specific level as to demarcate areas for each function within a given green space, where this is even possible.

6.2.9 Since the Audit was conducted nearly two years ago, green space provision has changed to a certain extent. In particular, the numbers of Play facilities has changed somewhat, with Newcastle now having 14 NEAPs and 33 LEAPs and Stoke now having 21 NEAPs and 47 LEAPs. Much of this change can be put down to LEAPs being upgraded to NEAPs in both Authorities.

6.2.10 The 5.46 ha per 1,000 population does not include certain elements of existing provision that may be considered functional but which it is hard to distinguish from other non-functional uses within the same typology in the Audit. For example, many pitch sports are found on school sites, which the Audit classified as "Institutional" (within the "other" typology). These have not been counted toward the unrestricted functional figure due to the difficulty of identifying them from the Audit but they would add to the existing provision of pitch sports and this will be considered in creating the local standards later in this strategy.

6.2.11 Similarly, there is a great deal of informal play space throughout the conurbation but which the Audit identified as “amenity space”. It is impossible to separate out these sites from other amenity sites and so, again, a further set of sites that would add to the unrestricted functional figure are not included in the above figure. In reality, the unrestricted functional figure is likely to be somewhere between 6 and 7 ha per 1,000 population but it is not possible to confirm this from the Audit data alone.

6.3 **Identifying National Standards for Green Space**

6.3.1 There is no definitive set of national standards and for some typologies national standards do not exist. However, Table 6b below outlines the national standards, where they are available. The policy context for green space and the national standards have been drawn from the following documents:

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Scott Wilson 41 September 2007

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5 Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) and Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
- **PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation (2002)** – this provides the policy basis for setting standards for green space but stops short of recommending specific figures as a national standard.
- **The Six Acre Standard (National Playing Fields Association, 2001)** – this sets out the minimum standard the NPFA expects to be provided for outdoor sports and play facilities. (see Appendix C for a brief overview of this)
- **The Urban Design Compendium (English Partnerships, 2000)** – this sets out recommended accessibility standards for different sizes of parks and “provides a hierarchy of parks classified according to scale, function and locational suitability” (p.56).
- **Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies (Greater London Authority, 2004)** – this develops recommended accessibility standards for open space on the basis of guidance from the above documents
- **English Nature’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) Model** – published within English Nature’s A Space for Nature (1997), these set out recommendations for accessibility to natural green space.

### Table 6b: National Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Gardens</td>
<td>None Available</td>
<td>Local Park = 0.4 – 2 ha</td>
<td>All households within 400m walking distance (280m radial) of a Local Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N’hood Park = 2 – 20 ha</td>
<td>of a Local / N’hood Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>District Park = 20 – 60 ha</td>
<td>All households within 1.2km of a District Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sub-Regional Park = 60+ ha</td>
<td>All households within 3.2km of a Sub-Regional Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[GLA / EP]</td>
<td>[GLA &amp; EP]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Facilities</td>
<td>0.8 ha per 1,000 pop. [NPFA]</td>
<td>Minimum size of a LAP = 0.04 ha</td>
<td>All households within 100m walking distance (60m radial) of a LAP,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum size of a LEAP = 0.16 ha</td>
<td>All households within 400m walking distance (240m radial distance) of a LEAP,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum size of a NEAP = 0.85 ha</td>
<td>All households within 1km walking distance (600m radial distance) of a NEAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[NPFA]</td>
<td>[NPFA &amp; GLA]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports</td>
<td>1.6 ha per 1,000 pop. [NPFA]</td>
<td>None Available</td>
<td>All households within 1.2km radial distance of “Local Playing Fields” [NPFA]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Natural</td>
<td>2 ha per 1,000 pop. [ANGSt]</td>
<td>None Available</td>
<td>All households within 300m radial distance of Semi-Natural green space [ANGSt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Corridors</td>
<td>None Available</td>
<td>None Available</td>
<td>All households within 1.2km radial distance of Green Route [EP]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 In the GLA and EP guidance different terminology is used to describe local, neighbourhood, district and sub-regional parks but for the purposes of Table 6b the terminology used in this Strategy has been applied.
7 of which 1.2 ha should be for pitch sports and 0.4 ha should be for non-pitch sports
9 of which 1 ha should be Local Nature Reserve
6.4 Moderating the National Standards for the North Staffordshire context

6.4.1 Having considered the comparison of existing local provision in North Staffordshire with the national standards (see Appendix B), it is clear that not all of the quantitative national standards are being met in North Staffordshire, most notably those for Play facilities. In some cases, where there is a large deficit in comparison to the national standards, it may not be appropriate to use these national standards as local standards because it sets an unrealistic target for the foreseeable future. Similarly, where national standards are met or exceeded, it may be appropriate to set more ambitious local standards in North Staffordshire in order to achieve the Vision, Aims & Objectives of this Strategy.

6.4.2 Therefore, the national quantitative standards need to be moderated in light of the local context to create an ambitious, yet achievable, set of Local Standards that create an appropriate standard of green space for North Staffordshire that will significantly benefit the community of the conurbation. It should also be acknowledged that these moderated standards might, in some cases, be interim ones, designed as a stepping-stone toward achieving national standards in the longer term, beyond the scope of this strategy.

6.4.3 Quantitative Local Standards are only one element of ensuring that the provision of green space across North Staffordshire is appropriate to the needs and desires of its community. Another, and perhaps more practical, element is the need to ensure all households have good access to each unrestricted functional typology of green space. Therefore, in the same way as the quantitative standards, the accessibility national standards need to be moderated in light of the local context to create an ambitious, yet achievable, set of Local Standards. The following section outlines the quantitative and accessibility standards for all the identified “functional” typologies.

6.5 Parks & Gardens

Overview

6.5.1 There are no quantitative national standards for Parks & Gardens with which to compare provision within urban North Staffordshire. This may reflect the fact that it is difficult to prescribe a definitive set of criteria that would exactly constitute a green space being given the label of ‘park’ rather than perhaps that of a ‘semi-natural’ or ‘amenity’ space or ‘playing field’.

6.5.2 Outside the processes of producing strategies and plans, anecdotal evidence suggests that the general public will often designate an area of green space to be a ‘park’ based on a very simple basis: a place that they visit for the purpose of active or passive recreation. These ‘parks’ can range from green spaces that contain a range of fixed play and recreation equipment to green spaces consisting only of a green environment with basic entrance features and network of pathways. The likelihood of a specific green space being given the label of ‘park’ by a community increases significantly if there are few comparable, suitable or significant green spaces for passive and active recreation in the vicinity.

Quantity

6.5.3 Current provision of unrestricted Parks & Gardens according to the Audit data is 1.6 ha per 1,000 population across the conurbation, with 1.10 ha per 1,000 population in Stoke and 2.75 ha per 1,000 population in Newcastle. This initially appears to show a vastly unequal distribution between Stoke and Newcastle but it should be noted that the Newcastle figure is inflated by the presence of Apedale Country Park at 163 ha and Bathpool Park at 61 ha,
i.e. both are the size of a sub-regional facility in an Authority with a population 2.5 times smaller than Stoke.

6.5.4 In addition, the Audit classified Parkhall Country Park in Stoke as “semi-natural” but it also serves the purpose of a Sub-Regional Park. Including this in Stoke’s provision of Parks & Gardens raises Stoke’s current provision to 1.72 ha per 1,000 population and the conurbation provision to 2ha per 1,000 population.

6.5.5 Even taking into account the presence of these larger parks, it is clear that the distribution of the Parks across the conurbation and within Authority areas is uneven, regardless of whether the quantitative provision is sufficient or not. Parks have evolved over time and correcting the unevenness of distribution is not a simple process.

6.5.6 This strategy recommends that for any park to be truly successful and to meet the expectations of the community it will need to be:

- Well designed
- Well maintained, in terms of grounds maintenance and cleanliness (particularly litter and graffiti)
- Perceived as safe by actual and potential users
- Offer a mix of fixed facilities, particularly play facilities including provision for young people / teenagers, in a natural, ‘green’ setting sufficient in size to stroll and enjoy nature
- Offer the opportunity for the community to become involved in development and management issues
- Offer the opportunity to apply ancillary services such as play and youth workers in a focussed and efficient manner
- Contribute appropriately to wider social, economic and environmental agendas and outcomes

6.5.7 The solution to this problem of distribution is not as simple as relocating a park. All the existing parks (as defined by the Audit) are valuable and attempting to dispose of one in order to relocate it in another part of the conurbation would be inappropriate. This situation may not apply to “Parks” as defined by the wider definition in 6.7.2 but, on the whole, these are not of the same value locally or Authority-wide as the Parks identified in the Audit.

6.5.8 However, it is recognised that there may be opportunities to dispose of or change small portions of large sites, particularly at their edges, if this can provide a direct benefit to the remaining green space in terms of retention, enhancement, maintenance and/or security and therefore to the surrounding communities.

6.5.9 Therefore, the existing parks will remain and be improved where required, even while new ones are created to fill in the gaps caused by uneven distribution. Creating new parks will not necessarily mean acquiring new land, but will more likely involve converting existing amenity or other non-functional space into Parks. In terms of setting a local standard this means that the existing provision of 1.6 ha per 1,000 population will need to be significantly increased in order to allow for this creation (mainly through upgrade or change of use of existing green space) of new Parks.

6.5.10 The development, maintenance and management of comparatively large and significant parks can be considered to provide greater value for money than that associated with smaller, less significant sites. Larger parks offer the greatest opportunity to meet community expectations whilst impacting positively across other agendas, particularly wider regeneration initiatives, although it is recognised that smaller parks are locally significant.
Therefore, in creating standards for parks and gardens, this strategy has crucially focused upon ‘reasonable’ access, taking into account the practicalities of provision, maintenance and management as well as:

- Providing parks of sufficient significance and impact to contribute to wider economic, social and environmental regeneration within the conurbation
- Providing parks of sufficient quality, particularly in terms of meeting the expectations of the community as expressed through the Household Survey and Community Workshops
- Providing recreational choice whilst attempting to ensure visitor numbers are high, relative to the type of park in question
- Encouraging community cohesion and social inclusion
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles and activities
- Establishing multi-functional parks

**Creating the Standards – A Hierarchical Approach**

Whilst the potential of large / significant parks is clear, it is also recognised that it is very important to meet local need. To balance the strategic and local potential of the conurbation’s parks, this strategy recommends that a formal hierarchy of park provision is established.

To inform the hierarchy, park roles and functions need to be determined and from this a broad hierarchy identified. Catchment areas can then be considered and from this the distribution / frequency of provision determined. These catchment areas are expressed in straight line (radial) walking distances and this enables the number of parks within each level required across the conurbation to be calculated. It is then possible to reconsider the role, function and distribution of existing parks in order to identify how best to meet the new standards.

The following basic park hierarchy is recommended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Type</th>
<th>Radial Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Regional Park</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Park</td>
<td>1200m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Park</td>
<td>800m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Park</td>
<td>400m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An informal hierarchy of parks and gardens already exists in both Authorities and as part of evening out the distribution of parks across the conurbation these hierarchies must be formalised and allowed to evolve where appropriate.

As part of this hierarchy, the type of equipped play area found in any given park will help to determine its place in the hierarchy. Neighbourhood, District and Sub-Regional Parks should have Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs), with those in District and Sub-Regional Parks being especially large and well-equipped NEAPs, whereas Local Parks will have Local Equipped Areas for Play LEAPs (See Appendix C for the characteristics of NEAPs and LEAPs).

This connection between the typologies of Parks & Gardens and Play Facilities provides the basis of a structure to the hierarchy as Table 6c shows. The total number of Sub-Regional, District and Neighbourhood Parks is equal to the total number of NEAPs, while the number of Local Parks is equal to the total number of LEAPs. From this hierarchy we
can therefore establish a quantitative local standard based on the accessibility standards employed for the play facilities within each park. Using this approach, the overall conurbation provision for Parks & Gardens once this hierarchy is established can be identified.

6.5.18 The accessibility standards are also, therefore, the same as the play facilities within each level of park with the hierarchy, except that District Parks should clearly have a larger accessibility standard than a NEAP. Sub-regional facilities are designed to attract visitors from a range of distances, often beyond what a person might be expected to walk so a local accessibility standard would be inappropriate. Emphasis should instead be placed on ensuring access by non-car modes can be accommodated.

6.5.19 Any park will also serve a function as a park lower than it in a hierarchy, so that, for example, a District Park also acts as a Neighbourhood and Local Park for those communities that fall within the radial area at each level.

Table 6c: A Hierarchy and Standard for Parks & Gardens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy</th>
<th>No. of Parks</th>
<th>Play Facilities</th>
<th>Radial Walking Distance</th>
<th>Typical Size (ha)</th>
<th>Proposed Provision (ha)</th>
<th>No. of Parks</th>
<th>Play Facilities</th>
<th>Radial Walking Distance</th>
<th>Typical Size (ha)</th>
<th>Proposed Provision (ha)</th>
<th>Total Proposed Provision (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Regional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>1200m</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>1200m</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>400m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>400m</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Provision</td>
<td>232</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>275 797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Standard (ha per 1,000 pop.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.80 2.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.5.20 The typical sizes used in Table 6c above are based on what the two Authorities consider reasonable at each level of the hierarchy but size is only one measure of determining what position in the hierarchy a green space should be given; location, design quality and the facilities provided in a green space are also key factors in determining hierarchy. Therefore, the typical size used above is only indicative as many sites at each level of the hierarchy are larger than the typical size stated and many are smaller but have other qualities that help determine their position in the proposed hierarchy.

Sub Regional Parks

6.5.21 Sub-Regional Parks should be of a sufficient size and quality with an adequate provision of facilities to attract visitors from outside the conurbation. These parks must offer the most considerable opportunities for planned and lengthy visits of any parks within the conurbation whilst also offering opportunities for more spontaneous and regular low-key usage for communities within close proximity.

6.5.22 These parks must provide the greatest mix of the most significant, exceptional, high quality and less frequently provided facilities in the conurbation within their boundaries. They
should offer the greatest opportunity to attract commercial input and contribute towards wider regeneration initiatives.

6.5.23 Sub Regional Parks should, where appropriate, provide children’s play facilities that greatly exceed the NPFA NEAP standard (includes multi-use games area for teenagers) whilst also offering the most significant opportunities for passive recreation (strolling, relaxing and enjoying the natural environment) of any park type. This requires the inclusion of a network of pathways, significant areas of semi-natural space, appropriate seating arrangements, community events and performance space and ancillary facilities.

6.5.24 Sub Regional Parks must be unique in size and content. They must provide a significant amount of car parking space and provide good toilet facilities. They must be excellently managed and maintained. They must display the highest levels of security and must be recognised as safe places to visit.

6.5.25 Sub-Regional Parks are, by definition, almost unique within the conurbation and this does impact on average travelling distance and time. In order to justify the designation of a Sub-Regional Park, and consequently the comparatively large travelling distance / time, the range and quality of facilities offered and managed at these Parks must be sufficient to make the journey (be it starting within or outside the conurbation) worthwhile.

6.5.26 In terms of quality, it is recommended that all Sub-Regional Parks meet full Green Flag Standards as a minimum. It is recommended that for the conurbation’s Sub-Regional Parks to function correctly and therefore provide the greatest return in terms of benefits, it is essential that they be recognised as ‘excellent’ parks and compare favourably to the best parks within the nation.

6.5.27 It is recommended that these parks provide a range of exceptional, high quality facilities and display the highest levels of appropriate maintenance and management (particularly security) of any parks within the nation (not just the conurbation). To help achieve this, it is recommended that these parks have the benefit of a dedicated staff resource in terms of both maintenance and management, including security, permanently based within the parks.

6.5.28 Without an emphasis on exceptional quality it is unlikely that these parks will function fully as Sub-Regional Parks or provide the range of benefits offered by such green spaces, particularly with regards to their positive impact on wider regeneration initiatives.

**District Parks**

6.5.29 District Parks should be of a sufficient size, quality and content to attract visitors from across the City or Borough. They should combine to provide a choice of high quality destinations and facilities. These parks offer considerable opportunity for planned and lengthy visits and also opportunities for spontaneous and regular low-key use for communities within close proximity.

6.5.30 These parks will provide a good range of significant facilities within their boundaries, only exceeded by Sub-Regional Parks in terms of some specific (unique) items and size of the space. District Parks should provide children’s play facilities that exceed the NPFA NEAP standard (includes multi-use games area for teenagers) and other sports facilities (e.g. bowling greens, tennis courts and skateboard areas), whilst also offering significant opportunities for passive recreation (strolling, relaxing and enjoying the natural environment). This requires the inclusion of a network of pathways, areas of semi-natural
space, appropriate seating arrangements, community events and performance space and ancillary facilities.

6.5.31 These parks offer good opportunities to attract commercial input and contribute towards wider regeneration initiatives within their vicinity. They must provide or have access to car parking space and provide good toilet facilities. District Parks must be excellently managed and maintained and must be safe places to visit.

6.5.32 District Parks are, by definition, rare phenomena within the conurbation and this has an impact on average travelling distance and time. To justify the designation of District Park and the associated travelling distance / time, the range and quality of facilities offered and managed at these Parks must be sufficient to make the journey worthwhile.

6.5.33 Whilst providing choice is integral to this strategy, it is essential that the level of choice is considered and managed, particularly with regards to keeping quality and visitor numbers within respective parks relatively high. High footfall contributes significantly to alleviating safety concerns (one of the main barriers to use); it will act as the catalyst for commercial input; and will help ensure that these parks contribute fully to wider social, economic and environmental agendas and outcomes.

6.5.34 In terms of quality, it is recommended that all District Parks meet full Green Flag Standards as a minimum standard. It is recommended that for the conurbation’s District Parks to function correctly, and therefore provide the greatest return in terms of benefits, it is essential that they be recognised as ‘excellent’ parks within the conurbation. This must be reflected in their physical quality and in the way that they are managed and maintained.

6.5.35 Therefore, it is recommended that District Parks provide a range of consistently high quality facilities and display very high levels of maintenance and management, including high levels of security. Without this emphasis on quality it is unlikely that these green spaces will function fully as District Parks. To help achieve this, it is recommended that these parks have the benefit of a dedicated staff resource in terms of both maintenance and management, including security, ideally permanently based within the parks.

Neighbourhood Parks

6.5.36 The appeal of Neighbourhood Parks is aimed towards a more local audience drawn from a local neighbourhood. They offer an appropriate mix of good quality facilities to meet local, day-to-day need. In most cases usage will be restricted to spontaneous use and low-key regular use (e.g. dog walking). These parks may receive little in the way of lengthy usage or offer much in the way of commercial opportunity in comparison to the other types of park listed above.

6.5.37 Neighbourhood Parks should provide children’s play facilities equivalent to the NPFA NEAP standard and some sports facilities including multi-use games area for teenagers, whilst also offering opportunities for passive recreation (strolling, relaxing and enjoying the natural environment). This requires the inclusion of a network of pathways, some areas of semi-natural space, appropriate seating arrangements and, ideally, community events space. Neighbourhood Parks are not required to provide car park space or toilet facilities but they must be well managed and maintained and must be safe places to visit.

6.5.38 In order to recommend quality standards for Neighbourhood Parks it is essential to recognise their role and function. Therefore, it is recommended that in the short to medium term Neighbourhood Parks be brought up to the elements of the Green Flag standard listed in Table 6m below.
6.5.39 Over the long term, both authorities may consider it appropriate to bring their Neighbourhood Park to full Green Flag standards but this should not be at the expense of efforts to bring Sub-Regional and District Parks up to Green Flag standards.

6.5.40 It is recognised that relatively high numbers of provision of these parks will mean that it will be challenging for either local authority to find sufficient resources to enable all these parks to benefit from dedicated, site-based grounds maintenance, management and security staff resource. Therefore, in order to address the concerns of the general public as voiced through the Household Survey and Community Workshop, a fundamental change of perspective with regards to provision, management and maintenance is required.

6.5.41 It is recommended that in terms of Neighbourhood Parks, focus must rest on engendering community ownership, protection and use. This can only be achieved by engaging with local communities and offering them opportunities to be involved in design (where possible), matters of improvement and ongoing management and maintenance.

6.5.42 In addition, it is recommended that other than the provision of NEAPs, local residents should determine the general content of these parks within parameters set by the respective local authorities. Changes to content and maintenance regimes should be part of this general discussion to ensure that these parks meet local needs as closely as possible. It is recommended that the potential to develop and include greater semi-natural content within these, often predominantly formal, green spaces be integral to any future discussions regarding change and improvement.

**Local Parks**

6.5.43 These are the smallest parks receiving the most local use of any type of park within the hierarchy. Their use is likely to be exclusively spontaneous and low-key regular use. These parks will usually contain equipped play facilities equivalent to NPFA LEAP standards, some appropriate seating and some ancillary space.

6.5.44 These parks present no commercial opportunities in comparison to the other types of park listed above, but they are significant at a very local level. These parks are not required to provide car parking space or toilet facilities but they must be well managed and maintained and must be, and be perceived to be, safe places to visit.

6.5.45 It is recognised that Local Parks with LEAP provision cannot be considered to have the same strategic impact as Sub Regional, District or even Neighbourhood Parks. However, they do provide an important recreational facility at a very local level. When combined with the provision of Local Areas for Play (LAPs - see Play Section), they will provide play and recreation space in close proximity to residents and will help ensure that residential areas present a pleasant and attractive environment.

6.5.46 In common with Neighbourhood Parks, it is recognised that the sheer number of Local Parks will mean that neither authority will be able to ensure that Local Parks benefit from dedicated (permanently based in the park) grounds maintenance and management staff with responsibility for security. Therefore a fundamental change of perspective with regards to provision, maintenance and management, including security, is required.

6.5.47 It is recommended that focus must rest on engendering community ownership, protection and use. This can only be achieved by engaging with local communities and offering them opportunities to be involved in design (where possible), matters of improvement and ongoing management and maintenance.
6.5.48 While it is recommended that a typical Local Park will contain a LEAP, the effectiveness of this type of play provision must be weighed against the potential of greater provision of naturalised environments that encourage more creative play and potentially have a wider appeal. This potential must feature in any future discussions with local communities regarding improvements to their Local Parks.

Overview

6.5.49 Specifically, it is recommended that each Neighbourhood, District and Sub-Regional Park should contain a formal, equipped play area commensurate with the significance of the park that it is situated within. In this respect, the usual minimum requirement for a Neighbourhood Park would be the inclusion of a play area meeting the NPFA NEAP standard; a District Park would contain facilities that exceed the NEAP standard; and a Sub-Regional Park will contain facilities that exceed those to be found in a District Park. The provision of such facilities will reinforce the role of respective parks in terms of their position within the park hierarchy.

6.5.50 From the above hierarchy we can therefore establish a quantitative Local Standard for Parks of 2.35 ha per 1,000 population. It should be noted that the apparent uneven distribution between Stoke and Newcastle shown in Table 6c is due to the fact that in establishing a quantitative local standard, the proposed accessibility standard must be considered as well as the size of the population.

6.5.51 In the case of North Staffordshire, although Stoke has a population 2.5 times larger than urban Newcastle, its geographical area is less than twice as large as Newcastle, i.e. Newcastle’s urban population is less dense. Therefore, if the accessibility standard is to be maintained, Newcastle will necessarily need more facilities per head of population.

6.5.52 The identified accessibility standards are considered reasonable but the following should also be taken into account when scrutinising the recommended standards:

- There are other green spaces, not identified as fitting into the Park hierarchy, that could be considered to perform the role of a park on a very local level
- This strategy recommends the completion of a comprehensive greenway network to allow safe, off road travel to the Parks within the hierarchy, particularly Sub-Regional and District Parks
- This strategy recommends the introduction of youth and play workers to make proposed facilities more accessible to a greater breadth of young people
- There needs to be good public transport links to the parks listed in the hierarchy, particularly Sub-Regional and District Parks
- There is a need to encourage healthy activity and exercise particularly by encouraging walking to parks offering the greatest range of facilities and recreational opportunity.
- The need to balance choice with the need to keep visitor numbers within respective sites comparatively high
- A pragmatic consideration of available funding both capital and revenue and current circumstance
- There is a need to provide parks of sufficient significance and impact to contribute to wider economic, social and environmental regeneration within the conurbation
- A focus towards quality as a priority over quantity of provision
- Encouraging community cohesion
- The recommended local standards are long-term ambitions
6.6 Play Facilities

Overview

6.6.1 The NPFA 6 Acre Standard has guided play space provision for many years (see Appendix C). However, PPG17 now encourages local authorities to create their own local standards. So, whilst the NPFA still advocates the use of their recommended minimum standards, particularly with regards to new residential development, there is no obligation for any local authority to adopt them either in part or in full.

6.6.2 There are a number of practical difficulties associated with the NPFA Standards, particularly with regards to their broad-brush nature, but they do provide a useful starting point in terms of identifying appropriate local play standards. Hence, NPFA play standards have informed the basis of the local play standards recommended by this strategy, but they have not dictated them.

6.6.3 The NPFA has developed a framework for classifying the type and size of play areas and the Table 6d is an adaptation of Appendix D of the Six Acre Standard document (with the addition of the walking speed column), summarising this classification of play areas.

Table 6d: Summary of Appendix D of the Six Acre Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Walking Distance</th>
<th>Radial (Straight Line) Distance</th>
<th>Walking Speed</th>
<th>Minimum Size Activity Zone</th>
<th>Nearest Dwelling</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LAP (Local Area for Play)</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>100m</td>
<td>60m</td>
<td>1m per second</td>
<td>100 m²</td>
<td>5m from activity zone</td>
<td>Small, low key games area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP (Local Equipped Area for Play)</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>400m</td>
<td>240m</td>
<td>0.8m per second</td>
<td>400 m²</td>
<td>10m from activity zone</td>
<td>At least 5 types of equipment, small games area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play)</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>1000m</td>
<td>600m</td>
<td>0.66m per second</td>
<td>1,000 m²</td>
<td>30m from activity zone</td>
<td>At least 8 types of play equipment, opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.4 The NPFA recommends a minimum standard of outdoor space for children’s play of 0.8 hectares per 1000 people (see Appendix C). It should be noted that the ratio is based on the total population figure, not on the number of children. The recommendation is to achieve 0.8 hectares of children’s playing space by providing LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs in locations based upon walking time and providing the balance as casual playing space within areas of amenity open space.

6.6.5 A LAP is a small area of open space specifically designated and laid out for young children (up to six years of age) to play close to where they live. Located within a walk time of one

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minute from home the LAP provides essential play opportunities for toddlers and young children in locations that are overseen by parents, carers and the local community. The space within a LAP should be designed to encourage play and social interaction but there should be no fixed equipment as this may encourage older children to use the area and displace the designated age group. The Activity Zone should be a minimum 100m² and when the buffer zone of 5m around the Activity Zone is included, the minimum size of a LAP is 400m². **Appendix C** lists the main characteristics of a LAP.

6.6.6 A LEAP is an open space that is designated and equipped for children of early school age (four to eight years old). Play equipment within a LEAP is an important part of the attractiveness of such spaces. However, children do not need play equipment alone but require space around those items of equipment for other games and to ‘let off steam’. Such areas need to be located within a walking time of five minutes from home. The Activity Zone should be a minimum 400m² and when the buffer zone of 10m around the Activity Zone is included, the minimum size of a LEAP is 1600m². **Appendix C** lists the main characteristics of a LEAP.

6.6.7 A NEAP is a site that is designed and equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children too. Located within a walking time of 15 minutes from home the NEAP is the largest of the three types of outdoor play facility and is able to address specific needs that cannot be met within a LAP or LEAP. A NEAP can be subdivided into two distinct parts; the first comprising a range of playground equipment, the second, a hard surfaced area for ball games or wheeled activities such as roller skating, skateboarding or cycling. It is necessary for the two parts to be in the same site and linked. The Activity Zone should be a minimum size of 1000m² and when the buffer zone of 30m around the Activity Zone is included, the minimum size of a NEAP is 8500m². **Appendix C** lists the main characteristics of a NEAP.

**Calculation of Requirements based on NPFA Play Standards**

6.6.8 The NPFA recommend:
- An overall provision standard for children’s outdoor play space of 0.8 ha per 1000 population;
- A recommended minimum size of play facility (in terms of LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs); and
- Straight line walking distances for each type of facility (catchment areas).

6.6.9 However, they do not give a definitive guide to the breakdown of their overall standard. Having said this, given the populations of each authority it is possible to calculate the total area of children’s play space required to meet NPFA recommendations concerning total amount of outdoor children’s play space:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>NPFA Recommendation per 1000 people (ha)</th>
<th>Total Area Required to meet NPFA Recommendation (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>240,636</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>192.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>98,056</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>78.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>338,692</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>270.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.10 The NPFA stress the importance of providing facilities within recommended walking distances, where the most frequent, and therefore closest to home, are small areas for
younger children. Less frequent, and more likely to be further away, are larger areas for older children. However, in terms of both Stoke-on-Trent and the Newcastle study area it would be unfeasible to reconcile the NPFA recommended total area of provision with recommended minimum play area sizes and associated straight line walking distances. If NPFA recommended walking distances are applied to the study area, four times the number of existing NEAPs are required and virtually ten times the number of existing LEAPs.

6.6.11 In addition, when the NPFA requirement for LAPs is calculated using this method the total area required for play facilities in the case of Stoke is brought up to two and half times larger than the area reached by multiplying the 0.8 ha per 1,000 population standard by the size of the population and over three times larger in the case of Newcastle. The calculations for, and explanation of, this is shown in Appendix D.

6.6.12 These calculations demonstrate the impractical nature of the NPFA standards, particularly in relation to the provision of LAPs, which exceed the 0.8 ha per 1,000 population standard on their own. However, discounting LAPs, it is clear that both authorities have a shortfall in the number of equipped play areas (LEAPs and NEAPs), as shown in Table 6f below, when compared to the NPFA Standards:

### Table 6f: Equipped Play Areas – NPFA Requirement v Audit Provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stoke Provision identified in Audit</th>
<th>Current Stoke Provision</th>
<th>Stoke Provision required by NPFA</th>
<th>Newcastle Provision identified in Audit</th>
<th>Current Newcastle Provision</th>
<th>Newcastle Provision required by NPFA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.13 It is clear that attempting to meet this prescribed shortfall would present a considerable challenge. However, it should be recognised that there is no obligation for any Local Authority to adopt the NPFA standards in full; NPFA recommendations provide guidance only and it is for Local Authorities to create local standards based on local circumstance. In fact, the NPFA recognise that, in practice, many local authorities are currently unable to meet the standard.

6.6.14 Furthermore, the practicalities and potential consequence of meeting the NPFA standards in full could be questioned. The provision of such a large number of equipped facilities, particularly LEAPs, in both local authorities lessen the potential for children’s play to facilitate community cohesion and inclusion as effectively as compared to the provision of a smaller number of facilities that draw from a wider population. However, it is recognised that provision must be sufficient to ensure that local communities have equipped play areas in reasonable proximity to their homes.

6.6.15 The provision of such high numbers of facilities, particularly LEAPs, could lessen the impact on encouraging healthy activity particularly in the form of walking as compared to the provision of a smaller number of facilities that draw from a wider population. Again, it is recognised that equipped areas must be within a reasonable walking distance from homes and should also be supplemented with non-equipped, informal or casual play space.

6.6.16 In order that these facilities are perceived to be safe places to visit, they need to be well used. The provision of such a large number of play facilities could dissipate use and ensure that each facility receives comparatively less use than if a smaller number were provided. It may also impact on levels of use of the conurbation’s parks, impacting on the
potential success of these important green spaces. In addition, the cost to provide and maintain such a large number of fixed play facilities would be prohibitive.

6.6.17 Ultimately, the NPFA recommendations take little account of new directions in children’s outdoor play including the creation of playful spaces / landscapes that encourage creative and imaginative play without the need for fixed equipment. The NPFA standards are, by definition, broad-brush national standards that must be moderated to take local circumstance into account.

Meeting the Challenge

6.6.18 It would be extremely difficult to make up the calculated shortfall in both LEAP and NEAP provision in both authorities in the short to medium term and, furthermore, the practicalities of meeting the NPFA standards in full, particularly with regards to LEAP and LAP provision should be questioned. The provision of such a large number of small spaces in both local authorities might do little to bring the wider community together. In effect, meeting the NPFA recommended provision standard in full could considerably reduce the potential positive impact of children’s play on social cohesion as well as create an extremely large number of small, difficult and costly to maintain spaces.

6.6.19 It is essential therefore, that local standards are created that balance the need to provide local children’s play facilities with the need to bring communities together and encourage health activity and exercise, particularly through walking. It is essential that a situation that may impact negatively on social cohesion or discourage healthy activity be avoided.

6.6.20 Informal / casual play space (essentially a LAP) can take the form of any open area of green space within, for example, a Park that provides an area for casual play without equipment. On this definition, a large proportion of space in a Park is informal play space. Therefore, it is questionable how much further space should be provided specifically as a LAP and this should be considered in attempting to meet the challenge.

A Local Standard for Play Facilities

6.6.21 From consultation, it is clear that the community is particularly concerned about a perceived (and actual, based on NPFA recommendations) lack of play facilities for older children and teenagers (i.e. NEAPs). The Household Survey has shown that 75% of respondents felt that there was insufficient provision for teenagers / young people and the top 5 most requested improvements included more children’s play facilities.

6.6.22 Therefore, it is crucial that a significant improvement in the provision, accessibility and quality of play facilities is achieved in establishing a Local Standard. Appendix D outlines how a local standard has been calculated. The outcome of this calculation is summarised in Table 6g below.

6.6.23 These walking speeds, and therefore radial distances, have been calculated based on the NPFA walking times, and the walking speeds extrapolated from them. The chart below shows how, as walking time is increased, so walking speed decreases. From this, for any given walking time, a walking speed can be deduced and therefore a radial distance calculated (by multiplying the walking time by the walking speed).

Table 6g(i): Baseline Local Standard for Play Facilities by Calculation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEAP</strong></td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>600m</td>
<td>0.66m per second</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>70.17 ha</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAP</strong></td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>240m</td>
<td>0.8m per second</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>82.55 ha</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LAP</strong></td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>60m</td>
<td>1m per second</td>
<td>8,255</td>
<td>330.20 ha</td>
<td>4,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Standard</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEAP</strong></td>
<td>21 min</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>0.64m per second</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39.47 ha</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEAP</strong></td>
<td>9 min</td>
<td>400m</td>
<td>0.74m per second</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>29.72 ha</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LAP</strong></td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>110m</td>
<td>0.92m per second</td>
<td>2,456</td>
<td>98.24 ha</td>
<td>1,306</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6.24 In order to calculate how many facilities were needed in each Authority the following calculation was used:

\[ \text{No. Facilities} = \frac{\text{Total Area of Authority}}{\pi r^2}, \text{where } r = \text{the radial distance} \]

6.6.25 The total area of play space these facilities provide can then be calculated by multiplying the number of facilities by the minimum size calculated for each type of facility in paragraphs 7.5.5, 7.5.6 and 7.5.7 above.

6.6.26 This approach has its limitations in that it is based on the geographical size of the Authority and not the population but, in light of a lack of guidance as to the breakdown of their play standard from the NPFA, this approach provides a robust calculation on which to set initial targets for numbers of play facilities. The limitation primarily lies in the fact that the population of an Authority will not be spread evenly across its area, with some parts having virtually no population while others need more facilities than the accessibility standard would suggest because there is a dense population. However, where a geographical area does not require a facility, of which there will be several around the edge of the urban area, these facilities can instead be placed in the most densely populated areas, usually in the inner urban core.
6.6.27 Table 6g(i) shows the numbers of facilities the proposed Local Standards for Play would provide across the two Authorities if they were fulfilled. However, it should also be noted that a NEAP would also perform the role of a LEAP. Therefore, in practical terms when implementing the proposed standard, Stoke and Newcastle will in effect provide 232 and 124 LEAPs respectively (these figures are the total number of NEAPs and LEAPs in each Authority). This will reduce the LEAP radial distance to approximately 360m, which is an 8-minute walking time at 0.75m per second.

A Local NEAP Standard

6.6.28 All NEAP facilities will generally be located in Sub-Regional, District or Neighbourhood Parks and so the numbers of NEAPs provided should ultimately match the number of parks provided. However, it is recommended that the 71 NEAPs to be provided across the conurbation vary in size and significance to match the park in which they are located. These NEAPs will be different from the standard size of NEAP described in the NPFA standards. Those in Neighbourhood Parks will have 11 items of play equipment rather than the standard 8 in order to be able to perform a dual function as both a NEAP and LEAP and those in District or Sub-Regional Parks will be even larger, providing a minimum of 14 items of play equipment, to reflect their role within a strategic facility.

6.6.29 The application of the 800m straight line travelling distance will create an appropriate level of provision given the high priority given to teenage provision within the Household Survey and Community Workshops.

6.6.30 In order to remove some further barriers to the use of the proposed network of NEAPs, it is recommended that more imaginative ways to encourage use and increase the perceived safety of the parks in which they are located are introduced. Such actions could include:

- A safe walk to play scheme initiative
- Mobile Play Teams
- The storing of play equipment within parks for use by play and youth workers
- The completion of a network of pedestrian greenways that will provide safe access to most parks in which NEAPs are provided.

6.6.31 The Parks & Gardens section of this chapter points out that it is questionable as to whether Neighbourhood Parks can ever meet the expectations of the community as expressed through the Household Survey and Community Workshops without a fundamental change of perspective with regards to provision, management and maintenance. Therefore, without this fundamental change it is unlikely that the NEAPs located within Neighbourhood Parks will ever present maximum benefit to the communities that they serve.

6.6.32 Change is required and it is recommended that focus must rest on engendering community ownership, protection and use. This can only be achieved by engaging with local communities and offering them opportunities to be involved in design (where possible), matters of improvement and ongoing management and maintenance.

6.6.33 It is also recognised that many existing NEAPs have been allowed to fall into an unsatisfactory condition, particularly within Stoke-on-Trent. To address this situation, it is recommended that Life-Cycle planning is introduced by the City Council into play provision (the Borough Council already take this into account). It is recommended that each NEAP is given a maximum life cycle of 10 years after which it should be replaced or refurbished. This will ensure that these important facilities remain up to date and appealing to young
people. Therefore, it is imperative that both Authorities accommodate this requirement when calculating developer contributions from residential development.

**A Local LEAP Standard**

6.6.34 If NEAPs are to be located in Sub-Regional, District and Neighbourhood Parks, then LEAPs should be located in Local Parks and other green spaces such as areas of green space within new housing estates. Indeed, it is likely that the inclusion of a LEAP within a green space may be a determining factor in it being recognised and accepted as a Local Park by the local community.

6.6.35 It is recognised that Local Parks with LEAP provision cannot be considered to have the same strategic impact as Sub Regional, District or Neighbourhood Parks. However, they do provide an important recreational facility at a local level. When combined with the provision of LAPs, they will provide play space in close proximity to homes (within 400m) and will help ensure that residential areas present a pleasant and attractive environment.

6.6.36 As with Neighbourhood Parks, it is questionable as to whether Local Parks can ever meet the expectations of the community as expressed through the Household Survey and Community Workshops without a fundamental change of perspective with regards to provision, management and maintenance. Therefore, without this fundamental change it is unlikely that the LEAPs within will ever present maximum benefit to the communities that they serve. It is recommended that, as with Neighbourhood Parks, focus must rest on engendering community ownership, protection and use.

6.6.37 In practical terms, the provision and maintenance of LEAPs will impact on the respective authorities’ ability to maintain a high quality network of NEAPs. It is therefore essential that an appropriate balance be struck. In this respect, local emphasis and priority has been given to creation of play facilities that include provision for teenagers (NEAP facilities).

**A Local LAP Standard**

6.6.38 Notwithstanding the fact that the conurbation has an abundance of green space that can perform the function of informal / casual play space, it is still necessary to specifically set-aside a proportion of land specifically as LAPs. The Local Standard identifies a total of 98.24 ha in Stoke and 52.25 ha in Newcastle should be set-aside as LAPs. This is based on an accessibility standard of 110m radial distance.

6.6.39 In reality, the direct application of this standard would still result in a plethora of very small sites across the conurbation, a somewhat unsustainable situation in financial and maintenance terms. Therefore, there is an argument to be made for reducing the number of LAPs, particularly in light of the fact there are many other green spaces that perform a similar function (for example, open, grassed space in a park serves the same informal play function).

6.6.40 Therefore, it is proposed that the accessibility standard for a LAP / green space that provides informal play space be increased to 220m but that the total amount of space set aside specifically as LAPs remains the same. This will result in fewer, but larger LAPs and many sites suitable for this function will already exist as under-used and poor quality amenity space and these are generally in locations where there are not parks with plenty of informal play space. This compromise ensures that the conurbation still provides an acceptable quantitative provision of informal play space by a combination of specified LAPs.
6.6.41 In addition, it is recommended that informal / casual green space should be provided as part of new residential development in the form of a LAP at a frequency based on this straight line walking distance of 220m (a walking time of 4 minutes using NPFA walk time calculations). These sites should provide a minimum useable area of 400m² (including active area and buffer zone) but they may be significantly larger to enable efficient maintenance.

6.6.42 It is also recommended that LAPs and other green spaces within residential developments be carefully designed to maximise their potential to provide some element of semi-natural space close to resident’s homes. Buffer zones should be planted to enable local residents to experience natural scent, colour and texture.

6.6.43 The recommended level of provision will ensure:

- That there is some green space in very close proximity to where people live
- Children have somewhere to play and socialise in close proximity to their homes
- That the potential for children’s play to facilitate community cohesion and inclusion is maximised
- That the potential to create a high quality network of equipped facilities is not compromised
- That new residential development presents a pleasant and attractive environment through the inclusion of green space and planting
- That the current levels of casual / informal play space is taken into account

6.6.44 While it is difficult to precisely quantify the amount of informal play space in green spaces of other functions (e.g. within Parks), this Strategy will identify a series of amenity green spaces across the conurbation that could be retained to provide LAPs and, in so doing, meet this quantitative standard for LAPs.

**The Output for Play Facilities**

6.6.45 Only counting NEAPs and LEAPs, the amount of green space given over to Play facilities in the North Staffordshire conurbation (as identified by the Audit) would virtually double under the local Standard to 0.31 ha per 1,000 population, facilitating a significant improvement in provision between 2005 and 2025. Therefore, adopting the local Standard would be appropriate and sufficiently ambitious for the provision of equipped facilities.

6.6.46 When the proposed provision of LAPs is incorporated the overall Local Standard for Play provides for **0.76 ha per 1,000 population** across the conurbation, nearly meeting the NPFA standard of 0.8 ha per 1,000 population. Within Stoke, this figure reduces slightly to 0.70 ha per 1,000 population, while in Newcastle it increases to 0.91 ha per 1,000 population but this is acceptable in light of the fact that the population densities of the two Authorities are not the same. This recommended local standard for play facilities is summarised in table 6g(ii) below.
Table 6g(ii): Recommended Local Standard for Play Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NEAP</td>
<td>21 min</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>0.64m per second</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39.47 ha</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.99 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>9 min</td>
<td>400m</td>
<td>0.74m per second</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>29.72 ha</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>15.81 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAP</td>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>220m</td>
<td>0.92m per second</td>
<td>1,228</td>
<td>98.24 ha</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>52.25 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Area for Play Facilities

Local Standard for Play Facilities (per 1,000 population)

Overall Local Standard for Play Facilities = 0.76 ha per 1,000 population

6.7 Outdoor Sports

6.7.1 In addition to recommending standards for play provision, the NPFA Six Acre Standard includes recommendations regarding sports and particularly playing pitch provision. In common with play, PPG17 now encourages local authorities to create their own local outdoor sport standards. So, whilst the NPFA still advocates the use of their recommended standards there is no obligation for any local authority to adopt them either in part or in full.

6.7.2 There are a number of practical difficulties associated with the NPFA Standards but they do provide a useful starting point in terms of identifying appropriate local outdoor sports standards. Hence, NPFA standards have informed the basis of the local outdoor sports standards recommended by this strategy but they have not dictated them.

6.7.3 The NPFA recommend a provision rate of 1.6 ha per 1000 head of population for outdoor sports. Included within this standard is a specific allocation of 1.2 ha per 1000 head of population for pitch sports and therefore an allocation of 0.4ha for ‘other’ sports, including athletics, tennis, bowls and croquet. Based on the NPFA standard it is possible to calculate the recommended total amount of sports provision required in Stoke and Newcastle:

Table 6h: Outdoor Sports – NPFA Requirement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Pitch Sport (ha)</th>
<th>Other Sport (ha)</th>
<th>Total Sport (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>240,636</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>98,056</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7.4 The Audit identified outdoor sports facilities but only identified sites (as opposed to individual facilities) and did not differentiate between types of facility. However, it still provides a useful comparison to the NPFA requirement and Table 6i below shows that both Authorities appear to fall short of the NPFA requirement, with Stoke only providing half of the requirement.
### Table 6i: Outdoor Sports – Audit Provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NPFA requirement (ha)</th>
<th>Audit Provision (unrestricted and limited access) (ha)</th>
<th>Current Provision (ha per 1,000 pop.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7.5 This figure does not include significant provision of outdoor sports facilities that are located in sites of another functional typology, e.g. bowling greens, tennis courts, MUGAs and pitches in a Park, and does not include a large proportion of pitches that are located in the grounds of schools but are informally open to the public (i.e. limited access) because the Audit identified them as within the “Institutional” typology. It also does not include the numerous Golf Courses serving the conurbation as the NPFA excludes these very large sites from their assessment of outdoor sports provision and so they have been discounted from the Audit figures.

6.7.6 While the exact figures involved cannot be calculated from the Audit data alone, the Playing Pitch Strategies produced by the two Authorities identify how many such facilities there are in each Authority (in different typologies) and where they are located (see Appendix E). This very accurate information shows that within the conurbation there are:

### Table 6j: Outdoor Sports Facilities – Playing Pitch Strategy facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. Pitches</th>
<th>No. Bowling Greens</th>
<th>No. Tennis Courts / MUGAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.7.7 Using an assumed area for each type of facility a calculation of the current outdoor sports provision in hectares can be made. The assumed areas are 0.8 ha for a pitch, 0.2 ha for a bowling green and 0.1 ha for a tennis court / MUGA.

### Table 6k: Outdoor Sports Facilities – Existing Provision (ha)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NPFA Requirement:</th>
<th>Existing Provision:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pitches (ha)</td>
<td>Non-Pitch facilities (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoke</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Creating Local Standards – Pitches

6.7.8 It is essential that local standards are created that are appropriate to need and demand within the conurbation. Both Local Authorities have produced Playing Pitch Strategies and the recommendations of these have been accommodated within this strategy.

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9 This is based on a rough average figure of a variety of types and sizes of pitch and includes some area for ancillary facilities directly associated with the pitch.
6.7.9 The City of Stoke-on-Trent Playing Pitch Strategy summarises the current provision of playing fields in Stoke-on-Trent as follows:

- There is currently an excess of football senior pitches in the North and Central areas that will not be used up by 2011
- There is a lack of senior football pitches in secure community use in the South of the City
- There are too few junior pitches in secure community use now, and this will become a greater problem in the longer term, particularly in the Central and South areas
- There is an approximate balance in the supply and demand for mini pitches
- The quality of football pitches is poor, and many sites have inadequate or no changing, car parking and fencing
- Overall across the City there is a need to provide up to four new cricket pitches with ancillary facilities to meet demand up to 2011
- The quality of hockey synthetic pitches is good and no additional facilities are required at current levels of demand
- The rugby clubs are all located in or close to the southern boundary of the City, with no clubs in the north, a situation that should be addressed

6.7.10 The City of Stoke-on-Trent Playing Pitch Strategy also provides recommendations regarding the total number of pitches required by type and size to the period 2011. From this, it is clear that the required changes will have little overall impact on the amount of outdoor sports pitches that are required within Stoke-on-Trent. A total additional provision of 2.5 ha equates to 0.01 ha per 1,000 population. However, it is clear that the actual types of sport pitches provided will change.

6.7.11 It is recommended, therefore, that the existing overall pitch provision standard of 0.78 ha per 1,000 population be provided within Stoke-on-Trent, but that the Playing Pitch Strategy determines the type of pitch provision. It is also recommended that in terms of developing pitch facilities within Stoke-on-Trent, focus be given to:

- Improving the quality of existing pitches
- Improving the quality of changing facilities where they exist
- Creating good quality changing facilities where they do not exist but are required

6.7.12 Where demand for pitch facilities is not being met, rather than create new pitches, attention is first given to the potential to use existing pitches that currently offer only limited or restricted use or convert existing pitches for use from one sport to another (e.g. redundant senior football pitches being converted to use for rugby).

6.7.13 The Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Leisure Needs Assessment & Playing Pitch Strategy 2006 summarises current provision of playing fields in Newcastle as follows:

- Borough-wide – there is currently a surplus in sports pitch provision to meet current demand, especially for senior football, although there are local deficiencies. Recommendation is to maintain current provision of pitches, redistribute and improve quality, re-designate some senior pitches to junior and mini-soccer and focus improvements on multi-pitch sites.
- Knutton/Cross Heath – rationalise and relocate current provision (4 senior pitches – no ancillary facilities) to provide high quality, grouped playing pitch facility with changing/parking and 2 senior + 3 mini-soccer pitches + STP
- Silverdale – need for additional senior (1) and junior (1) pitches. Improve quality of existing junior pitch.
6.7.14 Therefore, as with Stoke, the overall quantitative provision of pitches in Newcastle will not change so the existing provision of 0.98 ha per 1,000 population will remain.

6.7.15 The existing provision of 0.78 ha per 1,000 population in Stoke-on-Trent and 0.98 ha per 1,000 population in Newcastle works out at a combined provision of 0.83 ha per 1,000 population. Given that neither Authority is currently seeking to increase quantitative provision, this figure will be adopted as the Local Standard for pitch outdoor sports.

Creating Local Standards – Non Pitch Sports

6.7.16 The City of Stoke-on-Trent ‘Strategy for Sport and Active Recreation’ concerns the period 2002 to 2007. Therefore, work has recently begun to reconsider and renew this strategy. The new Sports and Active Recreation strategy for Stoke-on-Trent will be the lead strategic document in determining what ‘other’, non-pitch sports are required within the City, where they are required and how best to provide them. This bespoke Sports and Recreation strategy will take account of the implications of existing school provision, potential extended school provision, significant plans for building schools for the future, and the implications of the forming plans for a Sports Village as part of the University Quarter regeneration initiative.

6.7.17 Until the Sports and Active Recreation Strategy is complete, the question of the required amount or type of ‘Other’ outdoor sport provision cannot be resolved, nor can the question of how best to provide it. Therefore, it is recommended that the ‘Other’ Sports local standard should equate to current provision. This equates to a local provision standard of 0.06 ha per 1,000 population for the time being. It is recognised that the proposed ‘Other’ sports local standard will need to be revised in line with standards subsequently determined by the bespoke, Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, when adopted. The Sports Strategy is currently under review to ensure it complies with PPG17 requirements and to take account of emerging asset management reviews.

6.7.18 In terms of Newcastle-under-Lyme, the ‘Leisure Needs Assessment and Playing Pitch Strategy 2006’ produced detailed action plans, the implications of which are:

Borough-wide
- Bowling Greens – supply currently meets demand. Recommendation is to maintain current provision of greens and improve quality.
- Tennis Courts – deficit in current provision. Recommendation is to maintain current number of sites and seek to increase this longer term, although facility usage decline must be improved before new provision is made, and improve quality.

Knutton/Cross Heath
- Bowling Greens – retain or relocate bowling green to maintain current provision.
- Tennis Courts – retain or relocate 4 tennis courts to maintain existing provision. Improve quality. Potentially locate at grouped playing field facility and dual-use as MUGA.

Silverdale
- Bowling Greens – maintain current provision and improve quality.
- Tennis Courts – maintain current provision and improve quality.
6.7.19 The existing non-pitch provision of 0.06 ha per 1,000 population in Stoke-on-Trent and 0.08 ha per 1,000 population in Newcastle works out at a combined provision of 0.07 ha per 1,000 population, which will form the Local Standard for non-pitch sports.

Overview

6.7.20 When the pitch and non-pitch outdoor sports facilities are combined this creates an overall Local Standard for Outdoor Sports facilities of **0.9 ha per 1,000 population**. This existing level of provision appears generally sufficient, even though it is substantially lower than the NPFA requirement. The Household Survey, Community Workshops and other consultation with sports organisations in North Staffordshire support this conclusion as they conclude that the people of North Staffordshire consider that there are already sufficient outdoor sports facilities in the conurbation.

6.7.21 The NPFA accessibility standard for pitch sports (**1.2km radial distance**) will also be adopted as a Local Standard. A further note in relation to access is how accessible the sites themselves are. Some are in private, non-Local Authority ownership or are on school sites and therefore are limited, or even restricted, access. Therefore, a further aim of the Local Standards for Outdoor Sports is that 50% of these facilities should become fully unrestricted and the rest should be at least limited access.

6.7.22 There is also a need to improve quality, which will in turn increase the carrying capacity of the pitch stock and enable it to meet future increase in demand. The qualitative improvements to be carried out will reflect the actions identified in each Authority’s Playing Pitch Strategies and should be in line with the qualitative standards outlined in Table 6 below.

6.8 Semi-Natural

6.8.1 When considering this typology, the Audit shows that the conurbation as a whole (and both the Authorities individually) exceeds the identified national standard, with a current provision of 2.4 ha per 1,000 population (2.2 ha per 1,000 population in Stoke and 2.8 ha per 1,000 population in Newcastle). The ANGST model identifies that half of the standard should be Local Nature Reserves and while the current provision of Local Nature Reserves in the conurbation as a whole falls just short of the required 1.0 ha per 1,000 population, Stoke slightly exceeds this and it is Newcastle that has a deficit of Local Nature Reserves (0.6 ha per 1,000 population).

6.8.2 The lack of Local Nature Reserves in Newcastle could be made-up by converting some of the “other” semi-natural green space in the Borough to Local Nature Reserves. There is a significant amount of “other” semi-natural in the Borough due to the presence of four large semi-natural sites (between 30 and 90 ha in size).

6.8.3 Given that the conurbation is performing generally well when compared to the quantitative national standard for semi-natural green space, it is recommended that the Local Standard should focus on increasing the amount of Local Nature Reserves and improving the quality of existing semi-natural green space. As such, it would be appropriate to adopt a Local Standard that improves upon the national standard.

6.8.4 Further to this, the role of green space in mitigating against climate change should also be considered. Research undertaken by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) indicates that (based on
data from 1960 to 1991) Urban City Centres have the highest maximum surface temperatures and woodlands the lowest. Adding green cover reduces the maximum surface temperature, whilst decreasing green cover increases it, with the greatest temperature effect demonstrated in areas with little green.

6.8.5 Furthermore, it is believed that adding 10% green cover reduces maximum temperatures in high and low density residential areas by 2.2°C and 1.2°C respectively, whilst decreasing green increases them by 2.7°C and 1.4°C respectively. Under the 2080s High Emissions Scenario this moderating effect is further enhanced with predicted temperature increases of 8.2°C in town centres where green cover is reduced by 10%.

6.8.6 In the case of drought, where grassed areas dry out and stop providing an evaporative cooling effect, rivers and canals become the coolest urban morphology type and therefore have a role to play in creating pleasant and useful open spaces in the City’s future green space configuration.

6.8.7 However, the above findings do not, apparently, show the important effect of trees in providing shade, particularly at midday. Research undertaken in Manchester Parks by UKCIP and EPSRC suggest that mature trees can reduce hard surface temperatures by 15.6°C and mown grass by 13.2°C. Even semi-mature trees can reduce temperatures in mown grass areas by 7.5°C.

6.8.8 In addition, levels of green cover have also been shown to significantly influence levels of surface water run-off. Trees in particular are effective at reducing levels of run-off, which are likely to increase due to greater intensity of rainfall under future climate scenarios. Of particular interest is the effect on run-off of development of derelict or disused land for high-density residential use. Under 2080 high scenarios, development of derelict or disused land for this purpose can generate increased levels of run-off in excess of 150% of current levels. Careful consideration will be required to manage this increased run-off to counter the fact that for four months of the year many soils will be short of water for plants, with this problem expected to begin to occur as early as the 2020s.

6.8.9 Green space can be used to effectively moderate temperatures in urban areas including residential and town centres. For this reason it is important to conserve and manage what green space exists and to enhance it where possible, for example through the use of green roofs or greening large paved areas. Trees, particularly those with large canopies, have a particular role to play. Green space also has a role to play in controlling surface water run-off, although this is likely to be limited to areas where infiltration to the ground is possible and suitable, or where SUDS schemes can be developed to store water and moderate its release over time.

6.8.10 Semi-natural green space also has a significant role to play in increasing biodiversity and encouraging wildlife to thrive in urban North Staffordshire. A report carried out for Natural England, Sustainability West Midlands and RENEW in 2006 identified:

“That there are a wide range of benefits that accrue from biodiverse green infrastructure including: the provision of amenity resources, zero carbon transport corridors, wildlife habitat and linkages, pollution control, sustainable urban drainage, amelioration of the urban heat island effect, mitigation of the impacts of climate change, and improving energy efficiency” and “that these benefits have a direct relationship with the aims of providing sustainable communities and of RENEW … RENEW could act as a pathfinder with respect to biodiverse green
Therefore, it is clear that the creation of more semi-natural green space will aid mitigation against the impacts of climate change, has a role to play in increasing biodiversity and will make North Staffordshire a more attractive and sustainable place to live. To achieve this increase in the proportion of the semi-natural typology, it is recommended that amenity space be converted to semi-natural and that a greater content of semi-natural space be included in the conurbation’s parks. Such action should only be implemented after close and clear consultation with local communities. In order to engender community ownership, protection and input, it is essential that the local community understand the benefits of semi-natural green space and seeks (or will accept) its provision.

There are significant amounts of amenity green space across the conurbation (682 ha or 2 ha per 1,000 population) of which fourteen sites are between 10 and 50 ha in size. Some, or part of some, of these spaces may be required for conversion to play space or new Parks, particularly those with NEAPs and LEAPs on, but this will only be a limited proportion of the amenity space.

Therefore, this strategy recommends that the remaining amenity space should, where possible and appropriate, be converted to semi-natural green space. This would have the dual impact of increasing semi-natural green space provision (and all the positive environmental and social impacts this brings with it) and potentially attracting community input. By replacing amenity green space, which is generally just an area of grass that regularly needs mowing, with more interesting and varied semi-natural space, it may be possible to attract community interest and direct input with regards to design, maintenance and management. This ultimately has the potential to reduce the maintenance burden on the Authorities, which would no longer be required to cut as much grass and, if community ownership and protection can be engendered, remove as much litter or fly tipping. This conversion to semi-natural should be particularly encouraged in urban areas where there is currently a lack of semi-natural space, if this would not prejudice development proposals.

In summary, there are several reasons for increasing the provision of semi-natural green space:

- To further enhance the “green” character of the conurbation;
- To improve the lives of the community of North Staffordshire;
- To encourage more habitats for wildlife in the urban area;
- To facilitate the planting of more trees to help reduce air pollution;
- To make a contribution toward reversing climate change;
- To create a green space function for non-functional amenity space;
- To help grow community confidence and capacity; and
- To reduce the maintenance burden.

A Local Standard for semi-natural green space of 3.60 ha per 1,000 population, of which 1.30 ha per 1,000 population should be Local Nature Reserves, would help to achieve these aims.

In terms of accessibility, the ANGST standard (300m radial distance) leaves very large gaps and yet the quantitative provision is generally over and above the national standard (cf. Map 6a in Appendix F). This suggests that the accessibility standard is perhaps unrealistic because it does not take into account the fact that semi-natural sites are often quite large and only in certain locations (such as the edge of the built-up area). Therefore, there is a

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need to moderate the accessibility standard for semi-natural green space in North Staffordshire.

6.8.17 If the Local Standard were to be set at a 600m radial distance, this would synchronise the quantitative and accessibility standards in light of the nature of semi-natural space (cf. Map 6b in Appendix F), particularly in light of the fact that there will be more semi-natural green space than currently exists if the local standards are achieved. This still might leave gaps in urban areas but this is unavoidable given the nature of urban form. This should be addressed by ensuring that Green Corridors provide direct access to semi-natural sites within or near to the urban areas and out to the countryside.

6.8.18 It would be unhelpful to break down the provision of semi-natural green space into a hierarchy but it should be recognised that there are spaces that will serve a wider function than others, attracting more visitors from further away. It may be helpful to highlight such “District” spaces and ensure that they are up to the required quality standard to cope with the greater number of visitors. Potentially, creating Local Nature Reserves on these sites may serve this purpose, while ensuring all parts of the conurbation has reasonable access to a Local Nature Reserve.

6.9 Green Corridors

6.9.1 There is currently 0.5 ha per 1,000 population of Green Corridors across the conurbation, although this figure drops by nearly half in Newcastle. There is no national standard for quantity of Green Corridors and it would be somewhat misleading to attempt to set a quantitative standard for this typology, as PPG17 states:

“The need for Green Corridors arises from the need to promote environmentally sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling in urban areas. There is no sensible way of stating a provision standard”.

6.9.2 While it would be inappropriate to set a quantitative standard for Green Corridors, it is important to ensure that the existing Green Corridor Network is protected, enhanced and added to where it would be reasonable to do so and that the entire urban population has access to it. Therefore, accessibility, quality and connectivity become more important and, in the case of North Staffordshire, the vast majority of the conurbation has access to existing Green Corridors, as evidenced in the Audit. This would suggest that the existing provision is sufficient, although the quality and connectivity may need improving in places. The potential for implementing such improvements is demonstrated by the successful Greening for Growth programme.

6.9.3 The national accessibility standard for Green Corridors is a 1.2km radial distance. When this is applied to the current provision, the national standard is met in all but a few, small areas (Map 6c in Appendix F). However, despite this, the connectivity of the existing Green Corridor Network could be questioned, particularly as to whether the Green Corridors truly connect the inner urban areas of the conurbation out to the edge of the conurbation and the countryside. Therefore, while an accessibility standard is helpful, connectivity is a better measure of a successful Green Corridor and the Green Corridor network will need to be expanded in order to achieve this.
6.10 Qualitative and Connectivity Standards

6.10.1 The Audit showed that site quality is a key challenge for funding and management of green space in North Staffordshire. The Household Survey and Community Workshops confirmed this. Consultation identified five key themes that need to be addressed in terms of green space quality. These are:

- Fear of crime
- Standards of maintenance
- Litter and vandalism
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of provision for young people

6.10.2 The following qualitative local standards focus on these issues as a priority for change and also apply national standards for green space delivery (as identified in the documents in paragraph 7.3.1) to ensure that sites are managed to satisfy the needs of existing and future local residents.

Table 6m: Qualitative Local Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL OVERALL PROVISION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ All district level green spaces should be improved using Green Flag criteria as a benchmark, although this does not necessarily mean that they should apply for this award, even while aiming to achieve it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ One local green space, managed by local/voluntary groups, in each local authority should seek to achieve a Green Pennant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ All local level green spaces are to be easily accessible, provide seating, incorporate adequate lighting and appear welcoming to all members of the community. Maintenance levels and methods should be appropriate to the nature and use of the site, ensure longevity of site equipment and should eliminate litter and dog mess. Sites should incorporate sustainable use of materials and waste and engage the local community in its design and management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ All sites to be designed in accordance with ACPO “Secured By Design” principles (Appendix G).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARKS &amp; GARDENS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ The general quality standards for overall provision will be particularly relevant for parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ District parks should promote social cohesion by appealing to a range of age, disability and community groups within its catchment area. District parks should also include space for community events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The landscape design and management of parks should promote local landscape and urban distinctiveness so that parks across the conurbation display a variety of hard and soft landscape treatments. Each park should create a stimulating environment, appropriate to its use and location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Maintenance schedules for all parks should be derived from an adopted management plan, which seeks to sustain and enhance the park’s landscape character, taking into account particular requirements for different vegetation types.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Play areas should be designed in accordance with the ACPO “Secured by Design” principles for play areas (see Appendix G) and NPFA qualitative requirements (see Appendix C).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ The location of new play areas will need to be integrated with masterplans for adjacent sites to maximise natural surveillance of the play facility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- All play areas should exclude dogs, include robust equipment suitable for use by children with special needs and provide an emergency telephone or indicate directions to a public telephone within 300m walking distance.
- A NEAP should be at least a total of 0.85ha including a 1,000m$^2$ active zone and a site buffer. 8 types of play equipment appropriate for children between 8 and 14 should be provided with opportunities for ball games and wheeled activities. A NEAP should include a minimum of 8 seats, 6 cycle racks and 3 litterbins.
- Where provision for teenagers is to be included, this should be located separately to enclosed play areas and in areas with natural surveillance. A robust shelter and seating should be provided and where this is provided as part of NEAP provision, some form of active facility should be included. This may take the form of a skate park or MUGA, but this should be agreed following consultation with young people in the site’s catchment area.
- A LEAP should be at least a total of 0.16ha including a 400m$^2$ active zone and a site buffer. 5 types of play equipment appropriate for children between 4 and 8 should be provided with a small, flat games area. A LEAP should include a minimum of 6 seats, 4 cycle racks and 2 litterbins.

### OUTDOOR SPORTS
- A range of outdoor sports facilities should be provided across the conurbation based on an assessment of local demand (based on the requirements of local clubs and consultation), within the site catchment area, taking into account the anticipated population growth or decline.
- Larger, Playing Field sites with two or more pitches should include adequate changing facilities and toilets.
- All sites should be designed to allow adequate drainage, lighting, boundary treatments, gradients and orientation appropriate to the facility provided.
- Site boundaries should be visually permeable, access should be secure and maintenance should ensure that the site is free of litter and free of any damage that may cause injury.

### SEMI-NATURAL
- The inclusion of Local Nature Reserve within the quantitative standard for semi-natural sites will assist in improving the general quality of semi-natural sites across the conurbation.
- New or enhanced semi-natural sites should seek to extend locally relevant habitats with reference to the Staffordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and protect and enhance those that already exist.
- Public access and footpaths should be clearly signposted and habitat/species interpretation clearly presented.

### GREEN CORRIDORS
- Green Corridors should have a sufficient number of entry/exit points to facilitate a high level of use and to promote community safety.
- Surfacing should be provided that is sensitive to local landscape character but also robust enough and well drained to allow regular use through all seasons.
- Gradients within green routes should not exceed 1:20 and should be wide enough to allow at least one cycle and a pedestrian to comfortably pass.
6.10.3 As well as each green space being of a certain quality, it is important that all green spaces across the conurbation should form part of a coherent green network which provides:

- Connections for public access
- Connections for managed habitats
- Connections to neighbourhoods

6.10.4 Green spaces should be designed and improved to ensure that contiguous links are provided with at least two other accessible green spaces. Links may be provided by connection to green corridors, along green routes or through local street greening. These links should be part of the publicly accessible green space network. Where it is proven to be impossible to provide such accessible links, non-accessible green links may be used, such as private gardens, green space in other non-public ownership or green buffer zones on development site boundaries.

6.10.5 Such connections also serve an important role for connecting habitats and enabling the movement of wildlife through a built-up area. Therefore, these connections need not always have to accommodate humans; they may only have a role for wildlife. This role is crucial to the effort to increase biodiversity across North Staffordshire and facilitate the growth of wildlife populations.

Table 6n: Connectivity Local Standards

| PARKS & GARDENS | Parks and gardens should be located so that they can be safely accessed from and be linked to pedestrian and cycle routes.  
|                 | They should not be located in visually isolated sites and at least one boundary or entrance point should be adjacent to and signposted from a through road. |
| PLAY            | Play areas should be located so that they can be safely accessed from all houses within their catchment area, ideally with no lines of severance (e.g. busy roads, railways, major industrial sites) intersecting routes. Where this is not possible safe crossing points must be provided.  
|                 | Buffer zones to play areas should be designed and managed so that they contribute positively to the surrounding green network and should be planted to enable residents to experience natural scent, colour and texture. |
| OUTDOOR SPORTS | Outdoor sports areas should be located so that they can be safely accessed from all houses within their catchment area, ideally with no lines of severance (e.g. busy roads, railways, major industrial sites) intersecting routes. Where this is not possible, safe crossing points must be provided.  
|                 | Buffer zones to outdoor sports areas should be designed and managed so that they contribute positively to the surrounding green network. |
| SEMI-NATURAL   | A series of contiguous wildlife spaces and corridors should be established across the conurbation.  
|                 | Existing and proposed semi-natural sites should, therefore, be designed and managed so that habitats are linked through the incorporation of locally relevant habitats along wetlands and waterways, vegetated corridors and site buffers, green routes and transport corridors.  
|                 | This standard will need to be applied not only to the provision of semi-natural spaces but also to the landscape proposals for developments that will provide these links. |
| GREEN CORRIDORS | A contiguous network of green routes should be established across the conurbation.  
|                 | Green routes should form part of a coherent and connected network that uses existing linear features such as old railways and waterways. |
Where green routes cannot be linked using existing linear features, existing green spaces or roads with a speed limit of 30mph or less should be used. Where this is the case, routes should be clearly signposted.

Green routes should link key destinations including town centres (e.g. Newcastle and Hanley); district centres (e.g. Burslem and Chesterton) and the wider countryside.

6.11 Summary of the Local Standards

6.11.1 Table 6p below summarises the Local Quantitative & Accessibility Standards and while these are ambitious standards that will improve the provision of green space across North Staffordshire it should be stressed that they will require little, if any, brand new green spaces because the extra provision will be created by converting existing green space, such as amenity space, into the necessary typologies and by creating multi-functional green spaces. Alongside this, quality and connectivity play a vital role in creating robust Local Standards and in achieving the Vision, Aims and Objectives that this Strategy has set out to achieve.

6.11.2 The following chapter sets out the strategic framework that will provide a context conducive to achieving these Local Standards in urban North Staffordshire and will highlight a series of Actions that need to be undertaken to ensure this. Chapter 8 will set out site-specific Actions under each typology that will enable the Local Standards to be met on the ground in the green spaces themselves.

Table 6p: Summary of Local Quantitative & Accessibility Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Local Quantitative Standard</th>
<th>Local Accessibility Standard</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Gardens</td>
<td>2.35 ha /1,000 pop.</td>
<td>District Park = 1.2km radial distance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N'hood Park = 800m radial distance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Local Park = 400m radial distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Facilities</td>
<td>0.76 ha /1,000 pop. (of which 0.31 is equipped play areas)</td>
<td>NEAP = 800m radial distance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LEAP = 400m radial distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LAP = 220m radial distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports</td>
<td>0.9 ha /1,000 pop. (of which 0.83 is pitch sports)</td>
<td>1.2km radial distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Natural</td>
<td>3.60 ha /1,000 pop. (of which 1.30 is a Local Nature Reserve)</td>
<td>600m radial distance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 Delivering the Strategy

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The previous chapter has recommended a suite of quantitative and qualitative local standards for functional green space. This chapter introduces the complementary steps necessary to ensure the broader issues that need to be considered in delivering a green space strategy are taken into account. This chapter and Chapter 8 will also outline how provision of the functional green space typologies will be improved and managed in order to ensure that the Local Standards will be achieved to deliver a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits both locally and sub-regionally.

7.1.2 In forming the recommendations within this chapter, it has been recognised that:

- Green space plays an important part in helping both local authorities achieve their obligations as defined within respective Local Area Agreements, Community Strategies and Corporate Plans
- In order for green space to make a significant contribution across a range of agendas, a strategic approach to its future planning, development, maintenance and management is required

7.1.3 However, before commencing an explanation of the recommended approach to delivering the local standards a restatement of the benefits of green space is useful as these are at the core of what this Strategy seeks to achieve:

- **Play**: an activity that is crucial to many aspects of a child’s development
- **Health**: both physical and mental
- **Crime**: where good design and better management will help reduce fear of crime associated with some urban areas and their green spaces
- **Social Cohesion**: by offering common ground and an accessible meeting place to bring communities together
- **Connectivity**: where well planned and designed green space allow people to move around more easily by foot or bicycle
- **Biodiversity & Environment**: by offering people the opportunity to feel close to nature, by playing a role in the absorption of pollutants and impacting positively on climate change
- **Economic**: where a high-quality public environment can have a significant impact on the economic life of urban centres whilst making neighbourhoods more desirable

7.1.4 In order to help accrue the range of benefits listed above the delivery of the strategy will involve the following strands of action:

- Planning, providing, enhancing, managing and maintaining green space that has a strategic role and which can contribute towards the wider regeneration of the conurbation
- Planning, providing, enhancing, managing and maintaining green space at a more local level to meet local need
- Creating an environment within which local people can become more involved in green space planning, enhancement, maintenance and management
- Protecting and developing green space now and into the future by increasing environmental sustainability, promoting bio-diversity, supporting wildlife and providing mitigation for climate change and public awareness of all these factors
- Improving levels of resource and coordination of application of resources to raise standards and increase levels of community satisfaction

7.1.5 In common with many areas across the nation, this strategy has identified that the primary issue within the conurbation concerns quality, distribution and mix of green space, not overall quantity. In response, emphasis must therefore be placed on:
- Making the best of what we already have by changing the use of existing green space
- Making changes based on a clear context that can be defended, explained and understood
- A pragmatic response to community aspirations
- Changing or rationalising overall provision to help raise overall quality
- Focussing and arranging resources and activities to achieve maximum benefit

7.1.6 The quantitative elements of the above five factors are primarily addressed in the next chapter by a combined impact of the individual actions identified in order to meet the Local Standards. However, the more qualitative factors, such as community aspirations and maximising resources are covered in this chapter.

7.1.7 The likely success or failure of any green space is not solely a function of the quality of the physical elements within it. Whilst these are essential elements in creating and improving green spaces, location, accessibility, management and maintenance are also key elements.

7.1.8 Good green spaces depend on the three key strands of development, maintenance and management that all must be appropriate to the function of the green space in question. There are many ways of achieving each strand but it is essential that all three are balanced and coordinated. The failure of any of these elements will impact significantly on the likely success of any green space.

7.1.9 It is important that residents have access to a hierarchy of green spaces that offer a wide range of facilities that are suitable for their needs. It is therefore important that sites are created and improved so that a co-ordinated and clear hierarchy of local, neighbourhood, district and sub-regional green spaces are accessible to all residents. This hierarchy will be delivered by the application of the local standards to green space planning in the next chapter.

7.1.10 The remaining sections of this chapter will deal with overarching principles to be applied to the planning, provision, enhancement, maintenance and management of green space.

7.2 Accommodating Improvements to both Strategic and Non-Strategic Green Space

7.2.1 In formulating the recommendations within this strategy, it is apparent that there are two basic categories of green space within the conurbation: that which has a strategic role and that which does not. Both types of green space are important and it is essential that means are found to develop both accordingly.

7.2.2 Therefore, it is recommended that the planning, provision, development, maintenance and management of these two categories of green space should be approached in a manner...
appropriate to their role. As such, two mutually inclusive approaches are required to fully realise the potential of both categories of green space.

**Overarching Approach to Strategic Green Space**

7.2.3 The intention of this strategy is to ensure that green space provides maximum benefit for the people of urban North Staffordshire. Fundamentally, all green space should be designed to provide community benefit and engender community input.

7.2.4 In order to achieve this, it is must be recognised that, whilst all green space has the potential to provide benefit to local communities, some have the potential to benefit and accommodate audiences drawn from much wider catchment areas. With this comes the potential to create visitor attractions of significant impact sufficient to add benefit to and draw benefit from other regeneration initiatives and projects.

7.2.5 The conurbation has the benefit of a number of green spaces that given appropriate levels of investment (both capital and revenue) can individually contribute towards the wider regeneration of the conurbation.

7.2.6 This exciting potential rests mainly with the conurbation’s largest and most multi-faceted parks. These green spaces are distinct in that they have a collective impact on the quality of life evident within the conurbation and they also have a unique, recognisable and individual impact.

7.2.7 Whilst community input is required for both strategic and non-strategic green space, the level of local community influence on the nature and direction of development, enhancement, provision, management and maintenance must vary according to the type of green space in question.

7.2.8 In this respect, to realise the full potential of strategic green spaces it is essential that their primary purpose be recognised as providing benefits to the whole population within the City and Borough, rather than meeting very local need (although it is recognised that this will also be achieved in any case). The recognition of the wider role of these parks must be reflected in the way that they are planned, provided, enhanced, managed and maintained.

7.2.9 This unique aspect and potential requires that their development be closely aligned with other strategic and wide-ranging regeneration initiatives and programmes. In terms of development focus, the primary issue associated with these green spaces should be how best they can be developed, managed and maintained as green space to add benefit to, and draw benefit from, other regeneration activities and programmes.

7.2.10 In essence, whilst the development of these sites will provide considerable benefit for communities in close proximity, this is not their primary focus; their focus is to provide benefits for all communities across both local authorities. The impact of the regenerative focus of the development of these green spaces must be reflected in the way that they are planned, provided, enhanced, managed and maintained. However, it is essential that community input, ownership and protection be engendered and secured for all green spaces.

7.2.11 Physical (capital) improvements to strategic sites will be dependent to a large degree on the ability of both authorities to secure sufficient and appropriate levels of external grant aid. The strategic nature of these green spaces dictates that the process to secure external grant aid must be reconciled with and become part of wider regeneration programmes.
7.2.12 For these green spaces to be successful they must provide both high quality facilities and demonstrate high quality maintenance, management and security. This will be essential in order that these green spaces perform their full functional potential, but it will also be a likely condition of any significant grant obtained to achieve improvements to such sites.

7.2.13 In considering the planning, provision, enhancement, maintenance and management of strategic green space, the success of such sites will depend to a great extent on the quality of their physical enhancement and associated high levels of maintenance and management. In order to achieve this it must be recognised that:

- The appropriate, high impact, physical enhancement of these strategic sites will require very significant sums of money and complex project management arrangements
- These parks must display the highest quality of appropriate grounds maintenance and therefore require skilled horticultural input
- These parks must provide a very high quality visitor experience and have the potential to act as individual strategic business units and must therefore be professionally managed as such
- Security within these sites should preferably include uniformed and recognisable permanent presence within the parks

7.2.14 Therefore, the key to the successful planning, provision, enhancement, management and maintenance of strategic green spaces will be the extent to which the process can be coordinated and synchronised with wider regeneration initiatives and the extent to which effective professional services can be secured and implemented.

7.2.15 Community input is important within this process but the overarching approach to strategic green space must be based on the application of efficient professional services with adequate resources and levels of expertise.

7.2.16 Hence, it is recommended that both local authorities ensure that opportunities presented by green spaces with the potential to perform a strategic role are realised by a dedicated team specifically responsible for the coordination and delivery of their planning, development, maintenance and management.

7.2.17 Each team within each authority must at a minimum have clear links and involvement with the new North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership and be centrally located to ensure that the development of strategic green spaces are coordinated and based on meeting need assessed at City or Borough level, rather than that solely required at a local level. This will also allow strategic green spaces to be developed in order that they complement each other, rather than directly compete.

7.2.18 It is also recommended that these green spaces should be developed in such manner that their full commercial potential be realised and that they ultimately operate collectively as a single, strategic business unit.

**Overarching Approach to Non-Strategic Green Space**

7.2.19 In contrast to the limited number of green spaces with the potential to have a strategic role, the conurbation requires a large number of green spaces to serve very local communities.
Collectively, these green spaces have an impact on quality of life, but individually their impact is more noticeable at a very local level.

7.2.20 The local focus of these green spaces increases the need for much greater local community input in their planning, provision, enhancement, maintenance and management. The success of these green spaces does not exclusively rest with the provision of professional services, but rather on the extent to which the local community become involved.

7.2.21 Therefore, in terms of planning, providing, enhancing, managing and maintaining green space at a more local level to meet local need, it is recommended that both local authorities identify appropriate mechanisms that will allow close, clear and constructive dialogue with local communities with the aim of securing a sense of community ownership and protection for individual, local green spaces. In doing so, the time and resources required to work with the community in a meaningful fashion to deliver and sustain improved local green spaces should not be underestimated.

7.2.22 It is also recommended that appropriate coordination mechanisms be identified within each local authority to ensure equity of provision, affordability (in terms of capital and revenue costs), and the sharing of best practice across all local green spaces. This coordination function must be fully aware of all pertinent local standards and ongoing and planned strategic green space provision and enhancement.

7.2.23 Therefore, it is recommended that two key actions are taken to facilitate the involvement of the community in the planning, provision, enhancement, management and maintenance of their local green spaces:

- A detailed assessment and review of the current approach to community involvement and input, its strengths and weaknesses. The outcome should highlight the current ability of each local authority to support local groups both at present and in the future and the potential for change.

- Appropriate and effective mechanisms should be created through which community and volunteer input and training can be encouraged, supported and co-ordinated within each local authority, if required. This should include the creation of a database of available skills and interested individuals.

7.3 **Key Elements in Creating Good Green Space**

7.3.1 Good green spaces do not just happen, they are the product of concerted and planned action and they require resources to develop, manage and maintain. Quality green spaces should respond to the aspirations of their users and the wider interests in the area.

7.3.2 There are 10 key elements set out in the following section that must be appropriately addressed in order to deliver the overall green space strategy. These are as follows:

- Leadership and Partnership
- Empowering Local Communities
- Consultation
- Creating greater use of green space through good design
Promotion and marketing

Focusing on the health benefits of green space

Maximising the advantages of cultural heritage, tourism, arts and the historic environment

Addressing crime and safety

Sustainability

Making best use of resources, including smarter working and finding alternative uses for some sites

7.3.3 Further to these, the following chapter will discuss another key element in creating good spaces when it specifies how the local standards will be delivered in relation to the provision of typologies of green space in urban North Staffordshire. Also, Chapter 12 will further discuss making better use of resources when it covers maximising income generation and the negotiation of developer contributions as part of “Resourcing the Strategy”.

Leadership and Partnership

7.3.4 This strategy sets out how and where green space should be improved, but detailed actions must be agreed, coordinated and delivered. Traditionally, both local authorities have owned, provided, managed and maintained the vast majority of green space within the conurbation. However, it is clear that this model has fallen short in terms of meeting community aspirations. Therefore, change is required.

7.3.5 It is recommended that change should capitalise upon the multi-faceted nature of green space. Green space comes in all shapes and sizes and is used for a multitude of purposes. Therefore, the successful provision, maintenance and management of green space should not rest with a single local authority but should rather be a product of the combined efforts of a number of organisations, agencies and groups from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

7.3.6 It is recommended that both local authorities harness the power of partnerships. It is therefore essential to identify ways to ensure that the right mix of partners be involved in the formation and delivery of green space projects. To achieve this, appropriate partners must be identified and all partners must have a shared vision that unites all their respective interests, irrespective of each Partner’s specific role.

7.3.7 It is recommended that green space ‘Champions’ should be nominated within each local authority, together with appropriate forums to allow all relevant parties to come together to help deliver quality provision in a prioritised and coordinated manner.

Empowering Local Communities

7.3.8 This strategy has been devised to meet community aspirations as expressed through the Household Survey and Community Workshops. In order to implement effective change to any green space it is vital that the community are involved, where a full range of ages, cultures, needs and aspirations are taken into account.
7.3.9 This strategy recommends that the development, management and maintenance (including security) of strategic green spaces be based primarily on the application of dedicated, revenue-based resources, whether provided direct by either of the two local authorities, nominated partners or contractors.

7.3.10 It is not considered reasonable to expect local communities to dedicate sufficient resource to undertake all the varied roles and duties required to combine to produce successful strategic green spaces. This does not preclude community input into helping define the nature of change within these sites or their management, particularly with regards to defining, monitoring and scrutinising the quality of services and activities provided. However, high levels of community ownership, protection and direct input are key to the ongoing success of non-strategic green spaces.

7.3.11 Across the urban conurbation of North Staffordshire there are many examples of the effectiveness of community involvement in green space regeneration. In many cases, the improvement and development of green space has depended on the active and extensive involvement of local communities to create high quality spaces that meet the specific needs of the local community and secure the required levels of external grant assistance. Without their input, external grant aid would probably not have been secured or, at least, would have been considerably reduced.

7.3.12 It is recognised that local decision-making in regards of local green space development will capture local knowledge and history and engender local enthusiasm and action. This will help to deliver appropriate improvements and will help sustain these improvements by building-in community ownership and protection at an early stage of project development.

7.3.13 Past successful enhancements and community consultation associated with the production of this strategy clearly demonstrate that communities within the conurbation are willing and able to assist in the process of green space development and improvement. Therefore, it is recommended that this firm foundation should be built upon and expanded to include the enhancement of more green spaces together with their management and maintenance.

7.3.14 Whilst community input should initially be sought with regards to the development or enhancement of local green space (potentially with the associated need to secure external grant aid), the ultimate ambition should be to create an environment in which local communities can take full control of their local, non-strategic green space.

7.3.15 In all cases, the aim should be to grow community confidence and capacity and, whilst it is appreciated that not all communities will be able to meet the ultimate goal outlined above, each should be encouraged and supported to progress as far as their skills and ambitions will take them. It should also be noted that all community groups will require adequate levels of support at all levels of what should be considered a ladder of community involvement (a learning and experience curve from initial interest through to full management and responsibility).

7.3.16 This essential support and encouragement can be provided either directly by the local authorities, through partnership arrangements or via both but ultimately, effective empowerment of communities will depend upon the application of adequate resources to support, encourage and grow community capacity and confidence. Therefore, it can be seen that this requirement for community involvement sits well within the new devolution agendas that have been implemented in the respective authorities.

7.3.17 However, it must be recognised that change (development, improvement or disposal) must be based on need and that need must be considered in terms of defined and agreed standards, both quantitative and qualitative. Therefore, a distinction must be drawn...
between what a community might want and what should reasonably be provided. In this respect, it is vitally important that when engaging with communities, both local authorities and NSRP are cognizant of the requirement to manage community expectation within the context of agreed priorities and local quality / quantity standards as defined within this strategy, and the need to coordinate actions across the respective local authorities.

7.3.18 It is also essential that all community groups that are formed to help improve local green space are fully representative. Careful attention must be given to ensure that traditionally hard to reach sectors of the community (young people and people from BME communities particularly) are represented adequately.

Consultation

7.3.19 Effective public consultation is an essential element in empowering local communities and is fundamental to the planning, design, enhancement, management and maintenance of any green space. Part of the process to produce this green space strategy has been to identify the views and opinions of the community, volunteers and professional colleagues. However, this information represents only a snapshot in time.

7.3.20 This green space strategy outlines a long-term direction for the conurbation’s green space and it is essential that the collection and assessment of a wide range of views and opinions, particularly that of the community is considered an ongoing and essential process.

7.3.21 It is essential that fundamental data is collected, analysed and used to inform decision-making. Growing accountability within local government has increased the need to ensure that all aspects of its activity are subject to performance assessment. Therefore, it is recommended that, at a minimum, routine information is regularly collected and assessed concerning level of use, visitor opinion and levels of satisfaction particularly regarding maintenance, management and security. This will allow both authorities to build up comprehensive profiles that will greatly assist in ensuring effective projects, activities, and services are devised and implemented. It will also greatly assist in providing monitoring evidence to external funding agencies.

7.3.22 In undertaking one-off consultations for specific development projects it is recommended that the potential of events within green space be capitalised upon. Events that attract a large number of both regular and ad hoc visitors can provide rich sources of consultation information.

7.3.23 This strategy also recommends that that close attention be paid to how green spaces can best be delivered to excluded people, including children and young people, ethnic minority groups, those with poor basic skills, those with health and disability issues and those living in the most deprived communities.

7.3.24 It is essential that all consultation efforts are coordinated within each of the local authorities to avoid ‘consultation fatigue’ and to maximise the effectiveness of the consultation process. It is also essential that consultation be entered into with a full expectation to deliver change. In most cases, consultation that is not followed by appropriate action or delivery will damage the ability of both local authorities and the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership to have a meaningful relationship or dialogue with the communities they serve.
Creating greater use of green space through design

7.3.25 Good green spaces are the product of concerted and planned action across a number of disciplines, but perhaps most fundamentally through good design. Quality spaces should respond to the aspirations of their users and the wider interests in and links to the area and this must inform the design of any green space.

7.3.26 Design quality underpins the effective enhancement, creation and care of all green space. All design briefs for non-strategic green space should be developed in close consultation with the local community and site users. This process should be used to help manage community expectation and will help ensure that when complete, any given project will meet local community need as closely as possible and benefit from built-in, community ownership and protection.

7.3.27 Whilst the creation of well-structured design briefs is essential for the enhancement of strategic green spaces, design briefs must be informed by local communities rather than dictated by them. These design briefs must focus on the wider needs of the local authorities and the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership.

7.3.28 The onus will rest with regeneration partners to create design briefs and designs that the community will support because they will ultimately provide exceptional, imaginative, high impact and high quality visitor destinations across the conurbation that are accessible to all the community; green spaces that are beyond the community's usual expectations.

7.3.29 Care must be taken to ensure that the design of strategic green spaces is not undermined by potential low levels of community expectation produced by their experience of many years of poor quality service. Rather, it will be for professional officers from a range of partners to open the community's collective eyes with regards to what can be achieved.

7.3.30 This strategy recommends that all opportunities be pursued for green space be designed in such manner as to protect natural resources, to help manage the effects of climate change and to improve the local, natural environment. The design process must be cognitive of implications on future maintenance and management.

7.3.31 However, in the case of strategic green space particularly, it is essential that design aspirations are not undermined by what may be considered a present or current lack of maintenance and management resources. The starting point for any green space project and design brief should be what needs to be done, not what is affordable to maintain and manage at the present time. However, no scheme should be implemented until both capital and revenue issues have been addressed in full.

7.3.32 It is recommended that both local authorities adopt the basic principles advocated by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce in their report ‘Improving Planning, Design, Management and Maintenance’. These are:

- **Sustainability** – individual spaces should be sustainable in terms of function, durability and maintenance. This will also contribute to the sustainability of local areas

- **Diversity and variety** – a network of green spaces, and where possible, each individual space should provide a variety of experiences and functions

- **Identity and character** – green spaces should celebrate local distinctiveness, heritage, community, materials and architectural styles; each space should enhance the appearance of the local environment and should please users and passers by
Accessibility, permeability and navigation – green spaces should provide excellent pedestrian and cycle routes. Visitors should be able to find their way around, using defined routes, clear entrances and exits, and landmarks.

Structure and hierarchy – spaces should have a clear, coherent structure that recognises and reconciles different uses and integrates the site with surrounding area.

Activity and animation – spaces should promote a mixture of activities, both organised and informal, with places to sit, walk, play, participate in sport and more.

Comfort and shelter – green spaces should provide plenty of sheltered, sunny places to sit and walk.

Quality of materials and ‘whole life’ costing – the use of quality, long-life materials will create a sense of care and value, and will often be more cost effective in the long-term.

Biodiversity – opportunities should be taken to promote biodiversity within and across networks.

Nuisance and crime – good design must recognise local problems and can help prevent anti-social behaviour and crime. Good design will help create places that people want to use and respect, with natural surveillance to deter misuse.

Promotion and Marketing

7.3.33 Critical to the success of the conurbation’s green space is the need to ensure that it is well used. To encourage greater use, green space needs to be attractive, accessible, sustainable and fit for purpose. However, the existence of high quality green space in itself is not sufficient to guarantee its use.

7.3.34 The quality of many green spaces within the conurbation has been below an acceptable standard for a considerable time. While there have been many significant improvements to many significant green spaces, particularly through the Greening for Growth initiative, the Household Survey showed that many respondents were not aware of these improving green assets.

7.3.35 Poor quality provision over a considerable period of time is likely to have caused many people to stop using the conurbation’s green space. Therefore, without effective promotion and marketing, these people are unlikely to be aware of actual or planned improvements and hence, it is unlikely that they will return to use the conurbation’s green spaces, even when improved to more closely meet their needs and expectations. It is therefore recommended that marketing and promotion become integral elements of all green space enhancement projects.

7.3.36 Promotion and marketing should concern what facilities, activities and services are on offer and what events are programmed. The design and content of any material produced must be appropriate to the target audience. It is also recommended that all marketing and promotion activity be brought together in an overarching communications plan and marketing strategy that takes advantage of local information sources across the conurbation.
7.3.37 The communication plan must recognise that a lack of awareness of green space can sometimes result from an unclear function, a lack of interpretation relating to the particular value of a green space (such as a rare habitat) or a lack of appreciation as to how green spaces can be used. The communication plan must include an assessment of information about green spaces and their actual and potential users. It must identify where more interpretation is required.

7.3.38 It is essential that the conurbation’s green spaces are equally accessible to the whole community. Encouraging use of the conurbation’s green space involves providing appropriate facilities and services and ensuring that the community are aware of them. The Household Survey demonstrated that the majority of green space use is for passive recreation. The provision of contemporary activities with appropriate marketing and promotion will be a powerful tool with which to attract other users back in to green space.

7.3.39 It is recommended that particular focus be given to the provision of activities that:
- Benefit health directly
- Aim to raise environmental awareness
- Are aimed at young people
- Encourage fully representative use of green space

7.3.40 It is therefore recommended that a comprehensive activities programme be developed, coordinated and implemented across the conurbation’s green spaces. This programme must be designed and implemented with a range of appropriate partners and be designed with the above aims in mind.

Focusing on the health benefits of green space

7.3.41 It is essential that the health potential of green space be realised. The region’s green spaces offer both direct and indirect health benefits. Indirect health benefits include using green space to combat the impact of pollution or offering a peaceful oasis in which to relax. More specific and direct health benefits may need to be planned and delivered, for example, the provision of demarcated walking circuits within parks, high quality play, sports and recreation facilities and team sport or fitness classes.

7.3.42 Green space traditionally provides formal facilities such as sports pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens. However, the definition of sport has widened in recent years and now includes extreme sports such as skateboarding and BMX. It is essential that the conurbation’s green spaces reflect and accommodate these changing sporting needs and are developed accordingly.

7.3.43 It is recommended that effective health orientated provision should have partnership at its heart, where the potential of partnership organisations, such as local Primary Care Trusts and interest groups, to spearhead new activities is realised. Such activity can be exemplified within the conurbation by the successful input of the Stoke Association of Skateboarders into the design and management of a new, high quality skateboard facility of international standard within Central Forest Park.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, the Arts and the Historic Environment

7.3.44 The creation of high quality Sub-Regional and District Parks will form marketable asset in terms of tourism, as too could the development of a balanced events programme that offers accessible opportunities for the whole community to celebrate and experience culture and
the arts in as many forms and in as many ways as possible. These need to be linked as far as possible by the development of the green routes network across the conurbation.

7.3.45 Many of the conurbation’s green spaces already provide outdoor display space for public art and, in this respect, they provide a particularly accessible gateway to art and culture. Therefore, it is recommended that the potential for the conurbation’s green space to accommodate public art and act as an access point for cultural activities is investigated and that this process is co-ordinated across partners and includes full consideration of maintenance implications.

7.3.46 Several of the conurbation’s parks are listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It is essential that the development and improvement of these sites be tailored to ensure that, where possible, historic aspects are restored and protected. It is also essential that management and maintenance practices be considered in terms of both avoiding damage to historic aspects of these green spaces and sustaining them for future generations.

7.3.47 The green spaces listed on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens offer considerable opportunity to secure considerable amounts of grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), thereby creating significant visitor attractions in their own right. However, the bidding process is complicated and lengthy and as a consequence, so too are respective projects. It is therefore recommended that HLF grant assistance is pursued to help improve strategic parks that will form significant visitor destinations in their own right and that these assets are used to promote both green space and the conurbation.

7.3.48 It is also recommended that the tourism functions within both local authorities be appraised of recent, significant improvements to green space and all planned improvements in order that these can be fully considered in wider tourism activities and initiatives.

Crime & Safety

7.3.49 The Household Survey identified the fear of crime as one of the key barriers to the use of green space. The effects of crime and anti-social behaviour in green spaces, such as vandalism and fly tipping, also present particularly difficult problems for maintenance and management and can exacerbate the negative perception of a site.

7.3.50 During consultation, a large number of residents and stakeholders expressed the view that green spaces need to be subject to more visible policing, whether this is through liaison with local constabularies or through the establishment of a warden service. It is therefore recommended that the potential for a visible patrol of green spaces should be assessed in detail, including scale and extent of provision, cost, benefits and funding. It is recommended that such patrols be provided within strategic green space at a minimum.

7.3.51 Consideration should be given to dedicated green space patrols and security being dovetailed with other green space roles such as maintenance, thus mirroring successful models such as the ‘Parkforce’ in Leeds and the green space rangers in New York’s Central Park. The potential of partner input should be fully assessed, particularly the potential to expand successful voluntary warden operations within the conurbation.

7.3.52 The removal of graffiti, repairs to vandalised equipment and removal of broken glass and rubbish should be of utmost priority when maintaining any given green space. Staff or other resources should be organised to facilitate this work at the earliest opportunity, ideally during the entire (seven day) week, particularly in the conurbation’s strategic green spaces.
High levels of maintenance and management will help reciprocate local respect, pride and protection of green space.

7.3.53 The resolution of fear of crime and safety does not rest solely with the provision of park patrols. The most effective means by which to tackle this issue is by attracting good levels of use within the conurbation’s green space. In simple terms, the more used and more populated a green space is, the safer it will be. However, both local authorities should identify and investigate with appropriate partners, a raft of activities that can combine to impact positively on crime and the fear of crime. It is also recommended that both local authorities undertake safety audits to ensure that green spaces have clear sight lines, open vistas, and lighting where possible.

7.3.54 In response to concerns highlighted within the Household Survey with regards to fear of crime being linked particularly to the presence of young people within green space, it is recommended that both authorities identify ways to provide Youth and Play Workers within the conurbation’s green space to provide positive diversionary activities for young people. The potential for provision from the voluntary or community sector should be fully explored.

Sustainability

7.3.55 Green spaces have an important role to play in contributing to the sustainability of communities, for example in managing flood risk and urban drainage. Green spaces also have wider environmental benefits, such as enhancing bio-diversity, heat management and their potential role in providing renewable resources, such as timber, wind power and biomass.

7.3.56 Therefore, sustainability issues should be recognised as central to all green space initiatives and projects and it should be ensured that the potential to have wider environmental benefits, such as enhancing bio-diversity and heat management, are maximised.

Making Best Use of Resources

7.3.57 In order for the quality of the conurbations green space to increase (and with it increased levels of community satisfaction), the amount of resources dedicated to its enhancement, management and maintenance must also increase.

7.3.58 However, any new investment, irrespective of source, must focus on the right areas and do the right things and in the case of North Staffordshire, this is predominately enhancing and maintaining the quality of existing but poor quality green spaces (particularly strategic green spaces) rather than creating new space.

7.3.59 Additional resources can come from a range of sources, for example, additional finance (both capital and revenue) and or, provision of services from sources other than within either local authority (partners, contractors etc). However the attainment of additional resources, whether from maximising income generation or working smarter, will have little impact on green space unless it is invested back into green space development, maintenance and management. Therefore, it is recommended that any capital receipts and increased revenue accrued from green space is ring-fenced to enhance, manage and maintain green space.

7.3.60 In order to maximise resources with which to develop, manage and maintain the conurbation’s green space, this strategy recommends maximising income generation.
and **working smarter**. Maximising income generation is discussed further in Chapter 12 but Working Smarter is explored further here.

**Working Smarter – Reviewing current management and maintenance arrangements**

7.3.61 Maintenance and management presents a particular challenge in delivering and sustaining good quality green space within the conurbation. It is notable that the majority of the key issues identified by the Household Survey and Community Workshop relate to maintenance and management.

7.3.62 In January 2001, the Government appointed the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce to investigate the decline in the nation’s parks and green spaces. The taskforce concluded that there had been a considerable deterioration in the quality of parks and green spaces and that this was closely linked to a long-term decline in local authority capital and revenue funding.

7.3.63 The taskforce identified that whilst sources of capital grant aid had been made available with which to help address and reverse the decline in condition of parks and green spaces, there had been little in the way of additional revenue funding to finance the maintenance of improved green space. This situation is mirrored in North Staffordshire.

7.3.64 Therefore, the grounds maintenance functions within both local authorities face the dilemma of physical (capital) improvements to green space, with associated increased public use, without commensurate increases in management and maintenance budgets.

7.3.65 Both local authorities have budgets dedicated to the maintenance and management of green space and both sets of budgets have been reduced significantly in real terms over the last twenty years. As a consequence, maintenance operations have been dictated by what could be afforded, not necessarily what should ideally be done. With reference to the findings of the Household Survey and Community Workshops, it is evident that this level of quality is often below that which is required.

7.3.66 This issue is further compounded by the fact that this strategy recommends that the conurbation’s Sub-Regional and District Parks particularly display the highest possible quality of management and maintenance (including security) relevant to their role and function. In this respect, this standard will be far greater than that provided for many years.

7.3.67 In terms of quality standards, the Local Standards chapter has outlined general aspirations for each type of functional green space. However, the detail of these standards must be worked up into meaningful management plans. In determining appropriate levels of management and maintenance, it is recommended that maintenance and management schedules be formed as part and parcel of the creation of detailed management plans for all Sub-Regional and District Parks, as a matter of priority. These plans must clearly identify the typology and function of the green space to which it relates as well as the objectives for improving or maintaining landscape character and biodiversity on that site.

7.3.68 These plans should be drawn from an analysis of requirements for each individual strategic green space. It is recommended that local communities and users of specific facilities be involved in the creation of management plans. This process should also accommodate discussions regarding potential change, and where appropriate, the creation of new, semi-natural space within each strategic green space. The aim should be to ensure that strategic green spaces benefit from the highest quality maintenance and management (including security) of any green spaces within the conurbation, and are therefore provided with adequate maintenance and management budgets.
7.3.69 In terms of non-strategic green space it is recommended that generic management plans for sites of a given typology be used in place of individual site plans.

7.3.70 In terms of both strategic and non-strategic green space it is recommended that particular attention be given to the potential to create semi-natural space where some green spaces are redefined as meadows or heath land, due to their location, use and/or their contribution to local landscape character. This action alone could significantly decrease maintenance input in many green spaces.

7.3.71 When a maintenance regime has been identified for a site, the management and maintenance responsibilities for the site should be agreed as part of the management plan. These individual regimes can then be used to inform and rationalise maintenance operations across the whole conurbation. It is recommended that, when identified and implemented, new arrangements should be reviewed annually.

7.3.72 Efficiency savings through improved working practices will play an important role in getting the most out of the available maintenance and management budgets. Improved quality will be the product of combined effort, but in terms of identifying requirements for additional resource, the first step should be an assessment of how well existing resources are being used. Accurate maintenance costs cannot be forecast until new management plans have been drawn up. The new plans must identify an enhanced specification to that currently provided, particularly within strategic green space, and as such, will have an impact on associated cost.

7.3.73 When clear plans are produced, the amount of work can be calculated and compared to an assessment of output expected from current staffing and support levels. This process will identify whether, and if so, the scale of additional resources required to meet newly defined, appropriate levels of management and maintenance. This process must clearly identify:

- Maintenance and management funds currently available
- What is currently done
- What should ideally be done
- The costs and benefits
- What the gap is
- To what extent the gap can be filled

7.3.74 Therefore, it is recommended that each local authority scrutinise the productivity and effectiveness of existing grounds maintenance arrangements with reference to both what should be done at present and the potential to achieve what should be done in the future. As part of this process, it is essential that existing arrangements be compared to other models of provision, ranging from restructured or realigned in-house provision of services, to external provision of services by a range of partners, including private grounds maintenance contractors.

Working Smarter – Introducing Alternative Green Space Functions

7.3.75 Where it is proving difficult or economically unviable to convert some amenity space to other green space functions, potential alternative uses should be explored. Such alternatives allow for these sites to be maintained as a land bank for potential conversion to formal green space use or for future development should local populations increase or local economics change. Green space planning, enhancement, maintenance and management needs to be flexible and resilient to the scale and nature of change in urban North Staffordshire.
7.3.76 Retention of green spaces that do not directly contribute to local needs will mean that either further funding will need to be obtained for maintenance or that the overall quality of green spaces will need to be reduced, neither of which are attractive options. Hence, it will be important to consider how these alternative uses can be managed on a cost-neutral or productive basis.

7.3.77 Therefore, it is recommended that both local authorities assess, identify and implement alternative uses to non-functional green space that is not required for conversion to functional green space, or which cannot be disposed of in areas of surplus, in order to help improve the quality of retained functional green space.

7.3.78 Some opportunities for alternative uses are suggested below, though it should be noted that appropriateness would depend on a variety of factors that would need to be considered on a site-by-site basis.

**Urban Agriculture**

7.3.79 The potential exists to turn green spaces into productive gardens yielding food for local consumption. In Manchester, schemes already exist to develop two orchards in city parks. In East London (Stamford Hill), a large site has been transformed from an overgrown park to a productive vegetable garden. The ‘Growing Communities’ project in North London supplies produce from urban sites to the local community using an organic box scheme for £7/week. Many of these schemes are community-led and their benefits contribute to social objectives as well as local tables. Whilst urban agriculture becomes self-supporting, it is likely that initial set-up funding would be required.

**Urban Forestry**

7.3.80 Urban forests have been recognised as a valuable land use in supporting the green infrastructure of a conurbation. Green infrastructure benefits include shelter, air quality improvements, storm water moderation and visual screening. Urban forestry has also been used to support economic regeneration. For example, projects such as the HEYwoods on the East Riding of Yorkshire use woodland to promote investment, providing a more attractive environment for business and residential development.

7.3.81 Whilst urban forests do incur costs in terms of establishment, maintaining public safety, interpretation, vegetation management and removal of litter, fly-tipped rubbish and vandalism, maintenance costs are lower than those required for more formal uses. There is also increased scope for reducing costs further by encouraging voluntary involvement.

7.3.82 Whilst funding for a coherent and comprehensive urban forestry framework is usually readily available, it is difficult to generate a significant amount of income from this land use. Timber production is usually the only associated commercial by-product if the woodland has been created using species with the greatest potential for sale to known local markets (i.e. charcoal, firewood and fencing). The urban forest may also afford some community benefits in the form of green routes and formal and informal outdoor activities.

**Bioenergy**

7.3.83 Some sites within the conurbation may have the potential for supporting crops for biofuels. One of the most practical methods of generating biofuels would be to plant rapidly growing tree species and manage on a short rotation coppice basis. The saleable fuel would be in the form of solid wood and could be used to power local combined heat/power facilities. The coppice can also support a variety of wildlife, which can contribute to strategic habitat
networks. Alternatively, suitable species of green plants may be cultivated as energy crops. The visual impacts of such schemes can be negative and so this land use may be more appropriate for urban fringe areas, rather than those closer to the urban core.

**Bioremediation**

7.3.84 Some sites may be in an appropriate location for development or improvement as green space but may suffer from the detrimental impacts of previous industrial activity. Whilst this may deter developers from investing in a site, it may be possible to remediate the land whilst maintaining its ‘greenness’ so that the site may become more attractive for development or improvement in the future.

**Allotments**

7.3.85 While allotments have not been explicitly considered within this strategy, it is recommended that a bespoke allotments strategy should be commissioned. This is based on the fact that the current allotment stock suggests that there may be potential for rationalisation and that some allotment sites are located in prime development positions, particularly those located adjacent to green routes and waterways.

7.3.86 Therefore, a bespoke allotments strategy should investigate the potential for:

- Conversion to functional green space, freely accessible to the whole community;
- Disposal and rationalisation in order to improve the overall quality of allotments within the conurbation by concentrating on fewer, key sites;
- Land swap where existing allotment sites are developed for other purposes but replaced with new allotments in close proximity of higher quality; and
- Creation of new allotments sites on existing green space sites that are surplus to requirements.

**7.4 Creating Actions to Deliver the Strategy**

7.4.1 In order to deliver all the elements discussed in this chapter as part of this Strategy a series of Actions have been identified. These will be included in the Action Plan Programme for this Strategy. All the Actions derive from recommendations in the text above and are generally of one of two types:

- Actions that aim to establish a framework of activities that, alongside the site-specific actions required to deliver the Local Standards, will deliver the Aims & Objectives of the Strategy, and

- Actions that focus on maintenance, ensuring that the way green space is maintained in urban North Staffordshire creates high quality green spaces but makes the best use of available resources.
Proposed General Actions:

**GA1:** Establish a dedicated team specifically responsible for the planning, design, management and maintenance of Strategic Green Spaces and develop Strategic Green Spaces as a single, collective Strategic Business Unit, ensuring that all Strategic Green Spaces realise their full commercial potential.

**GA2:** Each Authority will develop a funding strategy to help deliver the Action Plan Programme by identifying the detail of how each action will be funded and how potential funding might be achieved.

**GA3:** Assess and review the current approach to community involvement and recommend how the Authorities can better support the involvement of local community groups in green space provision, particularly at a non-strategic level.

**GA4:** Establish mechanisms for the recruitment and training of community volunteers, ongoing support for them and a database of available volunteers and their skills.

**GA5:** Identify an appropriate mix of Partners to help deliver the green space projects emerging from this strategy.

**GA6:** Identify a green space ‘champion’ within the Councils for each local authority.

**GA7:** Establish ongoing review mechanisms whereby public opinion of green space across the conurbation is gained via consultation. Information to be collated should include that regarding level of use, visitor opinion and levels of satisfaction.

**GA8:** Create Design Briefs for all green spaces where they are to be significantly altered/improved. For strategic sites these should be primarily informed by regeneration partners but for non-strategic sites these should be primarily informed by the local community.

**GA9:** Both Authorities will adopt the basic principles of green space planning, design, management and maintenance advocated by the Green Space Urban Taskforce.

**GA10:** Prepare a green space Communications Plan and Marketing Strategy that seeks to promote green space across the conurbation, provide interpretation and information about green space, inform the establishment of an ongoing programme of events and activities and advises on the marketing and promotion of all green space enhancement projects.

**GA11:** Investigate the potential for the inclusion of public art and cultural activities within the conurbation’s green space and establish a Public Art & Cultural Activities Strategy for Green Space.

**GA12:** Ensure that the NSRP contributes to establishing the definitive schedule, nature and extent of all strategic green space projects (including historic parks).

**GA13:** Establish lines of communication with North Staffordshire tourism functions in order to pass on information regarding all improvements to Strategic Green Space and programmes of events and activities.

**GA14:** Explore the potential for, and implement, a scheme for the visible patrol of park sites in partnership with local constabularies and referring to successful models of funding and management.
GA15: Ensure that fly tipped rubbish, broken glass, graffiti and vandalised equipment is removed or repaired within 24 hours of a report, where possible, and at the most within 5 days of a report.

GA16: Local Authorities to undertake Safety Audits of green spaces to ensure clear sight lines, open vistas and lighting are sufficient to facilitate a reduction in crime and fear of crime.

GA17: Local Authorities to investigate potential for facilitating Youth and Play Workers within non-strategic green spaces where anti-social behaviour has been identified as a problematic issue.

GA18: Establish a commitment that any capital receipts and increased revenue accrued from green space should be ring-fenced for the purposes of enhancing, managing and maintaining green space.

GA19: Particular attention should be given to the potential creation of semi-natural green space within green spaces of other functions where their location, existing state and potential for contribution to landscape character makes it plausible and appropriate.

GA20: Produce management plans for each strategic green space and generic management plans for the non-strategic sites and review these at appropriate intervals.

GA21: Carry out an internal review of annual maintenance procedures, identifying and coordinating which maintenance tasks can be more economically carried out over larger areas and which can become the responsibility of improved multi-skilled Area Teams.

GA22: Investigate the potential for converting the identified surplus green space sites to alternative uses, including development opportunities, urban agriculture, urban forestry, bioenergy and bioremediation.

GA23: Prepare an allotments strategy for each Authority.

GA24: Investigate mechanisms for joint authority co-ordination of green space maintenance, including joint procurement and funding and the co-ordination of skills and knowledge, where appropriate.

GA25: Establish neighbourhood management arrangements as being responsible for the development, enhancement, management and maintenance of non-strategic green space and implementation of projects in accordance with this strategy.

GA26: Establish appropriate forums to allow partners to come together to help identify and deliver strategic and non-strategic green space projects.

GA27: Set up a green space information hub, which can be accessible by all those involved in the strategic and non-strategic management of green space across the conurbation that draws all the information gathered via Actions GA1-GA24 together in one location.
8. Delivering the Local Standards

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The Local Standards guide the creation, improvement, protection, management and maintenance of green space across the conurbation by setting the benchmark for what is to be achieved for each type of green space in any given area.

8.1.2 In terms of Quantity, Accessibility, Quality and Connectivity, the Local Standards enable the existing provision of green space in a given area to be assessed and identification of where improvements may be needed. As such, these Local Standards have been used to produce specific actions across all functional typologies of green space that are detailed within the next chapter.

8.1.3 In so doing, the Local Standards influence development, management and funding decisions for green space across the sub-region, providing a clear plan of action alongside the sub-regional and local spatial planning frameworks, such as the developing Local Development Frameworks for Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. However, to be of any merit, local standards must be translated into action.

8.1.4 The Local Standards help to identify areas of surplus and under-provision for each type of green space, in respect of quantity, accessibility, quality and/or connectivity. The lists of sites that will be identified within each typology in this chapter will show how each space is to be improved or modified (if necessary) and which sites need a review of their use and purpose and might potentially be put to alternative uses. Where change will occur on a site, this will be made an Action and will be included in the Action Plan Programme later in this Strategy.

8.1.5 Whilst the existing quantity of green space will remain virtually the same, some areas have an excess of functional green space, in relation to the standards, while others have significant deficits. Hence, a process of redistribution of function needs to be implemented. Multi-functional green spaces will naturally emerge as well, particularly in areas where there is a deficit (quantitatively and in terms of accessibility) of green space overall.

8.2 Parks and Play Space

8.2.1 In order to realise strategic potential and balance local need, this strategy recommends a hierarchical approach to the provision for park and play typologies, particularly. The application of the hierarchy will ensure:

- That the regenerative impact of the conurbation’s most significant green spaces are realised
- That the conurbation provides a range of very high quality facilities that fully meet the needs and aspiration of the community and which offer real recreational choice within a reasonable travelling distance
- That local people have good local green spaces in close proximity to their homes
- Equality and transparency
- Delivery, management and maintenance in the most efficient, effective and economic terms possible

8.2.2 The Quantitative and Accessibility Local Standards for Parks and Play Space set the following targets:
• A total of 880 ha of green space given over to Parks across the urban North Staffordshire conurbation (2.60 ha per 1,000 population), which is made up of:
  o 3 sub-regional facilities (2 in Stoke, 1 in Newcastle)
  o 15 District Parks (10 in Stoke, 5 in Newcastle) with all households within 1200m of a District Park
  o 53 Neighbourhood Parks (34 in Stoke, 19 in Newcastle) with all households within 800m of a Neighbourhood Park
  o 285 Local Parks (186 in Stoke, 99 in Newcastle) with all households within 400m of a Local Park

• A total of 288 ha of green space given over to Play across the urban North Staffordshire conurbation (0.85 ha per 1,000 population), which is made up of:
  o 71 NEAPs (46 in Stoke, 25 in Newcastle) with all households within 800m of a NEAP
  o 285 LEAPs (186 in Stoke, 99 in Newcastle) with all households within 400m of a LEAP
  o 182 ha of green space to be designated a LAP with all households within 240m of such a space

8.2.3 Appendix H lists the proposed Parks and their Play facilities within each Authority and each level of the hierarchy. The required numbers of Sub-Regional Facilities, District Parks and Neighbourhood Parks are met in each Authority but the number of Local Parks is not. These two typologies are grouped together here because there is significant overlap as all play facilities, with the exception of formal LAPs, will be located within a park. There is also overlap between the parks and outdoor sports typologies, with many sport facilities being located in parks, and parks and semi-natural, with significant semi-natural provision sometimes being located within a park (e.g. Parkhall Country Park), but these typologies have been kept separate in relation to delivering improvements to the different typologies.

8.2.4 The total figures (adjusted to take account of over-sized local parks) for Parks & Gardens Green Space in Appendix H show that both Authorities achieve the Parks & Gardens quantitative local standard, with Stoke having 588 ha in total (2.44 ha per 1,000 population) and Newcastle having 376 ha (3.84 ha per 1,000 population). In addition, the hierarchy is distributed in such a way as to ensure that the accessibility standard is achieved and the quality standards are achieved by requiring percentage uplift in quality where appropriate.

Sub-Regional Parks

8.2.5 In both authorities there are natural, existing candidates for the designation of ‘Sub-Regional’ Park. This designation means that the green space is of strategic importance, having the potential to impact on the whole conurbation and attract visitors from the wider sub-region. To achieve this, these parks must be of the highest quality.

8.2.6 The City of Stoke-on-Trent has established that its primary regeneration initiative is the City Centre. The magnitude of this initiative (in terms of scale and importance) is such that it will in effect determine priorities across a wide range of regeneration projects. In simple terms, regeneration projects that can contribute directly towards the future success of the City Centre (and therefore the entire City) must themselves be considered as priority projects within Stoke-on-Trent.

8.2.7 Similarly, in Newcastle-under-Lyme, the town centre is the Borough’s largest employment area and the primary focus for public and private sector investment in regeneration activity. Projects which facilitate or add value to this aim will accordingly be allocated priority. The
town centre is a key area in terms of the future social and economic well-being of the sub-region as a whole.

8.2.8 The successful regeneration of the City Centre and Newcastle Town Centre will require the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership to identify and realise existing natural advantages; unique selling points that, when realised, will help the Strategic Centres to compete with other such centres across the nation.

8.2.9 The City Centre has the benefit of two large parks located immediately to its north and south: Central Forest Park and Hanley Park respectively. In Newcastle there are three parks neighbouring the Town Centre: Brampton Park, Lyme Valley Parkway and Queen Elizabeth Park. These parks are some of the most obvious natural advantages offered by the Strategic Centres and are an essential part of their setting and character. If developed in a complementary manner (in terms of each park and the Centres themselves), these parks can significantly increase the attractiveness of the Strategic Centres as places to visit, work, shop, recreate, live or invest within. The opportunity exists to expand the ‘offer’ of the Strategic Centres through the planned and managed development of these parks: a shopping trip can be punctuated by or combined with a visit to the park; a lunch break can be enjoyed in a pleasant, natural setting away from the workplace; residents of new City Living or Town Centre accommodation without gardens need not feel deprived of green space; and an investor can feel confident that a holistic view is being taken with regards to the regeneration of the City Centre and Newcastle Town Centre.

8.2.10 From a City perspective, if developed to meet their full potential, in the light of a homogenous retail offer across the nation’s city centres, it is possible to envisage decisions to make recreational shopping visits to Stoke-on-Trent City Centre as being based to a large extent on the ability to visit either or both of Central Forest Park and Hanley Park. Two, high quality, complementary parks can form a significant unique selling point for the City Centre. In their own right, both parks can form high quality destinations, attracting large numbers of visitors. However, the synergy produced by their grouping with the City Centre will ensure the respective success of each part and the whole (City Centre). In particular, both parks offer the opportunity to host large events that can be used to attract considerable numbers of visitors to the City Centre and stimulate commercial activity.

8.2.11 This is also true in respect of the relationship between Newcastle Town Centre and Brampton Park, Lyme Valley Parkway and Queen Elizabeth Park with the latter two having the added benefit of direct links to the proposed Pool Dam waterside development site to the south of the town centre. To the west of the town centre, the proposed College redevelopment and Sports Village will provide a sub-regional sports facility on The Wammy adding another unique dimension to the town centre offer and strengthening the green corridor link from the town to Apedale Community Country Park to the west of the conurbation.

8.2.12 Without the City Centre, there would be little sense in locating and developing two significant parks in very close proximity to each other. With the City Centre, the development of both Hanley Park and Central Forest Park makes perfect sense, but dictates that they are developed in such manner that they complement rather than compete with each other. This can be achieved by further pursuing and strengthening the parks’ existing themes: the active and adventurous theme of Central Forest Park and the comparatively more passive art and performance theme of Hanley Park. This will ensure that both parks are distinctive and provide the broadest possible range of appeal. In Newcastle’s case, this complementary approach to green space around the periphery of the town centre can also be developed with a heritage based theme in Queen Elizabeth Park, an arts and cultural approach in Brampton Park and a semi-natural, linear green corridor in Lyme Valley.
8.2.13 Whilst all of these parks have a clear potential to contribute towards the success of the City Centre and Town Centre, they should contribute in a different manner. In terms of the proposed hierarchy, it is recommended that Central Forest Park be developed to fulfil the role of a Sub-Regional Park (see paragraph 8.2.14) and Hanley Park, Lyme Valley Parkway and Brampton Park that of a District Park (see paragraph 8.2.25). Queen Elizabeth Park, due to its relatively small size, could realistically only fulfil the role of a Neighbourhood Park (see paragraph 8.2.41).

8.2.14 The different designations of the parks within the proposed hierarchy recognises the difference in scale of the parks and therefore their capacity to accommodate facilities and visitors, the difference in proximity to the City or Town Centre and their different nature and heritage impacting on the scale and type of development that each can accommodate.

8.2.15 With regards to these parks, if they are to contribute fully towards the success of the Strategic Centres, it is essential that they are clearly linked to and become easily accessible to and from them. Therefore, the regeneration of the Strategic Centres must address physical and transport links between the City and Town Centre and the parks. Ideally, links should be so effective as to ensure that these elements become one, with ease of movement and therefore freedom of choice across the combined space.

8.2.16 Irrespective of the nature of further development, it is essential that the key, fundamental barriers to use of green space as identified within this strategy are addressed when developing significant parks, particularly safety (crime) issues.

8.2.17 Central Forest Park was created in the early 1970’s from reclaimed colliery land. It is of considerable size (48 ha) and has benefited from recent significant investment in new facilities (circa £1.5 million) to develop the park along an active and adventurous direction. At present, the park includes the largest outdoor equipped children’s play area in the conurbation and a skateboard facility of international standard. The park has a large, high quality car park, considerable semi-natural content (including a large lake), is dissected by two national cycle routes, has good toilet facilities, a good network of pathways, partial coverage by CCTV and, at the time of writing, will soon have a new entrance feature close to the City’s main shopping centre.

8.2.18 Public response to and level of use of the new facilities within Central Forest Park clearly highlights how this park can become even more successful with further development. The scale of this park is such that further development can and should be accommodated. It is beyond the scope of this strategy to determine what form this further development should take, but it is strongly recommended that the successful active and adventurous theme be further strengthened. Whilst, the exact form of development cannot be stated, the nature of any development can be. It must be exceptional, preferably unique and of sufficient impact to help raise the profile of Stoke-on-Trent’s City Centre at national level. In further developing Central Forest Park, it is essential that the potential to accommodate large events is fully considered.

8.2.19 In addition, the City Council also has the benefit of a large Country Park on its southeast fringe (Parkhall Country Park). This 149 ha park has little in the way of fixed play or recreation facilities, but does receive considerable use and is amongst the most visited green spaces within the City. It already has the benefit of a good quality visitor centre, small shop, conference facilities, a small golf course (of only reasonable quality), toilets and considerable car parking space. With the addition of a new range of play and recreational facilities, and particularly the creation of a new, high quality ‘animal farm’, this park can provide a unique and important dual education and recreation facility within Stoke-on-Trent, serving the surrounding region. Green issues are becoming more and more important and,
if developed appropriately, Parkhall Country Park can form an effective conduit through which to raise awareness of global and local issues in an accessible and effective manner. The potential to disseminate this important information in such a manner is a key factor in determining Parkhall Country Park’s designation as a Sub-Regional Park.

8.2.20 In terms of Newcastle, Apeda Community Country Park, which is 163 hectares in area and is managed by Staffordshire County Council, fulfils the function of a Sub-Regional Park. It is situated on the western urban fringe of Newcastle and hosts the Apedale Mining Heritage Centre as well as a network of footpath and bridleways linking the park to the open countryside to the north and west and to the Town Centre via the Wammy and proposed Sports Village to the south east. It will soon see the development of an innovative energy centre and visitor facilities to showcase sustainable building techniques and offers a range of informal recreational activities.

8.2.21 It should be noted that the conurbation also has the benefit of a significant, privately owned park that performs a Sub-Regional role. This ‘park’ (Trentham Gardens) offers a high quality and significant park setting that is, mostly, freely available to visitors. It is located on the southwest border of the City and the Borough.

8.2.22 It is recommended that the three natural candidates identified above, Central Forest Park, Parkhall Country Park and Apedale Country Park, should become Sub-Regional Parks and that this number should not be exceeded for the following reasons:

- Additional parks could dilute the total number of visitors using Sub-Regional Parks. As a consequence, each respective site could receive fewer visits than required to sustain the park.
- Additional parks could detract from the uniqueness of Sub-Regional Parks (in effect their unique selling point).
- The cost involved in sustaining additional Sub-Regional Parks is likely to be prohibitive.
- There are no other existing parks in the conurbation that display the same potential (natural advantages) to become Sub-Regional Parks as those identified above.
- The creation of completely new Sub-Regional Parks would detract from initiatives to improve existing District and Neighbourhood Parks or upgrade identified existing parks to Sub-Regional standards.
- The identified parks will complement each other rather than directly compete.

8.2.23 It is beyond the scope of this strategy to determine exactly how these parks should be developed, maintained or managed. However, as they are of strategic importance, it is strongly recommended that Management Plans are drawn up as soon as possible for the three identified parks and that this process is used to fill the fine detail of the exact content, layout maintenance and management approach applied to each and ensure that each park is of an extremely high quality. Also, it is proposed that each Sub-Regional Park will accommodate a larger-than-typical NEAP, which will have 11 items of play equipment and be approximately 1ha in size (including buffer zones) rather than the usual 0.85ha.

8.2.24 In both authorities there are natural, existing candidates for the designation of ‘District Park’. This designation means that the green space is of strategic importance, having an impact on a significant area and attracting visitors from across this area and beyond. It should therefore be of a very high quality.

8.2.25 Stoke-on-Trent has the benefit of several sites that already perform this function to some extent but with considerable room for greater cross-City use. These sites include: Westport
Lake, Hanley Park, Bucknall Park (due to the inclusion of an ‘animal farm’), and the Sub-Regional Parks (Central Forest Park and Parkhall Country Park). To a lesser extent, Fenton Park also receives citywide use due to its comparatively high content of senior football pitches.

8.2.26 In Newcastle, the sites which already perform a ‘District Park’ function to some extent are Lyme Valley Parkway, Brampton Park, Bathpool Park and Wolstanton Park and Marsh alongside the Sub-regional site at Apedale Community Country Park. The potential of these parks could be more fully realised with the appropriate level of investment.

8.2.27 Stoke-on-Trent also has the benefit of sites that may not currently provide city-wide appeal and use but have the potential to do so, given appropriate levels of investment. These sites include Tunstall Park, Burslem Park, Longton Park and Milton Park.

8.2.28 It should be noted that the history of Stoke-on-Trent as a collection of towns, prior to the formation of the City, means that the area is blessed with five very prominent ‘Town’ parks. Four of these parks (Hanley, Longton, Tunstall, and Burslem) are of heritage value and are listed on the English Heritage List of Historic Parks and Gardens as Grade 2 Parks. In this respect, these parks are exceptional within the conurbation’s required allocation of District Parks.

8.2.29 The previous section of this chapter highlighted the potential for Hanley Park to contribute towards the success of the City Centre. In this respect, the development of Hanley Park should be considered to be of greater priority than all the City’s parks, other than Central Forest Park. In addition to its proximity to the City Centre, Hanley Park has a number of other natural advantages when compared to the City’s other District Parks. The park is located on the shortest route between the City Centre and the City’s main train station, it is in close proximity to the City’s main bus station, it is very easy to access from the main A500 road that runs through Stoke-on-Trent, it is dissected by a canal that benefits from a considerable amount of recreational (holiday) use and links the park directly via a green route to many areas within Stoke-on-Trent, it is in close proximity to a number of new residential developments, including City Waterside, and forms a considerable community asset within the forming University Quarter.

8.2.30 Hanley Park has benefited from considerable, relatively recent investment (circa £2.8 million). At present, the park includes a very large outdoor equipped children’s play area (including an area for disabled children), a significant multi-sports area (including a large synthetic pitch), a good quality car park, a large lake with an impressive fountain, a good and sound network of pathways, comprehensive lighting and partial CCTV coverage.

8.2.31 In comparison to Central Forest Park, Hanley Park is smaller and is likely to be less flexible in terms of what it can accommodate in terms of new development due to the heritage status of the park impacting on formal planning matters (planning permissions / decisions).

8.2.32 However, Hanley Park (with the Cauldon Park annex) has the potential to form a green asset that can increase the attractiveness of a visit to the City Centre. The difference in nature of the two parks (Central Forest Park and Hanley Park) should be seen as an advantage, allowing their complementary development and each park should be developed in such a manner as to play to their respective strengths: Hanley with its very formal, traditional layout and Central Forest Park with its greater informality. For example, the less hectic nature of Hanley Park offers opportunities in terms of accommodating use by those that may not be attracted to the level and type of activity within Central Forest Park, particularly the elderly or disabled.
8.2.33 Public response and level of use of development to date of Hanley Park clearly highlights how this park can become even more successful with further development. It is beyond the scope of this strategy to determine what form this further development should take, but it is strongly recommended that the arts and performance theme of this park be further strengthened. It is also recommended that Hanley Park is developed in such manner that it clearly complements Central Forest Park, meeting needs that cannot be particularly well catered for within Central Forest Park. Whilst the exact form of development cannot be stated in this strategy, the nature of any development can be. It must be exceptional, preferably unique and of sufficient impact to help raise the profile of Stoke-on-Trent's City Centre.

8.2.34 Similarly in Newcastle the potential for Lyme Valley Parkway, Queen Elizabeth Park and Brampton Park to contribute to the regeneration of the Town Centre has previously been mentioned. All three parks are situated on the outer edge of the ring road within easy walking distance of the Town Centre and bus station. Lyme Valley Parkway and Queen Elizabeth Park are part of the Lyme Brook corridor which runs along the south boundary of the town centre and incorporates the Pool Dam waterside development site as well as a number of recently built residential developments. The redevelopment of Newcastle College and the proposed Sports Village to the western fringe of the Town Centre will bring a unique dimension to Newcastle, linking it via the Wammy (also part of the Lyme Brook Corridor to Knutton and Cross Heath, the primary focus for public sector investment in Housing Market Renewal).

8.2.35 Lyme Valley Parkway has recently received investment of approximately £700,000 and currently incorporates formal sports provision (football, rugby, cricket and cycling), children’s play and youth recreational facilities, footpaths and cycleways, car parking, lighting and a large events space all incorporated into a semi-natural, linear landscape setting along the Lyme Brook corridor running into the south east of the town centre. Public response has been positive and encouraging and there is real potential to build on this momentum and increase the park’s potential to further enhance the attractiveness of the town centre as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Additionally, Brampton Park, which hosts the Borough Museum and Art Gallery is a hugely popular park situated in the live-work office quarter of the town (a distinct and successful geographical concentration of financial and professional services) to the northeast of the town centre and many outdoor events, including live music shows, are held there. Clearly, there is massive potential to develop the park’s artistic and cultural offer in this respect. Queen Elizabeth Park, which lies to the south west of the town centre, incorporates the remains of the medieval motte and bailey castle (Scheduled Ancient Monument) after which Newcastle-under-Lyme is named. It is intended to develop this park’s strong heritage and educational value and forge links with local schools and heritage groups to provide a focal point for the town’s Industrial and Archaeological Heritage Trail, which also takes in Apedale Mining Heritage Centre in Apedale Community Country Park.

8.2.36 The designation of these sites as District Parks provides the necessary number of facilities except for two in Stoke-on-Trent and one in Newcastle. When these existing Parks are plotted on a map of the study area they leave four obvious gaps, all in the south of the conurbation. The gap at Trentham can be discounted due to the presence of Trentham Gardens but this leaves gaps in the Meir area (southeast Stoke-on-Trent), Stoke (western Stoke-on-Trent) and the southern part of Newcastle.

8.2.37 Therefore, it is proposed to create District Parks on three existing sites in those areas: Mollinson Road (Meir), Campbell Road Allotments (Stoke) and Wye Road Playing Fields (south Newcastle).
8.2.38 The existing parks that are to be designated as District Parks have a range of natural advantages that lend them to this designation:

- They are relatively large sites offering a considerable ‘green’ environment within very urban areas
- They are of heritage value or have an established function
- They have a well established, significant built and natural infrastructure, most including toilet facilities
- They either currently have, or have the potential to accommodate, large, high quality play and recreation facilities to meet high levels of demand
- They either currently have, or have the potential to accommodate, a range of sports facilities
- They are situated in urban areas with good transport links, including public transport
- They offer, or have the potential to offer, a high quality landscape and setting
- They offer, or have the potential to offer, accommodation for large scale events
- They attract, or have the potential to attract, ancillary commercial activity
- Some have recently received considerable investment and all have a real potential to attract considerable amounts of additional, external grant aid
- They can, or have the potential to, accommodate large numbers of visitors
- They will all provide an ideal opportunity to accommodate ancillary services such as youth and play workers

8.2.39 An approach based on the improvement of existing parks is considered the most efficient, economic and effective manner to meet the District Park standard. The intention of these sites is to attract visitors from outside their immediate locale and catchment and walking distances must be elongated to accommodate this. It should be noted that virtually all the parks recommended to become District Parks are served well by public transport. It is recommended that the sites listed above should be the only District Parks for the foreseeable future for the reasons similar to those stated in 8.2.19.

8.2.40 It is beyond the scope of this strategy to determine exactly how these parks should be developed, maintained or managed. However, as strategic green spaces, it is strongly recommended that Management Plans are drawn up as soon as possible for the identified parks and that this process is used to fill the fine detail of the exact content, layout maintenance and management approach applied to each and ensure a high level of quality. Also, it is proposed that each District Park will accommodate a larger-than-typical NEAP, as described in paragraph 8.2.20 above.

**Neighbourhood Parks**

8.2.41 In both authorities there are natural, existing candidates for the designation of Neighbourhood Park. These sites have natural advantages in terms of location, existing infrastructure and content and established role. In addition and of considerable importance, is that the majority of identified sites already benefit from community support for their enhancement. The task in hand is primarily to increase the quality of existing green spaces rather than create new ones.

8.2.42 When these sites were taken into account, very few gaps in provision were left in either Authority but where they did exist an existing green space or play facility was identified that could be upgraded to a Neighbourhood Park. In Newcastle the only gap of this type was in south Newcastle and so Kingsbridge Avenue has been proposed as the site for a new Neighbourhood Park to serve south Newcastle. Stoke-on-Trent showed more gaps, particularly in peripheral areas but suitable sites have been identified for upgrade to
Neighbourhood Park quality. The list of existing and upgraded Parks is in Appendix H and is illustrated in Plan A(i).

8.2.43 Neighbourhood Parks will not be subject to individual management plans but a generic management plan for Neighbourhood Parks should be developed to provide a basis for the management of each site. Each Neighbourhood Park will also provide a NEAP.

Local Parks

8.2.44 The Local Standards for Parks & Gardens identified a requirement of 186 Local Parks in Stoke-on-Trent and 99 in Newcastle. However, it is recognised that the success of these local facilities will be based on the extent to which they benefit from local community support and use. Therefore, it is proposed that the Local Standard be considered a maximum number of facilities to be created, but that this does not mean that the maximum number of facilities will actually be provided. It will be for local communities to consider their own local needs and to determine whether or not a local park should be provided, considering needs and distribution of other recreational facilities and the fact that space may need to be created to achieve this.

8.2.45 This Strategy identifies 44 sites in Stoke-on-Trent and 34 in Newcastle that should be considered as Local Parks or Gardens and given appropriate facilities, where they are not already provided. These sites are existing green spaces that currently serve a purpose for the local community as informal play space and so this designation is simply making this more formal and enabling facilities on it to be improved. However, this number may increase if local communities decide that a Local Park would meet a need in their community.

8.2.46 Local Parks will not have individual management plans specific to each Park but a generic management plan for Local Parks should be developed to inform the management of these sites. Each Local Park will usually provide a LEAP as well.

Parks & Play Overview

8.2.47 Quantitatively, the total site area of all these parks meets or exceeds the local standard of 2.60 ha per 1,000 population in both Authorities, even with the shortage of Local Parks. Plan A(i) shows the distribution of these parks and Plans A(ii), A(iii) and A(iv) show that the accessibility standards are generally met, except in relation to Local Parks for the reason stated above. There is only one significant gap in provision. This is the Trentham area in southwest Stoke, which is served by Trentham Gardens (see paragraph 8.2.36 above).

8.2.48 With regard to Play space, each Sub-Regional, District and Neighbourhood Park will have a NEAP and therefore the requirement of the Local Standard for NEAPs is met in each Authority. In fact, Stoke-on-Trent will have an extra NEAP due to the presence of a recently constructed NEAP in Florence Park in southeast Stoke-on-Trent, where no Park is planned or required. The only other exception to the pattern of a NEAP in every Sub-Regional, District and Neighbourhood Park is that no NEAP is planned for Apedale Country Park but this is made up for in the fact that there are plans for the Cotswold Avenue / Wammy Neighbourhood Park to have two NEAPs.

8.2.49 In addition, the NEAPs in Sub-Regional and District Parks will be larger than a typical NEAP, involving 11 pieces of play equipment and being approximately 1ha in size rather than the usual 0.85ha.
8.2.50 Each Local Park is a site that has, or it is proposed will have, a LEAP (Gardens will not have LEAPs) and so 43 and 30 LEAPs are currently proposed for Stoke and Newcastle respectively. This clearly falls short of the Local Standard for LEAPs but this Local Standard should again be considered a maximum and LEAPs should only be constructed outside the identified locations in this Strategy where the local community consider it necessary to meet an identified need.

8.2.51 In terms of accessibility, Plan B(i) shows the distribution of NEAPs and LEAPs across the conurbation and demonstrates how the accessibility standard is generally met. When this is compared to Plan B(ii), which shows the situation at the time of the Audit, the improvement that this strategy proposes for Equipped Play Facilities is clearly apparent.

8.2.52 The LAP / informal play space provision is provided by the remaining amenity spaces left over that are not converted to other uses (see section 8.6 below). Of the remaining amenity space in Stoke-on-Trent only approximately 50% is required to meet the Local Standard requirement for LAPs (98 ha) and it is the City Council’s desire that the majority of the other 50% also remains as informal play space. However, in Newcastle only 52 ha is required to meet the Local Standard requirements for LAPs. There are 59 ha of remaining amenity space in Newcastle, which would all but achieve the Local Standard. However, Newcastle are unsure of whether 18 ha of this is appropriate as a LAP and so, pending a review of these sites, further sites may need to be identified to meet the quantitative Local Standard for LAPs in Newcastle.

8.2.53 Qualitatively, the majority of the sites designated here as a Sub-Regional, District or Neighbourhood Park received a quality rating within the Audit, expressed as a percentage, where 100% is the highest quality. On the assumption that the vast majority of these sites will not have changed significantly in qualitative terms since the Audit, these ratings are taken as the current condition of the site.

8.2.54 Where a percentage improvement is required for a site in the paragraphs below, what this percentage improvement will actually involve will be determined by the management plans to be drawn up for those sites and these should refer to the detailed Audit quality scores that combined to give the percentage scores given here, as these will highlight the specific areas of deficiency for each site.

8.2.55 Strategic sites (District and Sub-Regional Parks) need to be developed and maintained to a higher quality. Therefore, with the exception of Apedale Country Park (which scored 96% in the Audit Quality Ratings), all the Sub-Regional and District Parks will require improvement in order to raise their quality ratings above 90% or because of special circumstances.

8.2.56 Where the existing rating is between 80% and 90%, the improvement required will be 10%. Where it is between 70% and 80%, the improvement required will be 20%. Where it is between 60% and 70%, the improvement required will be 30%. Where it is between 50% and 60%, the improvement required will be 40%. A notable exception to this is Milton Park, which would have required a 40% improvement but as it is currently a Neighbourhood Park and this strategy sets out that it should be a District Park this improvement will be doubled to 80%.

8.2.57 However, Bathpool Park will require more costly improvements than other strategic parks because it is also a Greening for Growth Park and Brampton Park will also require improvement despite scoring 97% in the Audit Quality Rating because it is also a Greening for Growth Park.
8.2.58 In addition to calculating the costs based on these quality improvements for strategic parks, the four Grade 2 Listed parks in Stoke-on-Trent will require much higher improvement costs associated with their heritage status and so have been given a 100% improvement requirement.

8.2.59 For neighbourhood parks, as non-strategic sites, where the rating falls below 75%, the site will need qualitative improvements. To calculate the amount of improvement required (and therefore costs), where the rating is between 70% and 75%, the improvement required will be 10%; where it is between 60% and 70%, the improvement required will be 20%; and where it is between 50% and 60%, the improvement required will be 30%.

8.2.60 There are three exceptions to this in Newcastle where Chesterton Memorial Park and Silverdale Park will require qualitative improvements despite both scoring above 75% in the Audit. This is because they are in an Area Regeneration Framework (ARF) area and so will help to facilitate regeneration and renewal in that area. As a result they have been given a percentage improvement that is required in light of the local knowledge of what will be needed to improve them for this purpose. In addition, Queen Elizabeth Park is a heritage park and so will require much more costly improvements than other Neighbourhood Parks and so is given a 100% improvement requirement.

8.2.61 It would not be appropriate to address the specific details of which Local Parks will need qualitative improvements in a strategic document such as this. However, a non-specific action, comprising an average 10% improvement of the 44 and 34 sites in Stoke and Newcastle respectively (where each site is assumed to be the typical 1 ha in size for a local park), is appropriate for each Authority and how the costs of these actions are used for improving the local parks will be determined by the management plans.

8.2.62 Each Authority has identified where an existing LEAP or NEAP falls short of the qualitative standards. In general, these will be replaced, though in some instances the improvement may be achieved simply by adding equipment to the existing facility. Where a LEAP is being upgraded to a NEAP, this will require a new facility.
Proposed Parks & Play Actions:

**PP1**: Improve Quality at Central Forest Park (by 40%)

**PP2**: Improve Quality at Parkhall Country Park (by 20%) and place a larger than typical NEAP there

**PP3**: Create new District Park with larger than typical NEAP at Mollinson Road, Meir

**PP4**: Create new District Park with larger than typical NEAP at Stoke Park

**PP5**: Create new District Park with larger than typical NEAP at Wye Road Playing Fields, Seabridge

**PP6**: Improve Quality at Wolstanton Park / Marsh (by 20%) and place a larger than typical NEAP there

**PP7**: Improve Quality at Bathpool Park (by 20%) in line with Greening for Growth requirements

**PP8**: Improve Quality at Lyme Valley Parkway (by 10%)

**PP9**: Improve Quality at Brampton Park (by 20%) in line with Greening for Growth requirements and place a larger than typical NEAP in Brampton Park

**PP10**: Improve Quality at Milton Park (by 80%) and place a new larger than typical NEAP there

**PP11**: Improve Quality at Fenton Park (by 30%) and place a new larger than typical NEAP there

**PP12**: Improve Quality at Westport Lake Park (by 20%) and place a MUGA there

**PP13**: Improve Quality at Longton Park and place a larger than typical NEAP there

**PP14**: Improve Quality at Tunstall Park and place a larger than typical NEAP there

**PP15**: Improve Quality at Bucknall Park / Finney Gardens (by 20%) and place a larger than typical NEAP there

**PP16**: Improve Quality at Hanley Park

**PP17**: Improve Quality at Burslem Park

**PP18**: Create new Neighbourhood Park with a NEAP at Kingsbridge Avenue, Seabridge

**PP19**: Improve Quality at Cotswold Avenue / The Wammy (by 30%) and place two new NEAPs in Cotswold Avenue and The Wammy – see also Action OS2

**PP20**: Improve Quality at Thistleberry Parkway (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP21**: Improve Quality at Salop Place, Kidsgrove (by 10%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP22**: Improve Quality at Brampton Recreation Ground (by 30%)
**PP23:** Improve Quality at Chesterton Memorial Park (by 40%) to strategic park standards to facilitate regeneration

**PP24:** Improve Quality at Silverdale Park (by 20%) to strategic park standards to facilitate regeneration

**PP25:** Improve Quality at Queen Elizabeth Park in line with requirements of the Heritage Lottery Fund

**PP26:** Improve Quality at Parksite Recreation Ground (by 10%)

**PP27:** Improve Quality at Loomer Road, Holditch (by 10%)

**PP28:** Improve NEAPs at Westlands Sports Ground and at Meadow Lane, Cross Heath

**PP29:** Improve Quality at Cobridge Park (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP30:** Improve Quality at Etruria Park (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP31:** Improve Quality at Bycars Park, Burslem (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP32:** Improve Quality at Crestfield Road, Meir (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP33:** Improve Quality at Monks Neil Park, Chell & Packmoor (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP34:** Improve Quality at Abbey Road, Abbey Hulton (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP35:** Improve Quality at Priors Field Park, Fenton (by 30%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP36:** Improve Quality at Hanford Park (by 30%) and place a new MUGA there

**PP37:** Improve Quality at Watson Road Recreation Ground, Stoke (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP38:** Improve Quality at Penkhull Park (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP39:** Improve Quality at Anchor Road Recreation Ground, Longton (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP40:** Improve Quality at Causley Gardens, Bentilee (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP41:** Improve Quality at Moss Green, Berryhill (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP42:** Improve Quality at Repington Road, East Valley (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP43:** Improve Quality at Lodge Road, Penkhull (by 20%) and place a new NEAP there

**PP44:** Improve Quality at Waterside Drive, Newstead (by 20%) and place a new MUGA there

**PP45:** Improve Quality at Goms Mill Road, Longton (by 30%)
PP46: Improve Quality at Henderson Grove, Meir (by 20%)

PP47: Improve Quality at Northwood Park (by 20%)

PP48: Improve Quality at Baddeley Green Playground (by 20%)

PP49: Improve Quality at Bentilee Park (by 10%)

PP50: Create a new Neighbourhood Park with a NEAP at Bankeyfields Public Open Space

PP51: Create new NEAPs at Mount Pleasant Park (Fenton), Middleport Park, Norton Recreation Ground, Norton Park, the Clanway Development (Tunstall) and the Coalville Estate

PP52: Create new MUGAs at Hambro Place (Fegg Hayes) and Blurton Valley Public Open Space

PP53: Create 14 new LEAP at specified Local Parks across Newcastle-under-Lyme (see Appendix H)

PP54: Create 28 new LEAPs at specified Local Parks across Stoke-on-Trent (see Appendix H)

PP55: Improve 34 Local Parks and Gardens across Newcastle-under-Lyme (see Appendix H)

PP56: Improve 44 Local Parks and Gardens across Stoke-on-Trent (see Appendix H)
8.3 Outdoor Sports Facilities

8.3.1 The Quantitative and Accessibility Local Standards for Outdoor Sports Facilities are that 0.90 ha per 1,000 population should be provided, of which 0.83 ha should be for Playing Pitches. Generally speaking, all households should be within 1.2km of an Outdoor Sports Facilities, though this should be reduced for the smaller facilities such as Bowling Greens and Tennis Courts.

8.3.2 Appendix E lists the existing provision of outdoor sports facilities in the study area, based on the two Authorities Playing Pitch Strategies. This has provided the basis for the quantitative local standard for outdoor sports facilities. As such, this Strategy does not propose any further quantitative outdoor sports provision and is in alignment with the Playing Pitch Strategies on the amount of facilities required for the two Authorities.

8.3.3 However, Stoke-on-Trent City Council are developing a new Playing Pitch Strategy that may introduce new facilities or require that others be removed. For example, there are ambitions for a sports village at Fenton Manor and if the Playing Pitch Strategy determines that this is feasible and appropriate the overall provision of outdoor sports facilities in Stoke-on-Trent will increase. Therefore, it is proposed that the quantitative local standard for outdoor sports facilities be reviewed once the new playing pitch strategy for Stoke-on-Trent is published.

8.3.4 Plan C shows how the current provision of outdoor sports facilities is distributed across the conurbation. In terms of accessibility, the vast majority of these sites are either unrestricted or limited access but is important that agreements are worked toward with the owners of these facilities to ensure that all facilities are as unrestricted as possible.

8.3.5 While it is unrealistic to think that all sites should be unrestricted (for example school playing fields during school hours) the Local Standards set a target that half of the outdoor sports provision should become fully unrestricted and the remaining half should be party to agreements that ensure that they are accessible at all reasonable times (for example outside school hours for school playing fields).

8.3.6 With regard qualitative improvements, due to the fact that many outdoor sports sites are not in the ownership of the Local Authority, there is limited action that this Strategy can take to improve them, although their owners will likely maintain many of these to a good or satisfactory quality anyway, especially where they are private sporting enterprises aimed at attracting custom. However, those sites and facilities that are under Local Authority ownership should be upgraded to a “good” quality where they currently fall below this. The sites that need qualitative improvement are identified in the Playing Pitch Strategies of each Authority and this will form the basis of any actions, although the actions for Stoke-on-Trent should be reviewed pending the production of the new Playing Pitch Strategy.

8.3.7 In addition, where sites are not currently directly connected to the wider network of green spaces or to the surrounding residential catchment area, efforts should be made to improve this connectivity in order to facilitate and encourage walking to these facilities.
Proposed Outdoor Sports Actions:

OS1: Work toward agreements with owners / management of Outdoor Sports Facilities to ensure that 50% of facilities become unrestricted access while the other 50% are accessible at all reasonable times in light of their private use.

OS2: Create a Sports Village with grouped Playing Field Facility at the Wammy – see also Action PP19

OS3: Improve the Tennis Courts at Westlands Sportsground

OS4: Improve Sports Pitch Provision (drainage and changing rooms) at Birchenwood

OS5: Improve Sports Pitch Provision (drainage and changing rooms) at Wolstanton Marsh

OS6: Improve strategic sites identified in the Newcastle-under-Lyme Leisure Needs Assessment & Playing Pitch Strategy as requiring qualitative improvements (not including those in Actions OS2-OS5) – drainage for 16 pitches, improve 6 bowling greens and improve 7 tennis courts

OS7: Review the Stoke-on-Trent Playing Pitch Strategy to assess what actions have been taken and what new ones may be required and ensure implementation
8.4 Semi-Natural Green Space

8.4.1 The Local Standards set a target of 3.6 ha per 1,000 population for semi-natural green space, 1.3 ha of which should be Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). They also state that all households should be within 600m of a semi-natural green space. LNRs and some large semi-natural sites should be considered as Strategic Green Spaces.

8.4.2 Appendix J and Plan D(i) show the proposed semi-natural green space, including those that are, or will become, LNRs. This list of sites meet the quantitative Local Standards, including the LNR element, even discounting those sites that the audit identified as restricted accessibility. Plan D(ii) shows that very few areas will not have access to this network of semi-natural green space and that the LNRs will be distributed fairly evenly across the conurbation enabling all areas to be within a reasonable distance of one.

8.4.3 The proposals include three new LNRs in Newcastle at Bradwell Wood, Bathpool Park and Westomley Wood and a relatively new one at Pool Dam Marshes that has been completed since the Audit was carried out. Each of these four sites will involve an Action to convert / improve the green space and its facilities and infrastructure to LNR quality. However, given that each is already an established semi-natural site, this should not require the full cost of creating an LNR. Compared to the Audit data, it also appears that Stoke-on-Trent has a series of new LNRs but these were sites that the Audit did not recognise as LNRs at the time and so are not actually new but established LNRs.

8.4.4 This significant, overall increase in the provision of semi-natural sites will be brought about in part by the creation / recognition of the LNRs but also by the fact that some amenity sites and sites from other typologies are to be converted to semi-natural, either in part or whole. In the main, these are sites that are already partially semi-natural and so will not require the full cost of a conversion to semi-natural and the relative cost of the improvement will decrease as the sites increase in size.

8.4.5 In Newcastle, whole amenity sites have been allocated for this transfer but, while a few sites have been designated in this way in Stoke-on-Trent, there is 190 ha of amenity space spread across the Authority that the City Council consider could be partially converted to semi-natural. In calculating how much these sites will contribute to the semi-natural provision, a figure of 30% of each site has been used. This figure is based on the overall proportion of functional green space that is other semi-natural (not including LNRs) that is proposed in the local standards.

8.4.6 In qualitative terms, there should be an over-arching action to ensure that all semi-natural sites seek to extend locally relevant habitats (cf. the Staffordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan). The action should also protect and enhance those sites that already exist and ensure that public access is facilitated by good footpaths that are clearly signposted and that information about habitats / species is clearly presented. In addition, each of the LNRs and the larger semi-natural sites should have a Biodiversity Management Plan developed for them, if one does not already exist.

8.4.7 Connectivity between semi-natural sites should be encouraged by ensuring that the Green Corridor Network enables a series of contiguous wildlife spaces to be established across the conurbation, as far as is physically possible. This does not have to exclusively use semi-natural sites as other green spaces and landscaped areas can provide this as long as they are designed and managed in a way that facilitates this.
Proposed Semi-Natural Actions:

SN1: Create 17ha of Local Nature Reserve at Bradwell Wood
SN2: Create 25ha of Local Nature Reserve at Bathpool Park
SN3: Create Local Nature Reserve at Westomley Wood / Wroxham Way
SN4: Improve Local Nature Reserve at Pool Dam Marshes
SN5: Create Semi-Natural at Birchenwood Countryside Park
SN6: Create Semi-Natural at Audley Road Open Space, Chesterton
SN7: Create Semi-Natural at Waterhays Open Space, Chesterton
SN8: Create Semi-Natural at Parkhouse Industrial Estate, Chesterton
SN9: Create Semi-Natural at Rowley Wood, Seabridge
SN10: Create Semi-Natural at Leys Drive Open Space, Westlands
SN11: Create Semi-Natural at Dismantled Mineral Railway site, Silverdale/Knutton
SN12: Create Semi-Natural at Moffat Way Open Space, Silverdale
SN13: Create Semi-Natural at Castle Street Open Spaces I + II, Holditch
SN14: Create Semi-Natural at Pepper Street Corner Plot, Silverdale
SN15: Create Semi-Natural at Florence Park, Longton
SN16: Create Semi-Natural at Lordship Lane, Shelton
SN17: Create Semi-Natural at Hoveringham Drive, Berry Hill
SN18: Create Semi-Natural at Boathorse Lane, Tunstall
SN19: Create Semi-Natural at Newstead Trading Estate, Blurton
SN20: Create Semi-Natural at Common Lane, Meir Heath

SN21: A general Biodiversity Management Plan should be developed (with reference to the Staffordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan) to inform the management of all non-strategic semi-natural green spaces

SN22: Each Local Nature Reserve and large semi-natural site will have a Biodiversity Management Plan developed for it, where this does not already exist, and these should be reviewed at appropriate intervals
8.5 Green Corridors

8.5.1 The conurbation as a whole has good access to Green Routes / Corridors (see Plan F) and Appendix L lists the sites that are specifically green corridors. However, the quality and connectivity of these Green Routes requires significant improvement to take advantage of the network of Green Corridors that exist as a legacy of the conurbation’s industrial heritage, such as the canals.

8.5.2 While the Local Standards did not set a quantitative standard for Green Corridors and the accessibility standard of 1.2km has been achieved by the existing provision of Green Corridors, it is clear that connectivity is still an issue. Map F shows how the Green Corridor Network could be extended using existing networks such as the cycle paths. Many of these already coincide with the Green Corridor Network and have been previously agreed but have not been implemented yet (these are termed “proposed greenway” on Map F). Others are entirely new proposals and provide a basis for extensions to the Green Corridor Network (these are termed “potential green routes” on Map F).

8.5.3 These latter extensions do not generally involve creating new green space, as this is difficult to achieve, especially in urban areas where Green Corridors can play such a vital role. Instead they use an existing green space, existing paths not in the network or a quieter road that potentially could be made greener and pedestrian and cycle friendly if necessary. This would create a green, pleasant, attractive and safe route to walk or cycle around the conurbation. However, signage would be critical on these routes because they use roads as opposed to formal green corridors.

8.5.4 In particular, extensions should seek to link parts of the conurbation with each other, especially between the two Authorities. The existing Green Corridor Network allows movement from the centre of each Authority out to the countryside fairly efficiently but does not always effectively link different areas and communities within the conurbation. The lack of connectivity is most notable across the A500, which forms a significant barrier between Stoke and Newcastle and, therefore, many of the proposed extensions focus on creating connections across this trunk route.

**Proposed Green Corridor Actions:**

**GC1**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Pool Dam Marshes

**GC2**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Lyme Brook

**GC3**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Hanford

**GC4**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Trentham

**GC5**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Hollybush

**GC6**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Blurton

**GC7**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Meir Hay

**GC8**: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Adderley Green

**GC9**: Create Proposed Greenway extension between Staffordshire University and Bucknall
GC10: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Milton

GC11: Create Proposed Greenway extension at Pitts Hill

GC12: Create Proposed Greenway extension between Turnhurst and Kidsgrove

GC13: Improve existing Greenway in west and south Newcastle

GC14: Create Potential Green Route extensions between Crackley and Kidsgrove

GC15: Create Potential Green Route extensions between Apedale and the A34

GC16: Create Potential Green Route extensions between the Brampton and Wolstanton

GC17: Create Potential Green Route extensions between Newcastle Town Centre and Staffordshire University
8.6 Remaining “Amenity” Green Space

8.6.1 The remaining amenity space is that which is not being converted to another function. This is identified in Appendix K and shown on Plan E. This totals 250 ha in Stoke and 60 ha in Newcastle. Appendix K splits this remaining amenity space into three groups on the basis of what the sites are to be used for:

- Those that may be partially converted to semi-natural (in Stoke-on-Trent)
- Those where the purpose, and therefore maintenance regime, of the site needs to be reviewed to determine how the site would best be used
- Those that will remain as informal play space, contributing to the Local Standards for Play as a LAP

Partial Conversion to Semi-Natural

8.6.2 These sites are all located in Stoke-on-Trent and are designated in this way because they are not needed in their entirety for informal play space but could be used to boost the provision of semi-natural green space across the conurbation. However, it may not be realistic or appropriate to convert the whole of such spaces to semi-natural and so each site will need a review by the City Council to ascertain which parts of the site should be converted and which should not.

8.6.3 For the purposes of estimating the contribution to the semi-natural local standards of this space it has been assumed that an average of 30% of each site will be converted to semi-natural. This is based on the overall proportion of other semi-natural within the Local Standards. The remainder of each site may either remain as informal play space or it may fall into the category of sites to be reviewed. 190 ha of amenity green space have been given this designation and so 30% of this creates 57 ha that will be converted to semi-natural.

Sites to be Reviewed

8.6.4 This group of sites are, in the main, smaller than 1 ha and appear to serve little purpose other than as infill but, where they are grassed, are expensive to maintain due to their smaller size. Little can be done with such sites as they are too small to convert to another green space function and so each of these sites should be reviewed by their owners and the Local Authority (where the two are not the same) as to what will be the most cost-effective and socially responsible way of maintaining them and putting them to a positive purpose. Some of the sites are larger than 1 ha but are not needed as informal play space. These therefore also require a review as to what alternative use they should be put to.

8.6.5 In Newcastle, there are 15 sites in this designation, totalling 18 ha. In Stoke, there are only 5 sites, totalling less than 5 ha. In addition, there is also the Grange Park site, designated a Local Park but a site that totals 18 ha. Clearly, this is very large for a Local Park and so this site should be reviewed to ascertain what parts should remain as a Local Park and what parts can be put to an alternative use, particularly in light of the fact that it lies within the Middleport, Burslem and Etruria Valley ARF area.

8.8.1 A number of possible alternative uses exist for sites that cannot be given a formal typology or function. These alternative uses would be more economically and visually appropriate than the designation of sites as ‘amenity sites’, which require regular maintenance and so cannot be managed on a cost-neutral or productive basis. However, these alternative uses are likely to require set-up and are not without ongoing management implications.
Nevertheless, funding for such sites is more readily available than for general maintenance of amenity sites, thus relieving the overall expected maintenance burden on the local authority.

Informal Play Space

8.6.6 The sites that remain as informal play space are so grouped because they serve a specific function in the local community as informal play space or connecting green space or are large enough to be no more costly to maintain than any other green space function because such large areas of grass are relatively cheap to maintain.

8.6.7 These sites are predominantly in Local Authority ownership but a significant proportion are not and, while these sites are not directly under the control of the Local Authority, this Strategy still highlights them as informal play space because they serve a useful purpose as such and it would be detrimental to the local community if these spaces were to be developed by their owners.

8.6.8 In Newcastle, the LAP standard within the Play Standards required 63 ha. If all the remaining amenity space is preserved as informal play space, Newcastle virtually meets this quantitative standard. However, 18 ha are designated as "Sites to be Reviewed". If this review recommends a use other than informal play for these sites then Newcastle will not achieve the quantitative LAP local standard. In contrast, even not taking into account the amenity sites designated in the other two categories, Stoke has an excess of informal play space. The Local Standard requires 119 ha but Stoke has 188 ha available.

8.6.9 An additional note with regard informal play space is that many parks also contain informal play space by their very nature and so the quantitative provision of informal play space is boosted further by this, although it is difficult to measure exactly how much. Therefore, it should not be a major concern that Newcastle are struggling to achieve the local LAP standard.

Proposed Remaining Amenity Space Actions:

RA1: Carry out a review of those sites designated for partial conversion to semi-natural to assess which parts of the site are suitable for conversion and implement the conversion.

RA2: Carry out a PPG17 review of those sites where the purpose of the site has been highlighted as questionable in order to assess what purpose the site should be put to, whether as a green space or otherwise, and therefore the maintenance regime required.

RA3: Ensure all the remaining amenity space to be designated as a LAP is of a quality fit for purpose as a LAP.

RA4: Carry out a PPG17 review of the Grange Park site and consider whether another green space use or a non-green space use might be appropriate.
8.7 Other Applications of the Local Standards

8.7.1 In addition to the application of the Local Standards for determining the distribution of green space, they also serve several functions at strategic and local planning levels:

- They may be incorporated into Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)
- They can assist design at masterplan and local level
- They can be used in appraising plans and applications

8.7.2 It is essential that the Local Standards be given legislative weight by being adopted into planning policy. The most appropriate manner of doing this is by incorporating them into Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and integrating them into Development Control processes. They can be lends further weight by being incorporated into a Developer Contributions SPD or a specific Green Space SPD. Such an SPD could be jointly produced and adopted across both Authorities or by separate SPDs covering each Authority individually. It is crucial that the Local Standards be included in planning policy so that when they are used for calculating Developer Contributions they have a robust legislative foundation and, perhaps more importantly, a robust evidence base from which contributions can be derived.

8.7.3 Another application of the Local Standards is as a guideline to developers in designing their masterplans, particularly for RENEW Areas of Major Intervention (AMI) masterplans, as well as for smaller windfall planning applications for residential developments. On the flipside of this, the Local Standards can be used by Local Authority Planning Officers to help appraise the quality of planning applications for residential purposes or masterplans and of their own plans and policies as they are drawn up and developed as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).

8.7.4 Ultimately, this Green Space Strategy needs to be consistent with the emerging Core Spatial Strategy and the Policy Review in Chapter 4 demonstrated that the Vision, Aims and Objectives of this Strategy are in line with this. The Local Standards and the manner in which they are to be implemented, as outlined by this chapter, also need to be consistent with the Core Spatial Strategy. The Local Standards, once implemented, will provide a much improved green space network, which will further the North Staffordshire urban conurbation’s image as a “green” place. As such, they will provide a useful element toward achieving a sustainable conurbation that people choose to live in.
8.8 A Summary of Delivering the Local Standards

8.8.1 In this chapter the way in which the provision of high quality green space of all functional typologies will be achieved has been outlined. Both Authorities will achieve, exceed or virtually achieve every Local Standard for each typology if the Actions presented in this chapter and the previous chapter are implemented.

8.8.2 In addition to this functional provision, the non-functional green space (as defined in the glossary) will also remain and provide a valuable green space resource to sit alongside the functional provision. Together, the total coverage of green space across urban North Staffordshire creates a very green conurbation, as Plan G demonstrates. The Green Corridor Network is overlaid on this total provision on Plan G and it shows that if the action plan is fully implemented urban North Staffordshire will have an ample provision of well connected green space facilitating healthy and sustainable movement throughout the conurbation.

8.8.3 This chapter and the previous chapter have established a series of actions that, if implemented, will help to realise the vision, aims and objectives of this strategy. The following chapter presents a summarised version of the costed and phased Action Plan Programme.
9. **Action Plan Programme**

9.1 Having established a series of actions that are both strategic and non-strategic and that constitute both general actions and site-specific actions, an Action Plan Programme (APP) is required to set out a schedule of how these actions are to be delivered. The full APP will set out:

- The indicative cost of each site-specific action
- The proposed phasing of each action
- The Aim that each action will contribute toward achieving

9.2 The full APP can be found in Appendix N but within this chapter a simpler, more accessible version is included that focuses on phasing and the collective costs of actions within each phase and Authority area. However, the following issues must be taken into account to enable the correct interpretation of the APP.

9.3 It must be stressed that the cost for each site-specific action is indicative. How these indicative costs have been reached can be found in Appendix P and, in the main, they are based on standard unit costs for the work to be undertaken produced by a Quantity Surveyor (see Appendix Q) but some costs are based on known, already determined costs for individual actions already being prepared. However, all indicative site-specific costs produced for this strategy are considered robust for the purpose of providing an indication of what actions may cost. In the case of many of the actions the true, precise cost can only be calculated once detailed management plans have been drawn up for each functional green space, either on a site-specific basis or as a general typology management plan.

9.4 Whilst it is possible to provide indicative costs for site-specific actions based on a clear costing methodology, it is not possible to provide such costs for general actions. The general actions outline what should be done in general terms and it is for each local authority to determine the level of detail and method of delivery of subsequent action. By way of example, authorities could choose to implement a specific action either by the use of internal resources or alternatively through specific commission and external consultants. Further, the local authorities may consider that a simple and quick approach may meet the terms of a general action or they may consider that a more lengthy and detailed approach is required. Hence, with such variables, it is not possible to provide indicative costs for general actions.

9.5 However, whilst it is not possible to provide indicative costs for general actions, it is possible to identify those actions that should be considered priority. These actions have been identified as such due to their direct influence on combating the barriers to use as identified by the community within the Household Survey. These priority general actions are:

- **GA3**: Assess and review the current approach to community involvement and recommend how the Authorities can better support the involvement of local community groups in green space provision, particularly at a non-strategic level
- **GA4**: Establish mechanisms for the recruitment and training of community volunteers, ongoing support for them and a database of available volunteers and their skills
- **GA5**: Identify an appropriate mix of Partners to help deliver the green space projects emerging from this strategy
- **GA6:** Identify a green space ‘champion’ within the Councils for each local authority

- **GA14:** Explore the potential for, and implement, a scheme for the visible patrol of park sites in partnership with local constabularies and referring to successful models of funding and management

- **GA15:** Ensure that fly tipped rubbish, broken glass, graffiti and vandalised equipment is removed or repaired within 24 hours of a report, where possible, and at the most within 5 days

- **GA17:** Local Authorities to investigate potential for facilitating Youth and Play Workers within non-strategic green spaces where anti-social behaviour has been identified as a problematic issue

- **GA18:** Establish a commitment that any capital receipts and increased revenue accrued from green space should be ring-fenced for the purposes of enhancing, managing and maintaining green space

- **GA21:** Carry out an internal review of annual maintenance procedures, identifying and co-ordinating which maintenance tasks can be more economically carried out over larger areas and which can become the responsibility of improved multi-skilled Area Teams

9.6 The phasing of the APP is based on several factors:

- The geographical location of an action and whether that location is in an area of regeneration or an area that is in particular need of a specific typology of green space
- The strategic importance of the action, i.e. whether it will have an impact on an Authority-wide or sub-regional area
- Whether preparation of the action has already begun to take place

9.7 This latter point relates to a key issue in interpreting the APP in that this APP, and indeed, this whole Strategy, is emerging within a dynamic environment. Green space management is ongoing and has been while this strategy has been prepared. Therefore, some of the actions may have already begun within the natural course of maintaining and improving green space across the conurbation or due to regeneration initiatives.

9.8 Associated with this is the need to be flexible about site-specific actions. The ultimate aim of the site-specific actions is to ensure an even distribution of facilities of all typologies and all levels of hierarchy across the conurbation. Therefore, they have been selected on the basis of which sites in a given area were the most suitable at this time. This suitability may change over the coming years due to development pressures, regeneration initiatives or changes to planning policy and so it may be that a more suitable site is found for a given action or facility. This flexibility is acceptable on the condition that the new site must be within close proximity to the current proposed site in order to serve the same area.

9.9 One of the first actions that will need to be carried out as a priority early win involves identifying the partners that will help the steering group to deliver the strategy (GA5). Delivery responsibilities will need to be formalised and agreed by all parties, enabling an additional column to be created within the APP. It should be stressed that this is an issue that should be resolved as soon as possible to ensure that actions within this strategy are implemented within the timescales given. In addition, the monitoring measures outlined in the APP and Chapter 13 provide only an initial set of measures and should be built upon as
other suitable measures emerge or are made available in order to ensure that the APP is delivered satisfactorily.

9.10 Identifying potential sources of funding within the APP is an important early action (GA2) and will enable a further additional column to be created within the APP. The Funding Strategies that will be developed by the Local Authorities (see Chapter 12) will investigate a set of funding sources in order to gather the funding required to implement the APP. Where one source does not materialise (for example, the full amount of developer contributions are not achieved) the deficit this creates in the funding must be filled from another source. Hence, for some actions there is more than one potential funding source. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 12.

9.11 The simplified APP set out below addresses the timescale for the implementation of the actions emerging from this strategy and the collective costs for actions within each Authority area for each phase. The full APP can be found in Appendix N.
10. Organisational Responsibilities

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 The Green Space Strategy was commissioned by RENEW together with the City and Borough Councils. During that time there has been a very close working relationship between relevant Council departments and the Policy team of RENEW. This close collaboration has reflected the need for the strategy and proposals emerging from it to be ‘owned’ by the main stakeholders in the sub-region.

10.1.2 In this context, the emphasis on the importance of green space in shaping the environmental, economic and social fabric of the conurbation has been a driving force in the development of the strategy.

10.1.3 The alignment over the last couple of years of RENEW housing market renewal pathfinder and the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone have reinforced this broad remit. The large overlap between the organisations and some Local Authority functions is now more formally structured within the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership and should assist in ensuring a common approach to green space on economic and social issues, as well as environmental issues.

10.1.4 Organisational responsibilities will emerge as the new North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership develops its new identity and stakeholder partners for green space are identified but a set of key principles of working will apply to the key partners (Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and RENEW) and any other partners who will be closely involved with the implementation of this strategy. These principles are:

- Legitimacy of organisations to develop policy and implement the initiative and proposals.
- Accountability, to local residents and businesses, as well as leading funding agencies such as English Partnerships.
- Consultation with communities, partners and stakeholders to ensure commitment and legitimacy of proposals and inclusiveness.
- An approval process that is understood and agreed, robust and capable of withstanding challenge.
- Management, report and monitoring of proposals expenditure and activities of partners and stakeholders.
- Integration of green space policy and proposals with broad, strategic planning, corporate aims and objectives.
- Devolution of delivery responsibilities to local agencies from public, private and voluntary sector partners.
- Close relationships between the statutory planning processes and site-specific proposals.
10.2 Definition of Roles

10.2.1 It is essential that clear roles are defined for partners and stakeholders which reflect the principles set out above and to ensure that delivery of agreed strategy impacts on the environmental, economic and community of North Staffordshire.

10.2.2 At both a strategic and local level, it is necessary to develop an understanding of responsibilities at strategic and local level with particular regard to strategy development and delivery. The following roles must be agreed both in relation to the overall strategy and for each type of action in a given geographical area (e.g. Authority):

- Lead Partner
- Support Partner
- Stakeholder(s)

10.2.3 At a strategic level, tasks of lead partners will be as follows:

- To champion the aims and objectives of the Green Space Strategy;
- To co-ordinate activity to establish a binding policy framework within which proposals can be developed and implemented;
- To ensure partners and stakeholders interests and representatives are fully represented;
- To co-ordinate policy development and ensure partners and stakeholders are, and remain, fully committed;
- To ensure integration across a breadth of corporate, economic, environmental and community policy;
- To lead and ensure good governance of the strategy; and
- To identify and commit resource as appropriate.

10.2.4 At an operational and local level, support partners will:

- Support lead partners in fulfilling the above tasks and, within this framework, commit resources to strategy development;
- Act as lead partner with regard to initiatives and proposals;
- Ensure local stakeholders and communities are fully consulted and given every opportunity to contribute to the delivery of proposals; and
- Contribute to ongoing monitoring and management

10.3 Organisational Relationships

10.3.1 At the current time, it would be inappropriate to identify who the lead and support partners will be at an operational and local level for each type of action and this provides the basis for Action GA5 in the Action Plan Programme (APP), which is a priority action within the APP as an “early win”. Action GA5 requires the identification of an appropriate mix of Partners to provide leadership in the delivery of green space projects. This should be a collaborative process and follow directly on from the completion of this strategy.

10.3.2 However, at a strategy level, the existing team of partners, who have enabled the creation of this strategy, can provide an over-arching management of the strategy, including implementing actions such as GA5. This management of the strategy should be informed by ongoing negotiation with partners but Figure 10a below provides a preliminary basis for this management structure.
10.4 Summary

Assigning organisational responsibilities is a vital element of the implementation of this strategy and, without it, very little will be achieved. Therefore, it is a matter of priority that Action GA5 is taken forward once this strategy is adopted. Partners need to be brought on-board with proposals, given opportunity to be part of a wider collaboration to assign the actions to partners and given the authority and incentive to undertake their assigned actions.
11. **Capital & Revenue Costs**

11.1 **Capital Costs**

11.1.1 To convert the strategy objective into a deliverable set of actions, the indicative total capital costs for quantitative and qualitative improvements to raise the quantity and quality of green space in urban North Staffordshire so that it is in line with the Local Standards is **£60,989,181**.

11.1.2 This figure can be split down by Local Authority area as follows:

- Stoke-on-Trent = **£44,839,388**
- Newcastle-under-Lyme = **£16,149,792**

11.1.3 These figures are the sum of the all site-specific / typology actions within an Authority area. The cost calculations for each action can be found in Appendix P, which is informed by the standard unit costs for typology improvements found in Appendix Q. A full explanation of the calculations can also be found in Appendix P. The indicative costs for the majority of actions were estimated using a set calculation for a given typology or hierarchy. A few actions varied slightly from these calculations due to exceptional local circumstances (e.g. being a heritage park) and the indicative costs for a few other actions came from external sources, where plans for the delivery of the action were already underway and could be used to inform the indicative costs.

11.1.4 These sources of data, the calculations and the unit costs used are considered robust and provide a sound basis for the production of costs for this strategy, albeit indicative costs. The steering group, who will, in the main, be responsible for the implementation of these actions, estimated the general action costs on an informed basis.

11.2 **Revenue Costs**

11.2.1 The revenue costs for the ongoing implementation of this Strategy, and the maintenance of green space as a result of it, should not be significantly different from the existing green space maintenance budget across the two Local Authorities. This is because, though the green space will need to be maintained to a higher standard, there will be a significant shift in typology from small plots of amenity grassland to semi-natural, which is less intensive of resources.

11.2.2 In addition, actions GA21 and GA24 (both “early wins”) will facilitate the review of maintenance regimes, resulting in more efficient use of resources. This review is necessary to acknowledge that, broadly speaking, the quantity of land to be maintained as green space will remain the same but that the nature of the maintenance required will change and the balance between more intensive and less intensive techniques will shift. While some areas will require more intensive maintenance (e.g. the focal areas within strategic green spaces), the majority of green space will need less intensive maintenance.

11.2.3 Where maintenance requirements do increase in a localised area, the maintenance budgets will be enhanced as a result of commuted sum contributions from external funding sources, such as Section 106 agreements.
12. Resourcing the Strategy

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 The means of resourcing the strategy will primarily, though not exclusively, be delivered via the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) and economic regeneration processes, as these are the catalysts which provide the greatest driver to change in the conurbation. These processes are predicated on the need for partnership and developer-led delivery arrangements in close consultation with local communities and stakeholders within both the public and private sectors.

12.1.2 It is the HMR and economic regeneration processes that will provide much of the justification for funding when applying / bidding for grants / match-funding from public agencies and they will also guide the policy framework that requires contributions toward green space from developers. These will be the primary sources of funding for this strategy alongside ongoing local authority capital and revenue budgets, which it is assumed will continue at their existing budget level.

12.1.3 It is important to prioritise funding so that best value can be achieved. Therefore, internal revenue funding (including income from concessions and sites given to alternative uses), capital from any site disposal that may happen in the future, external capital funding and developer contributions will need to be co-ordinated across each local authority to ensure that a co-ordinated approach to green space planning and delivery can be achieved.

12.1.4 To achieve this it is recommended that a funding strategy should be developed to help deliver the actions detailed within the Action Plan Programme (cf. Action GA26). This strategy has started this process, directing where funds should be applied and how they might be attained, but it will be for each authority to develop their own (or a joint), comprehensive approach to these issues.

12.2 Developer Contributions

12.2.1 Developer Contributions will primarily arise out of development proposals within area-based masterplans, which should be informed by the local standards set out within this strategy, and planning applications involving 10 or more new residential dwellings or on a site of at least 0.4 ha but involving fewer than 10 dwellings. Therefore, it is vital that this strategy sets out a sound method for calculating the contributions required of any given development proposal based on the local standards.

12.2.2 Currently, the City and the Borough use two different methods for calculating Section 106 contributions for green space and ask for different amounts based on these different calculations, with Stoke asking for significantly more than Newcastle. Therefore, it would reduce any disparity between the Authorities if both Authorities move towards the application of one calculation.

12.2.3 The standard formula proposed is based on the Local Standards and calculated as follows:
Table 12a: Calculating Developer Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Space Typology</th>
<th>rate (£/m²)</th>
<th>rate (£/ha)</th>
<th>Local Standard (ha/1,000 pop.)</th>
<th>Funding Required per Dwelling*</th>
<th>Contribution Standard (ha/1,000 pop.)</th>
<th>Funding Required per Dwelling*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>£40</td>
<td>£398,977</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>£758</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>£309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and Gardens</td>
<td>£19</td>
<td>£191,055</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>£1,122</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>£573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Natural</td>
<td>£5</td>
<td>£53,474</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>£307</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>£154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Nature Reserve</td>
<td>£9</td>
<td>£94,389</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>£307</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>£307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sports</td>
<td>£40</td>
<td>£398,475</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>£897</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>£448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on a Figure of 2.5 people per dwelling

12.2.4 Developer Contributions do not require the full Local Standard provision for a development to be funded by developers, as this would be such a large figure that it might act as a disincentive to developers and therefore reduce the number of development proposals coming forward and being delivered. However, the Contribution Standard modifies the Local Standard to allow a reasonable sum (as compared to current sums required and those required by other authorities) to be asked for capital development / improvement of green space, based on the following priorities:

- The need to create **equipped** play facilities (NEAPs / LEAPs) accessible to all – hence the 0.31 ha per 1,000 population contribution standard for Play (which is the full local standard for **equipped** play facilities)
- The need to provide high quality Local Nature Reserves accessible to all – hence the contribution standard for LNRs is the full local standard of 1.30 ha per 1,000 population
- The need to improve Parks provision, particularly Sub-Regional and District Parks (i.e. Strategic level actions) – hence the 1.20 ha per 1,000 population contribution standard for Parks (half the full local standard)
- The need to ensure that high quality other semi-natural green spaces are provided – hence the 1.15 ha per 1,000 population contribution standard (half the full local standard)
- The need to implement qualitative improvements to outdoor sports facilities and ensure that half of sites become fully unrestricted – hence the 0.45 ha per 1,000 population contribution standard for Outdoor Sports

12.2.5 This creates a total contribution requirement for capital development / improvement of green space of **£1,791** per dwelling. In addition to this, there is a requirement for contributions for maintenance of green space in the vicinity of a new development, be it
new or existing green space. This is of equal importance to the creation of new space because maintenance is crucial for maintaining quality.

12.2.6 The Stoke-on-Trent Supplementary Planning Guidance for New Residential Development and the Provision of Public Green Space Areas and Facilities sets out a maintenance element to the developer contribution based on 10 years maintenance and inflation. It calculates this to be £1,920 per dwelling. It is suggested that this figure be brought forward as part of the developer contribution calculation for both Stoke and Newcastle within this strategy.

12.2.7 However, where a proposed development does not require the creation of new green space to meet the demand that will be created by the proposed development (i.e. it can be met by improving existing facilities only), the maintenance element should be reduced to reflect this as the existing facilities already have maintenance budgets and these will only need topping up in light of the greater demand placed on the sites. As such, only 60% of the maintenance contribution will be required for the maintenance of existing off-site facilities (£1,152 per dwelling).

12.2.8 Therefore, for any residential development involving 10 or more dwellings or on a site of at least 0.4 ha, a contribution up to a total of £3,711 per dwelling would be required of the developer for green space.

12.2.9 The cut-off point of 10 or more dwellings or at least 0.4 ha for applications involving fewer dwellings has been selected on the basis that this is the policy currently used by Newcastle (Policy C4 in the Local Plan). Stoke’s current approach (set out in the City Plan, Policy GP7) involves the potential to waive or reduce the requirement for applications comprising less than 30 dwellings but this is a very generous allowance compared to most Authorities across the country and so the Borough’s cut-off point was deemed more reasonable.

12.2.10 This contribution could be made financially, in-kind by some green space delivery and / or maintenance as part of the proposal or a combination of the two. Which of these three options is levied will depend on negotiation with the developer and, most importantly, on what the wider green space strategy is for the surrounding area.

12.2.11 For example, if the surrounding area has sufficient quantity of each typology, even taking into account the additional population created by the development, it would be inappropriate to allow the developer to deliver some new green space on their own site as their contribution. Instead, a financial contribution would be more appropriate as it could be put toward sub-regional facilities or improving the quality of the green space serving the new development.

12.2.12 However, if there is a gap in provision that can be met by a developer delivering a green space as part of their proposals this should be considered by the Local Authority as part of the green space developer contribution required for that proposal, ensuring that they produce the space to an acceptable standard.

12.2.13 Therefore, it can be seen that it is essential that the quantitative output of the Local Standards be tempered by a qualitative understanding of the wider strategy for green space in the locality of development proposals to determine how the Contributions are levied. The additional benefit of this approach is that it creates a clear basis for requesting developer contributions and the developers know exactly where their money is going.
12.2.14 The Anticipated Income from Developer Contributions for the creation or improvement of green space (i.e. capital developments and not maintenance) can be estimated as follows:

**Table 12b: Estimating Developer Contributions (exc. Maintenance)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Developer Contribution Required per Dwelling</th>
<th>Potential Additional Households to 2026</th>
<th>Anticipated Developer Contributions to 2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stoke-on-Trent</td>
<td>£1,791</td>
<td>7,541</td>
<td>£13,507,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle-under-Lyme</td>
<td>£1,791</td>
<td>4,426</td>
<td>£7,927,658</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12.2.15 The figures for potential additional households to 2026 in Table 12b above are taken from Table 1 on page 110 in the North Staffordshire Core Spatial Strategy Revised Preferred Options Report (March 2007) and are based on the residual number of dwellings to be found in urban North Staffordshire by 2026, in relation to the targets set in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy for North Staffordshire.

12.2.16 Clearly, these figures are only estimates based on the targets for provision of new households in urban North Staffordshire by 2026 (targets which may change or may not be achieved) but it gives a good indication of the potential funding that can be gained from developer contributions if the full contribution is secured on each development proposal. However, if the developer contribution for capital development / improvement of green space that is secured is regularly not that which is being sought here, either because it has been reduced through negotiation with the developer or because an alternative calculation is used, this may create a significant gap in the funding for this strategy.

12.2.17 This raises an issue that it is quite possible may emerge if either the sums gained from developer contributions or the funding from public agency programmes are, ultimately, not as large as budgeted for. In the absence of future investment from Partners, the resulting gap in funding would likely need to be sourced by disposing of the land that is surplus to the green space local standards. Subject to statutory planning requirements, ownership constraints, community wishes and local design issues, release of surplus green space for development is an option to be explored. In this instance, to maximise the contribution of green space to the sustainable communities agenda, the capital receipts from green space land sales would need to be ring-fenced for the creation, improvement and maintenance of other green space (cf. Action GA18).

**The Planning Gain Supplement**

12.2.18 The Planning Gain Supplement, if it is taken forward, will result in significant changes to the negotiation of Section 106 agreements / planning obligations (i.e. developer contributions) and, therefore, potentially to the amount of developer contributions that are collected and that are made available for green space improvements. While it is by no means certain that the ideas within the Planning Gain Supplement will be adopted, it is worth mentioning them here and assessing how they would affect the developer contributions funding element of this strategy.

12.2.19 In essence, the Planning Gain Supplement seeks to scale-back the scope of planning obligations, reducing negotiation of section 106 agreements, in the main, to just affordable housing. In its place, the Planning Gain Supplement would require a
proportion of the value up-lift gained when a site is given planning permission as the developer contribution.

12.2.20 While this proposal would seek to speed up the planning application process and would be a more certain and transparent process for the developer and the public, there are concerns as to how the contribution would be sub-divided between different sectors that would currently benefit from planning obligations (e.g. green space and transport/highways) and who would decide this split, how the loss of flexibility will impact on the ability to provide “in-kind” contributions (such as the developer creating a new green space where it is needed rather than giving the Local Authority a financial contribution) and how it may, ultimately, result in a lower level of contributions overall.

12.2.21 Therefore, it is clear that, if the Planning Gain Supplement is taken forward (which the government says it would not be until at least 2009 at the earliest), it is likely to have a significant impact on a crucial source of funding for this strategy, creating a significant gap in the funding.

12.3 External Funding

12.3.1 The majority of funding that will not come from developer contributions or Partners will need to be sourced from public sector funding programmes. These might include:

- Advantage West Midlands, including North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone
- English Partnerships
- The Housing Corporation
- The Heritage Lottery Fund
- Other Lottery Fund sources
- Sport England
- DBERR / DCLG
- Natural England / DEFRA
- Groundwork
- The Forestry Commission
- Staffordshire County Council
- EU Structural Funds
- EU LIFE and LIFE+ Funds
- Charitable Organisations
12.4 Maximising Income Generation from other sources

12.4.1 At a local level, additional funding for both capital and revenue expenditure can be maximised by the appropriate commercial management of existing green spaces, particularly strategic green spaces. They can provide a source of ongoing income while providing a service for visitors to the green spaces.

12.4.2 The process to raise additional income or resources, or apply their proceeds, cannot be approached in an ad hoc fashion. It is therefore recommended that both authorities create appropriate mechanisms to seek to control and coordinate these activities.

12.4.3 This strategy has recommended each strategic site should be considered a business unit in its own right with its own management/business plan (cf. Action GA2), with clarity regarding income, expenditure, enhancement, maintenance, management activities and events being essential elements. It is also recommended that these individual business units come together to form a single business unit that is centrally co-ordinated within each authority.

Introducing new and additional commercial ventures into strategic green spaces

12.4.4 This strategy recommends the improvement of a network of multi-faceted, high quality strategic sites within the conurbation’s overall network of green space. These are intended to attract visitors from large catchment areas. If developed, managed and maintained correctly, these parks will benefit from high visitor footfall and this will offer opportunities to commercial operators.

12.4.5 The introduction of commercial operators is an efficient means by which to introduce an expanded range of ancillary services and leisure opportunities. These new opportunities will attract additional visitors into the green spaces from which they operate and will therefore help underpin their collective success (that of the business and that of the park).

12.4.6 The introduction of new and additional commercial activities has a number of advantages:

- New facilities and services can be introduced to green space at no cost to either local authority – the capital and revenue burden will rest with the commercial operator
- Commercial operators can apply clear focus to operation and development of the commercial opportunity
- The right commercial operator can apply the right levels of expertise and experience to ensure delivery of quality services
- Commercial operators are more flexible and agile in being able to respond to changes in demand
- In the case of the reuse of an existing building within a public park by a commercial operator, local authorities would be relieved from the ongoing cost to sustain and maintain the building
- Commercial operators will be required to pay for the privilege of operating from any given area of green space, and hence additional income streams will be produced for the development, management and maintenance of green space
12.4.7 It is essential that the right type and quality of commercial operators and activities be introduced. These should match the function of the site in which they are located and should add to the quality of visitor experience. Nationally, small cafes and tearooms have proven popular in many formal parks. However, the small scale of these ventures can mean that, whilst they provide a valuable amenity within a given park, the income stream that they produce is relatively small.

12.4.8 It is therefore recommended that both local authorities undertake an assessment within their Funding Strategies of the potential to introduce a small number of larger commercial operators into strategic green spaces. The services offered by such operators should ideally be ancillary to the function of the green space and add to its attractiveness as a visitor destination. If such operators can be identified and secured, their operations could provide an ongoing income for the ongoing management and maintenance of green space, as well as attracting considerable numbers of visitors to sites.

12.4.9 The nature of some large, commercial operators could mean that, in addition to the core business, other ancillary facilities are provided, such as good quality toilets, security and maintenance. In the case of small-scale operators, it is recommended that their operations be designed to underpin and enhance the distinctiveness of the green space in which they are situated, particularly if the site has an identified theme. Irrespective of size, it is essential that good quality services be provided.

12.4.10 In addition to provision of the core business of any commercial operator, it is also recommended that the potential to add in the provision and management of other services within green space as a condition of operation be considered and assessed within the Funding Strategy. In this respect, operations that may not be commercially viable or attractive in their own right could be packaged with profitable opportunities within green space. By way of example, the operator of a profitable café may also be required to provide and operate seasonal boat hire on a lake within the park in which the café is based.

12.4.11 It is recommended that the starting point for the introduction of new and additional commercial activities should be:

- A clear understanding of what is done now: income accrued, benefits produced and lessons learned. Integral to this process must be a comprehensive assessment of the costs (both actual and opportunity) and benefits associated with existing building usage within the conurbation’s green space, whether commercial, community or voluntary based.

- An assessment of what needs to be done, what sorts of commercial ventures are acceptable and where (this needs to be reflected in management and development plans for respective green spaces). This should draw on local and national best practice.

- What opportunities exist and how best to realise them, including a cost / benefit analysis.

Revisit Charges for Existing Use of Facilities, Buildings and Services

12.4.12 There are a number of recreational services offered from within the conurbation’s green space. Some of these services have a charge for use and some do not. It is recommended that, within the Funding Strategies, where charges exist at present, the true cost of the service provided be identified and compared to charges made. It is
essential that the level and reason for any subsidy is identified and made clear. It is also recommended that all existing arrangements be the subject of a cost / benefit analysis that considers both existing demand and the potential to improve the quality of existing provision, or provide alternative provision.

**Introduce Additional but Reasonable Charges**

12.4.13 New, high quality facilities have been introduced into many of the conurbation’s most significant green spaces. Some of these facilities present the opportunity to implement higher charges or charges where none are levied at present.

12.4.14 It is recommended that all charging opportunities apparent within the conurbation’s green space be identified within the Funding Strategies. It will be for each local authority to consider the costs, benefits and logistics of new charges but it is clear that the opportunity does exist to raise additional income that can be used to support the development, management and maintenance of the conurbation’s green space.

12.4.15 Where charges could be implemented, but are not, the reason must be clear. This information must be used to determine where the burden of subsidy should rest (i.e. if a service that provides leisure opportunities for elderly people involves little or no charge, who should contribute to the cost of the service; should it be the grounds maintenance function or should it rest with departments or organisations responsible for services to the elderly or should it be both?).

**Seek Additional Sponsorship**

12.4.16 There are some existing examples of sponsorship within the conurbation, for example, the maintenance of some prominent roundabouts at major road intersections are sponsored by a variety of organisations. There may be other opportunities to attract sponsorship to other green spaces.

12.4.17 Invariably, sponsors want to be associated with high quality facilities, goods and services. Therefore, as the quality of prominent green spaces within the conurbation rises, so too does the potential for additional sponsorship. In addition to future improvements, the potential to attract sponsorship of recent improvements must also be considered.

12.4.18 It is recommended that the current level and approach to sponsorship be assessed within the Funding Strategies with regards to its strengths and weaknesses and that this be used to inform a coordinated approach to attain additional sponsorship.

**Maximise Revenue from Events**

12.4.19 The conurbation’s green space already hosts a range of events, from small, local events to comparatively large events that attract large numbers of visitors. These events often include catering and refreshment vendors who are attracted by potential profits. The conurbation’s green space also host large funfairs and it is reasonable to assume that these too operate for financial profit. Therefore, it is recommended that existing charges for the use of green space for the purposes of events and profits accrued are scrutinised and assessed within the Funding Strategies with regards to income maximisation and to ensure that income accrued is invested back into green space. However, in doing so, sight must not be lost of the social and community importance of events.
Seek financial assistance from partners based on direct positive benefits of green space to areas of their direct responsibility

12.4.20 Traditionally, the responsibility to provide, develop, manage and maintain green space within the conurbation has rested mainly with both local authorities. However, partnership arrangements should be used as a means to highlight the wide-ranging benefits of green space and in doing so demonstrate the wider range of partners that could be approached to share responsibility. By way of example, local Primary Care Trusts may wish to contribute towards the cost of providing and supporting a walking scheme to reduce costs associated with treating the symptoms of poor health due to a lack of activity or as a means to treat those that may have already suffered from ill-health.

Dispose of Surplus Land

12.4.21 The disposal of surplus green space has already been discussed as an alternative for further funding if some expected funding does not become available (see paragraph 12.2.15). However, this should also be considered as a viable option within the initial budget for this strategy and, as such, be reviewed as part of the Funding Strategies of each Authority.

12.4.22 It is recommended that disposal of relatively small portions of large green spaces be considered and assessed in full, particularly where a site is larger than it needs to be for its hierarchy and typology. This could be land at the edges of the green spaces or sites within the green space that could be considered for a change of use. These changes in use could:

- Introduce new users into the green space
- Increase natural surveillance of the green space
- Improve the environment immediately adjacent to the green space
- Create income in the form of capital receipt from the sale of the land
- Create income in the form of capital and revenue funds accrued from the developer contributions gained from any residential development on the land

12.4.23 Action RA4 is an example of a site where this might be applicable. Grange Park is only required as a Local Park in the hierarchy of Parks & Gardens but the site is 18 ha in size. Given its location within an ARF area, a large proportion of the site may provide a useful plot of land for residential or other development, retaining the local park element of the green space as an integral part of the new development.

12.4.24 In addition, those sites listed as requiring a review of their maintenance regimes (Action RA2) may provide a similar resource if they are deemed as unnecessary or inappropriate for maintaining as green space and are in an appropriate location with regard planning and regeneration policy. This wholesale disposal of individual green spaces should only be considered if:

- There are no functional green space deficits within the locale that the green space could address, if converted or enhanced
- The loss of the green space would be compensated by replacement green space of improved quality that more closely meets community need. This could be provided as new green space or through the enhancement of existing green space.

12.5 Summary

12.5.1 A variety of funding sources are available to support this strategy. However, it is clear that identifying the appropriate funding sources and attracting the funding itself is crucial to the implementation of this strategy. Therefore, it is vital that Action GA2 is undertaken as a priority upon adoption of this strategy and that the Funding Strategy is followed up and implemented in turn.
13. Monitoring Performance

13.1 Performance Indicators

13.1.1 Monitoring has become an important part of local government practice over recent times and it serves to ensure that the actions a strategy such as this set in motion are completed, completed to a high quality and achieve the impacts intended. This latter point is particularly relevant to enable a learning process, so that, where an action is seen not to have been a success in achieving its aim, it is not repeated in the same way again, but can be modified or replaced to better achieve objectives.

13.1.2 Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council have a series of performance indicators for a variety of services that are used to monitor performance. These can be drawn upon to monitor the implementation of this strategy and the impacts of the actions set out in this strategy.

13.1.3 The following provides a list of such indicators that can be utilised for the monitoring of this strategy. It is not an exhaustive list and should be developed upon as new indicators emerge to ensure a robust and thorough monitoring of performance for this strategy. The list is divided into which aim of the Green Space Strategy the indicator can contribute to the monitoring of.

“Ensure that the strategic planning, management and maintenance of the conurbation’s green space supports the environmental, economic and social regeneration of urban North Staffordshire”
- All Indicators

“Improve the quality, accessibility and coherence of green spaces within urban North Staffordshire”
- % of users satisfied with parks and open spaces
- % of all residents satisfied with parks and open spaces
- Number of Parks with Green Flag status
- % of people feeling safe using parks and open spaces
- Number of trees planted
- Number of playgrounds per 1000 children
- % of playgrounds meeting NPFA criteria
- % of Peoples Panel with excellent or satisfactory impression of parks and open spaces
- % of park paths fair or good
- Number of park dog waste bins
- Number of park litter bins
- Area of parks and green spaces managed for biodiversity
- Number of sites designated for alcohol regulations
- % of TPO applications determined within specified time

“Promote the co-ordination of responsibilities and resource allocation across agencies, authorities and local groups to improve service delivery and to maximise the potential of available funding”
- Expenditure on parks improvement from non-mainstream sources
- % of landscape design clients satisfied with value for money
- % of emergency call out targets met
- Net cost of parks and green space (per ha or per head)
- % of DSO complaints met in target time
“Raise the profile and importance of quality green space as a key ingredient in the delivery of sustainable communities and housing market renewal”
- Number of school parties in guided walks or activities provided by environment team
- Number of schools joining Eco-Schools programme
- Number of schools gaining a new Eco-Schools award
- Number of volunteer hours
- Number of community groups assisted

“Create a strategic framework that facilitates a coherent and co-ordinated approach to the creation, improvement, protection, disposal, management, maintenance and funding of green spaces within urban North Staffordshire, which can be embedded within strategic and local policy by provision of a robust, coherent and clear set of tools for delivery at a local level”
- Expenditure on parks improvement from non-mainstream sources
- % of landscape design clients satisfied with value for money
- % of emergency call out targets met
- Net cost of parks and green space (per ha or per head)
- % of DSO complaints met in target time

“Highlight the value of green space in contributing to corporate strategic aims and objectives”
- Number of school parties in guided walks or activities provided by environment team
- Number of schools joining Eco-Schools programme
- Number of schools gaining a new Eco-Schools award
- Number of volunteer hours
- Number of community groups assisted

13.2 Future Consultation

13.2.1 Consultation forms an important element of monitoring, as it will give an indication of how the public perceive green spaces in the conurbation. As the implementation of this strategy progresses, consultation will therefore give a reliable picture of the general impact of the actions within the strategy and how successful they have been, although full judgement of the actions should be reserved until the collective impacts of the entire APP can be seen.

13.2.2 Given the importance placed on consultation, Actions GA3, GA4, GA7 and GA27 will all be of importance in collating public opinion, involving the community in green space management and maintenance and in using and making available the information gained from these activities.

13.2.3 Green space is primarily created, managed and maintained for the public and so this strategy values the views of the public and seeks to involve communities in the development of green space, both local and strategic. As such consultation will be given an important role in the monitoring of this strategy.
14. **Summary of the Strategy’s Key Points**

14.1 This Green Space Strategy for urban North Staffordshire has an over-arching vision to:

> “Create and promote a balanced network of community-focused, valued, safe, sustainable, accessible, interesting and well-managed green spaces that enhance the quality of life, local identity and economic prosperity within urban North Staffordshire.”

14.2 To achieve this vision six aims have been set that are strategic in nature and collectively, if achieved would see the vision achieved. Alongside these aims there are nine objectives that provide the basis for activity within the strategy that provide the basis for achieving the aims.

14.3 The strategy has established a series of local standards for green space that should be utilised to form the basis of green space development and improvement across the conurbation and that should inform local planning policy, spatial masterplanning and the development processes generally. These standards ensure an appropriate level of provision of green space for urban North Staffordshire in relation to quantity, quality, accessibility and connectivity.

14.4 Taking into account the context surrounding green space in urban North Staffordshire, in particular the sustainable communities agenda and housing market renewal objectives, an Action Plan Programme has been developed, setting out a series of general, typology-specific and site-specific actions that, collectively, will see the local standards achieved and the vision and aims of this strategy realised.

14.5 This Action Plan Programme provides for the delivery, management and maintenance of high quality green space across the conurbation sets out a phased timescale for doing so. Indicative costs for this work have been established, alongside potential sources of funding, and monitoring indicators identified to ensure that the strategy is implemented and that it achieves the stated aims of the strategy and value for money.

14.6 The key to ensuring that this Action Plan Programme is realised and achieves all it is intended to do lies in the delegation of organisational responsibilities and the management of these responsibilities in ensuring the delivery of actions. This should be considered a matter of priority and the relationships and responsibilities for delivering actions should be agreed as soon as possible.

14.7 Overall, the implementation of this strategy will lead to the delivery of a green space network of the highest quality, accessible to all and providing a range of functions. The green spaces will be valued, safe and sustainable because the community will have a sense of ownership over them and will want to use them and they will be managed and maintained to remain at this level of provision.

14.8 The presence of such an excellent asset in North Staffordshire will provide positive impacts for parallel strategic initiatives and will improve other areas of life for the community as well. Ultimately, the quality of life and economic prosperity of the conurbation will be raised, while the existing local identity and heritage will be maintained and built upon. North Staffordshire will be perceived as a more attractive place to live, work and relax as a direct result of this green space strategy.
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