

SUBJECT:	<i>Chiltern and South Bucks Open Spaces Strategy</i>
REPORT OF:	<i>Director of Services – Steve Bambrick</i>
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	<i>Head of Healthy Communities - Martin Holt</i>
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WARD/S AFFECTED	<i>All</i>

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 On 12th June 2018 the draft Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy was presented to members. The report detailed the strategy's key findings and recommendations in relation to the quality and supply of open spaces/parks across the district.
- 1.2 To verify the strategy's accuracy, Healthy Communities Policy Advisory Group requested that it be subject to an additional further round of public consultation with the district's Town and Parish Councils and other key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The attached updated strategy reflects the feedback captured through the additional consultation.
- 1.4 Cabinet is requested to formally adopt the strategy so that it can be used to inform the emerging Local Plan and support local Town and Parish Councils and other community groups improve facilities.

The PAG is asked to advise the Portfolio Holder on the following recommendation to Cabinet:

RECOMMENDATION

That members recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities that Cabinet formally approve the South Bucks and Chiltern Open Space Strategy and utilise its findings to support the implementation of the new Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The South Bucks and Chiltern Open Space Strategy is a key document in helping inform the new Local Plan.

- 2.2 Improving access and the quality of open space provision contributes directly to improving the health and wellbeing of residents. Also an up to date audit of South Bucks existing open space provision will enable Parish Councils, Town Councils and local community groups to attract inward investment by providing robust evidence of existing shortfalls in provision.

3. Content of report

- 3.1 In March 2016 Chiltern and South Bucks Councils jointly commissioned a specialist consultant, Strategic Leisure, to undertake an Open Space Strategy. The Strategy's key aims were to:

- Inform and support the newly emerging Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan to provide a concise, robust and comprehensive evidence base that enables both Councils to develop planning policies which are sufficient to withstand scrutiny at an Examination in Public.
- Increase participation in by bringing together key community organisations to develop a co-ordinated approach to effectively manage recreational and open space provision.
- Achieve a joined-up strategy with localised priorities to develop sustainable facilities that support increased participation.
- Support community groups and others to access external funding.

- 3.2 The scope of the open space assessment criteria is detailed below with each site visit involving both a qualitative and quantitative assessment:

- Public parks and gardens
- Amenity greenspace
- Provision for children and young people
- Allotments and community gardens
- Recreation grounds (where applicable)
- Accessible areas of countryside on the urban fringe
- Cemeteries

- Civic Spaces
- Natural and semi-natural greenspaces

3.3 The methodology employed to reach the strategy's conclusions included a number of elements which are detailed below:

- Review of national, regional and local strategies and policy documents relevant to the exercise.
- Use of quantitative standards in accordance principles contained in the PPG17 Companion Guide (i.e. by applying a local standard based on new Fields in Trust standards to different types of open spaces grouped in accordance with the PPG17 typology in terms of ha per 1,000 population).
- Division of open spaces into typology consisting of a number of different and discrete amenity "types".
- Creation of a qualitative template to include key elements of design and maintenance.
- Qualitative on-site assessment of open spaces distributed throughout Chiltern and South Bucks in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the principles contained in the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 Companion Guide.
- Analysis of results to qualitatively assess the condition of open spaces.
- Use of accessibility standards as defined by the Fields in Trust Guidance Document.
- Defining of a parish questionnaire, distribution to all parishes within Chiltern and South Bucks and analysis of questionnaire results.
- Drafting key conclusions relating to the current state of open spaces in Chiltern and South Bucks.
- Drafting recommendations relating to the significance of open space Chiltern and South Bucks and Chiltern in relation to the Local Plan.

3.4 Following the site assessments a range of key findings were identified. These included evidence of:

- A very large supply of parks and gardens in the district, largely due to sizeable accessible land-holdings such as Burnham Beeches, Black Park and Cliveden.
- Open spaces in the district being clean and well-maintained at the time of audit, particularly parks and gardens.
- Play sites needing new safety surfacing to avoid risk in future, with some unconnected to footpaths or vehicle parking, resulting in a long walk across grass
- Signage needs improvement to make open spaces of all types more welcoming, and to create a "sense of place."
- A shortage of play sites, partially owing to a lack of available informal space (kick a bout, picnic areas, etc.). The Fulmer area in particular is deficient.
- The district having healthy quantities of natural and semi-natural greenspace which is accessible to residents and other visitors.
- Amenity greenspace being well-provided, with some large open spaces such as Gerrards Cross Common.
- All settlements with the exception of Gerrards Cross having large quantities and good distribution of accessible natural and semi-natural greenspace.
- Adequate provision of allotments.
- More use of tree planting and natural landscaping in the form of floral or managed grass meadow would improve biodiversity, provide shade, and improve appearance.

4. Consultation

4.1 Following completion of the draft strategy it was agreed by the Healthy Communities Policy Advisory Group that there should be an additional round of consultation with key stakeholders to verify the accuracy and content of the document. Town and Parish Councils were given an additional month to report back issues specific to their respective localities. Collectively these two rounds of

consultation provided invaluable information which has been used to improve the accuracy of the strategy.

4.2 This has included updating and incorporating the correct site names of all the assessed sites, capturing any improvements which have recently been undertaken, updating any inaccuracies in the strategy's findings for specific sites and ensuring the population data used is accurate to identify any shortfall and over-supply in provision.

4.3 Looking ahead given the ongoing changes to open space provision Town and Parish councils along with local community groups will be encouraged to provide information of any improvements to the district councils. This will allow the strategy to be regularly updated and accurately reflect local needs.

4.4 Internally, the Council's Planning and Economic Development Department has supported the strategy throughout its development, advising on key issues such as population growth, planning issues and settlement sizes.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Financial – There are no direct financial implications to the Council arising from the report.

5.2 Legal – NPPF guidelines require local authorities to

- Avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain and enhance the character of open spaces
- Ensure that open spaces do not suffer from encroachment (from traffic flows, etc.)
- Protect and enhance rights of way
- Consider the impacts of development on biodiversity and nature conservation.

6. Links to Council Policy Objectives

6.1 Sustainable Environment – The strategy will help protect the district's green infrastructure and facilitate improved provision for residents to access both now and in the future.

- 6.2 Safe, Healthy and Active Communities – South Bucks District Council has a duty to consider the health and wellbeing of its community, enabling improved access and provision of open spaces would directly support this as well as strengthen partnership working with Town and Parish Councils and the voluntary sector.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 Once adopted the strategy will be presented to key stakeholders including Town and Parish Councils and local environmental community groups so that they are aware of its key findings and recommendations.
- 7.2 Following this the strategy will be promoted on social media and made available on the Council's website to support stakeholders in funding bids to improve provision in their local communities as well as help inform the new Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan.

Background Papers:	Appendix 1 – Chiltern and South Bucks Open Space Strategy
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