

Green Spaces Strategy

1. Introduction

Our ambition is to ensure that the cultural, sporting and leisure opportunities of Oxford enhance the lives of all people in the city.

To achieve this ambition, the Council has adopted a series of aims, which reflect the varied ways in which leisure activities contribute to quality of life for both residents and visitors within Oxford. These aims are:

1. **To ensure equity of access and diversity of provision.**
2. **To encourage participation in healthier lifestyles.**
3. **To advance lifelong learning.**
4. **To protect and enhance the natural and built environment.**
5. **To enhance the recognition of Oxford through the pursuit of excellence, both locally and internationally.**
6. **To nurture and encourage community spirit and well-being.**

This document, the Green Spaces Strategy, outlines how the Council's work in relation to parks and green spaces will ensure the delivery of these aims, and how they contribute to the achievement of wider Cultural Strategy and Community Strategy aims. It covers a range of green spaces including playgrounds, recreation areas, parks, cemeteries, playing pitches and allotments.

2. Strategic context

How leisure fits into the bigger picture

In 2004, partner organisations in Oxford agreed a Community Strategy for the city, which agreed five themes:

1. Vibrant and inclusive economy
2. Safer communities
3. A better living environment
4. Opportunities for life
5. Active and healthy lifestyles

While cultural, sporting and leisure activities contribute to all of these themes, the vision statement for the active and healthy communities theme makes specific reference to cultural activities. It recognises that "good physical and mental health, and a sense of well-being require a healthy lifestyle and access to social, cultural and leisure activities".

The Cultural Strategy was agreed in 2002 and has two central objectives:

1. Ensuring that Oxford remains culturally rich for decades to come
2. Breaking down barriers that restrict access for residents and visitors

This Green Spaces Strategy outlines how the Council intends to deliver and maintain high quality green spaces that enable equal access and opportunity for all as well as protecting and enhancing the local environment. It:

- outlines how the Council's work in relation to parks and green spaces contributes to the achievement of the Cultural Strategy and the Community Strategy.
- summarises the current provision and quality of green spaces, and identifies areas that can be improved.
- highlights those aspects of our work in relation to green spaces that the Council has prioritised and explains why.

- provides a series of action plans that describe what the Council will do to drive forwards those areas that we have prioritised.

3. Developing the Strategy

In 1999 the Council amalgamated the client and contractor functions of Parks Management. Many of the historical problems of split responsibilities, cultural differences and conflict were solved, and after five years the service now enjoys a track record of delivery, with many new initiatives either achieved or on the way. We see continued success in national competitions: Britain in Bloom (Sept 2002), Winner of Britain in Bloom Regional Finals (Sept 2005), Best Kept Park for Florence Park 2005 and the Cemetery of the Year competition (Aug 2001).

In April 2004 the Council amalgamated the indoor Leisure Services with Parks, so that one unified service is provided, now enjoying various economies of scale in terms of promotion and administration. Now called Leisure and Cultural Services, the service:

- has responsibility for the development and management of over 1,000 hectares of public parks, sports pitches, recreation grounds, play areas, cemeteries and other green space;
- provides specialist horticultural and arboricultural advice, and nature conservation and play area maintenance advice as well as specialist commercial services to other groups, individuals and internal and external partners;
- is responsible for organising regular consultation exercises to ensure that we continue to provide the facilities that people want;
- manages arrangements for kiosks to sell ice cream and other refreshments in the summer, and operates tennis courts and other sporting facilities;
- manages twenty-eight nature parks and reserves that include the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation, a large country park and several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) that encompass a wide range of habitats and landscapes;
- protects the environment and seeks to improve the biological diversity across the whole city, (i.e. not just on City Council owned land).
- includes the burial service, which looks after a portfolio of four cemeteries and a number of disused burial sites and churchyards.
- acts as an enabler as well as a direct provider by working with external partners

Who are our customers?

The customer base of the unit is very wide and diverse. It caters directly for sports men and women, either individually or through clubs, and provides pleasant environments and activities for both tourists and local people of all ages to enjoy. Our parks are visited frequently by children and their families for casual recreation, to use the play areas and to attend events.

Recent consultation suggests that 9 out of 10 customers are satisfied with Oxford's parks (Talkback 2005), and the latest BV119 satisfaction indicator illustrates that Oxford is in the Upper quartile nationally.

3.1 What we will focus on

Reduction of Resources

Since the early 1990s expenditure on Oxford's parks and green spaces has been reduced year on year, as the impact of Competitive Compulsory Tendering (CCT) shifted the focus towards reducing maintenance costs rather than developmental and regeneration issues. The "CCT years" largely resulted in on-site staff being replaced by mobile maintenance teams and the withdrawal of parks based staff that were easily accessible to users. Partly as a consequence of this action, increased concerns about public safety in Parks occurred which in turn led to some reduction in usage and a general feeling that some of the parks are unsafe.

Parks Infrastructure

The "CCT years" also led to a concentrated effort on maintenance which has left the parks infrastructure (toilets, signs, pavilions, fences and pathways etc) neglected.

Safety

This can be evidenced both in our own customer surveys and in national research. The Oxford Talkback Panel was surveyed in August 2005. 28% of respondents believe parks should be made safer, with 30% wanting an increase in staff/wardens in parks and 33% of respondents wanting the removal of drunks and anti-social behaviour. Residents surrounding Gillians Park were surveyed in September 2005, and 15.5% of the respondents said that they did not visit the park because they felt unsafe due to anti-social behaviour – such as graffiti, litter and fly tipping, dog mess and drug abuse.

Play Areas

The Council manages and maintains 97 play areas throughout Oxford and there is concern about both the quantity and quality of them. While some of our play areas are very popular, a great many are not well used. Many were installed along with the original housing during the interwar and post-war period. They were designed for the demands of a population that has changed demographically and behaviourally. Much of the equipment dates back 30 years or more to the time of the original construction and now offers little play value to present generations of children whose expectations have changed.

National Context

These difficulties, which are mirrored across the whole country, have pointed to an urgent need for a new approach in the management of open space. As a result, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister established an Urban Green Spaces Taskforce who delivered the white paper "Living Places: Greener, Safer, Cleaner". One recommendation was to establish an organisation that would champion excellence in the design and management of parks, streets, squares and other open spaces in our towns and cities - CABI Space was formed in May 2003.

To tackle the issues facing Parks Departments, CABI Space is advocating a number of initiatives including:

- The re-introduction of on-site staff (ParkForce)
- Increase community involvement, through consultation and establishing Friends of Groups.
- Adoption of quality awards and frameworks such as The Green Flag Award

- Sourcing external funding, such as the New Opportunities and Heritage Lottery Funds.

The Current Position

In August 2005 a Green Space Study was completed which provided an assessment of the quantity, quality, and value of all green space in Oxford. It looked at provision both across the city as a whole and within individual urban villages. These urban villages were used for the study rather than electoral wards, as they take the effect of severance (from major roads, rivers etc) into account when evaluating catchment areas and likely levels of use.

The Oxford City Green Space Study incorporated several different assessments, including:

1. An assessment of the *supply* of open space through qualitative audit. It recommends a City standard of 5.75ha/1000 population.
2. A *quality* audit of sites. The average quality score is 61%, with scores ranging from 33-93%. The highest scoring sites are mainly City Parks and Churchyards, tending to be distributed in Central and Southern parts of the city. The lowest scoring sites are mainly playgrounds and local parks, with a concentration of low scoring sites in the eastern part of the city especially Wood Farm. As 70% is considered a 'Good' quality site this is the recommended aspirational score all sites should achieve.
3. An assessment of *value*, which considers the wider role of the site within its local context, levels and type of use and the wider benefits including ecological, landscape and historical designations.
4. Evaluation of current needs for open space through *consultation*.
5. An estimate of possible future demand and the establishment of a hierarchy of green space provision to meet this need.

From the evidence gathered the assessment formulates policies and strategies for the future, providing a number of recommendations for each urban village as well as the City as a whole. Generic recommendations include:

- Improve the quality of all sites that do not meet the required quality standard.
- Use the quality database to determine which sites are most in need of improvements to disabled access at each level of the hierarchy beginning with high-level sites.

A summary of the key findings from the Green Spaces Study is provided in Appendix 1.

3.2 Intended approach

As highlighted in the Overarching Leisure Strategy and in line with all aspects of cultural activities, our intention in relation to green spaces is to:

1. Use the principles outlined in the Overarching Leisure Strategy to determine our preferred level of involvement, preferred niche and preferred approach for each area of our activities.
2. Focus on service improvement.
3. Focus on achieving efficiency gains while maintaining effectiveness.

We seek to provide a mixture of large and small sites and we are the primary provider of parks and green spaces in the city. We directly provide some activities but we also support and enable community and interest groups to run their own. We work with both internal and external partners to help develop our parks and consider alternative management options for different sites. This also enables us to engage directly with communities and interest groups on the development and management of our sites.

Parks and green spaces are not subject to the Best Value Review that is being applied to other areas of our cultural activities, so it is unlikely that this will result in any significant changes to our current mode of operation. However, financial savings that are achieved through efficiency gains may be reallocated to activities that we would like to do but are currently unbudgeted. This will enable us to deliver a greater range of improved services within the same level of investment.

4. Strategy into action **What we intend to do**

With limited resources and some ambitious objectives, we need to prioritise our resources on the most important aspects. In evaluating our priorities, we have considered all of the areas highlighted above as well as how specific activities can contribute to wider corporate commitments and priorities.

The Action Plans in Section 6 provide further information on what the Council has prioritised and the actions it intends to undertake in relation to parks and green spaces.

4.1 Responsibility for delivery

Responsibility for delivering the actions outlined in this strategy and achieving our ambition in relation to parks and green spaces lies primarily with the Parks Operations Team.

5. An evolving strategy **Monitoring and review**

The Overarching Leisure Strategy provides a broad overview of the priorities within our range of cultural services over the next 5 years to 2011, based on current circumstances. The four supporting strategies provide more detail about the actions that we intend to take to address these priorities over the same time scale. The delivery of these actions will be reviewed regularly: on a quarterly basis by the Business Manager for Leisure and Cultural Services and the Strategic Director for the Physical Environment, and every six months by regular reporting to our Scrutiny Committees.

5.1 Monitoring

Each of these strategies will need to be monitored regularly to ensure not only that we are completing the actions that we have identified but also that those actions are having their desired impacts and that levels of satisfaction and our performance show continuing improvement.

To enable effective monitoring and ensure that we achieve our aims, we will need to:

1. Identify key performance indicators
2. Establish robust and consistent mechanisms for capturing performance data

3. Identify comparators, to enable us to compare our performance with other providers both within and outside local government
4. Establish targets to help us drive improvements

These indicators will need to cover several aspects of our culture, sport and leisure provision, including:

- Usage figures, covering overall use, number of new users and the number and range of new uses, for example provision for minority sports
- Financial information, such as expenditure on leisure provision, income received from charges, external investment secured
- External recognition, either for Oxford as a brand and venue in regional and national arenas, or for the quality of the services we offer
- Satisfaction results, both through standard assessments and through the monitoring of complaints
- Internal management practices, relating to the frequency, quality and efficiency of maintenance and refurbishment programmes
- Community benefits, from the number of new interest or community groups established to the number of educational and recreational courses provided.
- Environmental responsibilities to protect and enhance habitats and to create new habitats where possible.
- Wider benefits, relating to the economic benefit arising from increasing the number of instructors trained, or the community safety benefit of reduced crime and antisocial behaviour.

Reference is made to many of these aspects in the Action Plans of the supporting strategies, and the frequency and nature of their monitoring will vary depending on the specific actions to which they relate.

5.2 Review

The strategies will also need to be reviewed regularly as local needs and circumstances change. Numerous factors might affect our strategic approach to cultural services, including:

- The appearance or disappearance of major competitors in provision of facilities
- Legislative changes
- Change in the political control of the Council
- Significant changes in performance
- Significant changes in satisfaction levels or customer feedback

The strategies will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to provide an effective response to local needs and circumstances. We will seek to engage users, non-users, residents and visitors alike, in the monitoring and review of these strategies.

6. Action Plan for Green Spaces Strategy

Aim 1: To ensure access and diversity

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Provide adequate infrastructure capacity to accommodate a diverse range of uses and activities.	1,5	6,2	Review provision of infrastructure including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets and equipment. Parks infrastructure including benches, resting places and shelter Allotment infrastructure including lighting, signage and security Power, water and communication services 	Establish base-line provision, identify shortfalls and enhance provision where currently lacking	2006	Within existing resources
				Consider all shortfalls in amenities identified and reported by users and management committees and associations when planning additional provision.	2006	Within existing resources
				Review nature and quality of paths, other surfaces and gateways in green spaces to ensure accessibility.	2006-07	Within existing resources
				Investigate options to expand the availability of healthy eating menus and fairly traded consumables at refreshment outlets.	2006	Within existing resources
				Assess the feasibility of park based café/restaurant provision as part of the review of refreshment outlets and catering.	2006	Within existing resources
				Review and identify sites that can accommodate diverse uses	2007	Within existing resources
			Work with schools, colleges and universities to encourage public use of their facilities both inside and outside term time.	2007	Resource needs currently unknown	
			Seek to increase the number and quality of small local spaces	2008	Within existing resources	

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Ensure that provision of facilities meets the needs of the population.	5,3	6,9,5,4	Review distribution and condition of play areas	Complete condition survey and audit. Categorise play areas and develop a hierarchy – city, neighbourhood and local playgrounds	2006	Within existing resources
				Identify recommendations, e.g. closure, improvements, and associated costs, Service Level Agreements, contractual needs etc	2006	Within existing resources
				Rationalise play areas in Wood Farm, Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys	2006	Within existing resources
				Increase provision of play areas for teenagers	2006 onwards	Investment required
			Review distribution, management and refurbishment of playgrounds	Use play area hierarchy to establish refurbishment programme	2006	Increased resource needs for refurbishment
				Introduce a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) programme	2007	Investment required
				Investigate alternative uses for underused sites, with a particular view to improve recreational opportunities for young people.	2006	Within existing resources
				Identify funding opportunities	2006	Within existing resources
			Ensuring future provision	Consult on play areas in urban village groups and use in conjunction with condition survey to plan future play area developments	2006	Resources insufficient to undertake the complete task
			Ensure that facilities and green spaces provide safe environments	Conduct relevant risk assessments, such as those around the removal of fallen trees	2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Ensure that adequate safety equipment is provided, e.g. lifesaving equipment around waterways	2006	Within existing resources
				Review staff training and development needs in health and safety issues	2006	Within existing resources
			Ensure sufficient playing pitch capacity to accommodate future growth	Develop a hierarchy of pitches to guide management and refurbishment.		Within existing resources
				Reduce provision of adult football pitches	2005	Within existing resources
				Increase provision of junior football pitches	2006	Within existing resources
				Rationalise bowling greens – Botley Park, Barton and Florence – investigate future use	2007	Within existing resources
				Review management of tennis facilities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Ensure provision of parks, nature reserves, allotments and other green spaces to meet needs	Create a hierarchy of parks to guide management and refurbishment - City, Neighbourhood and Local. City Parks – Cutteslowe, Florence, Hinksey, South Park, Court Place Farm, Blackbird Leys Park	2006
			Assess recommendations in Green Spaces Study regarding gaps in provision of parks and nature reserves and implement those feasible		2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Investigate options for shared of facilities and pitches that are currently underutilised		2006	Within existing resources
			Investigate further ways to prevent unauthorised vehicles entering parks		2006	Within existing resources
			Develop park management plans for city parks in association with local residents		2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Ensure that maintenance, management, development and refurbishment activities take account of community safety issues.	2006	Within existing resources
			Support the use and development of allotments	Review allotment leases and uptake to ensure that future provision will meet future need	2006	Within existing resources
				Introduce a refurbishment programme, funded by an 06-07 budget bid to improve signage, security, entrance gates and facilities.	2006	Within expected resources
			Work with Youth Service and other agencies to enhance provision of teenage activities within green spaces	Engage young people in the management of the green space portfolio	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Ensure that cemetery provision meets the needs of the population	Review plot uptake	2006	Within existing resources
				Identify future cemetery land	2005	Within existing resources
				Review Muslim burial services	2005	Within existing resources
Ensure equity in the standard / quality of services and activities provided	4,5	5,6	Improve the quality of facilities	Improve the quality and quantity of changing facilities, particularly for juniors, women, girls and people with disabilities.	2006 onwards	Investment required
				Establish and deliver a balanced and resourced maintenance programme for all sites and facilities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Seek to improve the quality of playing pitches in Oxford	2006 onwards	Investment required
Reduce the impact of cost as a barrier to	5,1	2,8,6	Promote take up of Slice Card	Specifically target disadvantaged groups with the benefits of the Bonus Slice	2006	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
participation				Develop a promotional campaign for sport and recreational activities that includes Slice Card promotion.	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Review fees and charges to ensure that they represent value for money	Review to take account of affordability and value for money for customers as well as for the authority.	Ongoing	Within existing resources
			Seek out opportunities for external funding to help subsidise access	Establish networks within the local/regional/national business community to maximise sponsorship potential	2006/7	Within existing resources
				Engage in partnership work with organisations eligible for wider funding sources	2006	Investment required
			Use S106 agreements to direct funds towards priority needs	Through the planning process, secure contributions towards improving outdoor sports facilities and other forms of open space and secure additional sporting/open space provision where this is needed.		Long term maintenance issues.
Identify and tackle perceived barriers to access, e.g. fear of crime.	5,2	2,5	Eliminate constraints that are seen to prohibit social and healthy use of green space.	Consult with communities to identify the barriers that negatively affect use of green space facilities	2007	Within existing resources
				Review by-laws to remove unnecessary restrictions	2006	Within existing resources
			Develop and implement actions to reduce fear of crime.	Develop the role of ranger teams in parks and investigate options to extend coverage	2005/6	Resources not sufficient to cover whole city
				Introduce manned sites to city parks	2005/6	Not currently resourced

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Ensure that operational standards and practices contribute towards the development of safer communities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Review practices in relation to locking of parks	2006	Within existing resources
Maintain and improve access to green spaces and the wider countryside	3,5	2,4	Maintain provision of open space	Maintain provision of green space at a minimum of 5.75 Ha/1000 population	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Increase provision of open space in areas highlighted by open space assessment as having inadequate provision eg Littlemore & Headington.	2007	Not currently resourced
			Improve access to surrounding farmland and green belt	Develop a countryside access strategy	2007	Within existing resources
			Assess formal and informal use of green spaces to identify conflicting uses and develop solutions	Maintain and enable use of lakes, streams, rivers and the canal for a range of activities & interests	2006-07	Within existing resources
				Enable and maintain evening access to open air sports facilities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Within parks, establish and maintain a balance between the provision and use of formal (pitches) and informal (open space) sites, to cater for all.	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Establish and maintain a range of activity or interest led partnerships to increase access to green spaces	2007 onwards	Within existing resources
Address physical barriers to access parks,	3,5	2,4	Ensure that green spaces cater for all abilities	Ensure that green space facilities comply with DDA legislation.	2008	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
green spaces and allotments				Investigate the feasibility of providing sensory gardens in city parks.	2006 onwards	Investment required
			Review transport options to ensure all sites can be accessed by a variety of means	Work with public transport providers to raise awareness of alternative means to access green spaces	2007	Not currently resourced
				Work with the County Council to develop and promote a safe and enjoyable walking network of streets and footpaths	2006 onwards	Resource needs currently unknown
				Work with transport providers and the County Council to seek improved transport infrastructure, including safe and convenient bus stops, cycle parking and safe pedestrian and cycle access	2006 onwards	Resource needs currently unknown
				Identify locations where new pedestrian/cycle crossings or bridges would enhance access.	2007	Not currently resourced
				Investigate options to integrate cycleways through and between parks and open spaces, linking the Dual Oxford Cycle Network and the National Cycle Network	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Assess car parking needs and introduce enforcement	2007	Within existing resources
			Ensure that first impressions of parks, open spaces and allotments are good	Review signage and other street furniture to ensure no unnecessary clutter	2006	Within existing resources
				Update signage so that it is consistent with OCC standards and includes contact numbers to report incidents or the presence of used needles.	2006 onwards	Resources insufficient to do the complete task

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Improve entrances to open spaces, parks and recreation grounds	2006 and onwards	Investment required
Widen audiences and participation	4,5	3,8,2	Promote green spaces as alternative venues for activities normally associated with other venue types	Introduce parks information leaflets and develop the website	2006	Investment Required
				Identify further potential outdoor venues	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Enhance experience of open space, sense of ownership and sense of place	Develop an “interpretation approach” to signage and promotional work.	2006	Investment required
			Encourage ideas and comments from users so that gaps in provision are identified naturally	Introduce friends groups for city parks	2006	Investment Required
			Work with a range of social and environmental clubs to ensure a broad spectrum of recreational and educational development activities in green spaces	Produce a strategy to develop countryside activities with clubs	2007	Within existing resources
				Encourage schools to participate in tree planting and other environmental activities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Aim 2: To encourage participation in healthier lifestyles

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Promote and enable opportunities for physical activity	3,5	2,3	Promote use of all forms of green space for physical activity	Develop partnership approaches with other council departments, health authority and social services	2007	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Develop ways to support user groups and associations in the promotion of their groups and activities	2006-07	Within existing resources
			Cater for non-active and socially excluded population	Work with sports development team to focus on target groups	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Deliver informal recreation development in open spaces	Explore direct delivery and grants to develop partnerships	2007	Investment required
				Promote sites to local people, through events and leaflets	2006	Investment required
Deliver sports development on street sports sites and other pitches	5,4	3,5	Investigate options to meet needs	Explore direct delivery as well as through leases, clubs, and external coaches across a full range of sports.	2007	Within existing resources
			Make available a range of organised physical activities to attract new users	Encourage providers to run taster sessions	2006	Within existing resources

Aim 3: To advance lifelong learning

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning	4	1,8,9	Encourage use of sites for educational purposes	Maintain and increase links with schools	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Provide structured programmes for learning, e.g. links with summer play schemes in open spaces	2006 onwards	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
			Provide opportunities within Leisure and Cultural Services	Investigate the potential for secondment and work placement opportunities	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
Encourage community-led development to develop skills and build capacity	3,2	1,8	Increase understanding of open spaces	Develop interpretation signage, leaflets, events and web pages	2006	Investment required
			Develop stronger links with groups/community associations.	Encourage the use of green space for play schemes	2008	Within existing resources
				Integrate initiatives on friends groups, local events, interpretation and publicity	2006	Investment required
				Encourage and support existing and new initiatives in biodiversity	2006	Within existing resources
Encourage formal and informal educational activities	4,3	1,9,3	Increase countryside learning activities with schools/colleges/community group	Promote and encourage the school use of allotments/nature reserves etc. for learning sessions	2007	Work with external partners required
				Encourage other arts and educational uses – sculpture, focus of poetry and photography competitions, local history and crafts	2006	Within existing resources
				Investigate the possibility of involving schools in the volunteer scheme for countryside sites	2006	Within existing resources
				Encourage third party suppliers of arts/performance projects occupying council green space to include an educational dimension in their operation	2007	Within existing resources

Aim 4: To protect and enhance the natural and built environment

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Maintain and enhance the built and natural heritage of the green space portfolio	3	4,8	Review relationships with Oxford Preservation Trust and agree common objectives		2008	Within existing resources
			Develop and implement a strategy to protect and enhance the biodiversity value of Oxford's green space portfolio, particularly where UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority habitats and/or species are present	Review biodiversity enhancement opportunities in all open space	2007	Within existing resources
				Assess Green Spaces Strategy to ensure that it delivers the duties and requirements of the European Habitats Directive	2006	Within existing resources
				Ensure management practices do not adversely affect biodiversity	2006	Within existing resources
				Enhance or restore the biodiversity interest of open spaces	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Encourage biodiversity enhancement in farmland and other land within the city and owned by the City Council	2007	Within existing resources
				Take measures to reduce the fragmentation and isolation of habitats by creating linkages between sites	2007	Within existing resources
				Improve networks and links to wildlife partnerships	2007	Within existing resources
Manage and enhance SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest)	3,4	4,1	Promote awareness and voluntary support of SSSIs and SLINCs (Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation) to ensure long-term sustainability.	Develop initiatives e.g. special projects, encouraging school use of sites and linking with local interest groups	2007	Investment required
				Work to secure grazing on SSSIs and other high wildlife sites	2007	Within existing resources
			ensure that management practices enhance SSSIs in the short term and sustain them into the future.	Review the management of SSSIs to ensure long term sustainability	2006-07	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Maintain green character of the city	3,1	4,7,10	Maintain a standards driven grounds maintenance service	Review methods of working for grounds teams to improve maintenance standards / frequency	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Introduce an apprenticeship scheme for the development of grounds staff	2006 onwards	Investment required
			Develop and implement a scheduled quality and improvement review programme that prioritises the management of all green space functions.	Review management information systems to determine a suitable operational performance framework for Parks and Green Spaces	2007	Investment required
			Improve where possible the links between green spaces	Use improved access arrangements and tree planting and planning powers to develop or preserve such links	2007	Within existing resources
				Preserve the wildlife value of allotments as habitats in their own right and as migration corridors	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Seek to achieve recognition of the green character of the city (green flag status, for example)	Review Oxford in Bloom	2006	Within existing resources
				Enter Britain in Bloom	2006	Within existing resources
				Increase standard of city parks to Green Flag standard	2006	Investment needed
			Enhance public awareness and experience of the environment	Investigate the potential to develop a series of trails through parks and open spaces, themed around energy, water, arts, heritage and ecology.	2006-07	Resource needs currently unknown
			Enhance links between the city and the countryside	Review options to enhance and increase wildlife corridors	2006-07	Within existing resources

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
				Investigate opportunities to improve access to and the enjoyment of the Thames Corridor, towpaths and the canal.	2006-07	Within existing resources
Manage the environmental impacts of our own activities	3	7,4	Develop and implement an environmental policy	Develop policy to address main environmental impacts	2008	Within existing resources
				Review green space policy and procedures to reduce its environmental impact	2008	Within existing resources
				Investigate and exploit opportunities to demonstrate good practice	2008	Within existing resources
Promote environmental good practice	3,4	4,6,8	Enable and promote responsible use and enjoyment of parks and green spaces	Improve networks and links to wildlife partnerships	2008	Within existing resources
				Encourage local community groups to apply for funding for environmental improvements	2006	Within existing resources
				Introduce a volunteer programme to help manage countryside spaces	2006	Within existing resources
			Manage the city's trees	Develop a tree removal policy	2007	Within existing resources
				Produce a tree strategy	2006	Within existing resources
				Produce and implement a tree planting programme	2006	Resources provide for maintenance for highways only
				Seek to secure resources for enhancement of leisure facilities over and above that available for transport issues	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
Seek alternative funding sources to provide an enhanced tree planting programme	2006 onwards	Within existing resources				

Aim 5: To enhance the recognition of Oxford through the pursuit of excellence

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Raise awareness of the potential uses and value of green spaces	4,5	3,8	Encourage third party use of green spaces to attract more visitors and raise awareness of their potential	Establish constructive relationships with local/regional media providers to raise awareness of green spaces and activities within them	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
			Complete the review of lease arrangements with a view to realising true market value	Update database	2006 onwards	Database maintenance issues
			Maximise contribution to local economy	Review seasonal approach to commercial activity within the green space portfolio	2008	Within existing resources
				Include locality as a selection criterion in tender processes	2006	Within existing resources
			Seek out opportunities for regional / national events	Actively promote parks and events as attractions for residents and tourists	2006 onwards	Investment required
				Promote existing horticultural show sites	2006	Within existing resources
Promote and celebrate excellence in sport	1,5	1,10	Capitalise on opportunities springing from the London Olympics in 2012	Develop three centres of excellence, including all weather pitches in North, Central and South areas of the city. Investigate options for development at: Court Place Farm, Cowley Marsh, Horspath, Blackbird Leys Park	2007 onwards	Investment required
			Create centre of excellence for cricket and rugby	2008	Requires additional resources and investment	
			Review long term management of Horspath Athletics track	2006 onwards	Requires additional resources and investment	

Aim 6: To nurture and encourage community spirit and well-being

Culture, Sport and Leisure Objective	Links to other strategies (see App 2)		High level actions	Detailed actions	Due date	Resource needs
	Community	Cultural				
Enhance community engagement and involvement	4,5	3,2	Identify customer needs to drive service improvement.	Undertake regular consultation to review services and their delivery	2006 onwards	May have resource implications
Provide support to community groups to help ensure their long-term sustainability	4,1	3,6,8	Develop a sense of “local ownership” of green space by working with communities and encouraging and enabling interest groups	Establish a network of community links and “Friends of” groups, to encourage input into green space management	2006	Additional resources required
				Promote groups and their events through leaflets and the web site	2006	Investment required
				Support allotment holders and their management committees to maintain local ownership of green spaces	2006 onwards	Within existing resources
				Implement a programme of special events in partnership with communities to enable music/arts/local interest performance in local environments	2007	Within existing resources
			Allow and enable cultural activities to go ahead within green space	Review by-laws to remove unnecessary restrictions	2006	Within existing resources

Appendix 1 Summary of Green Spaces Study

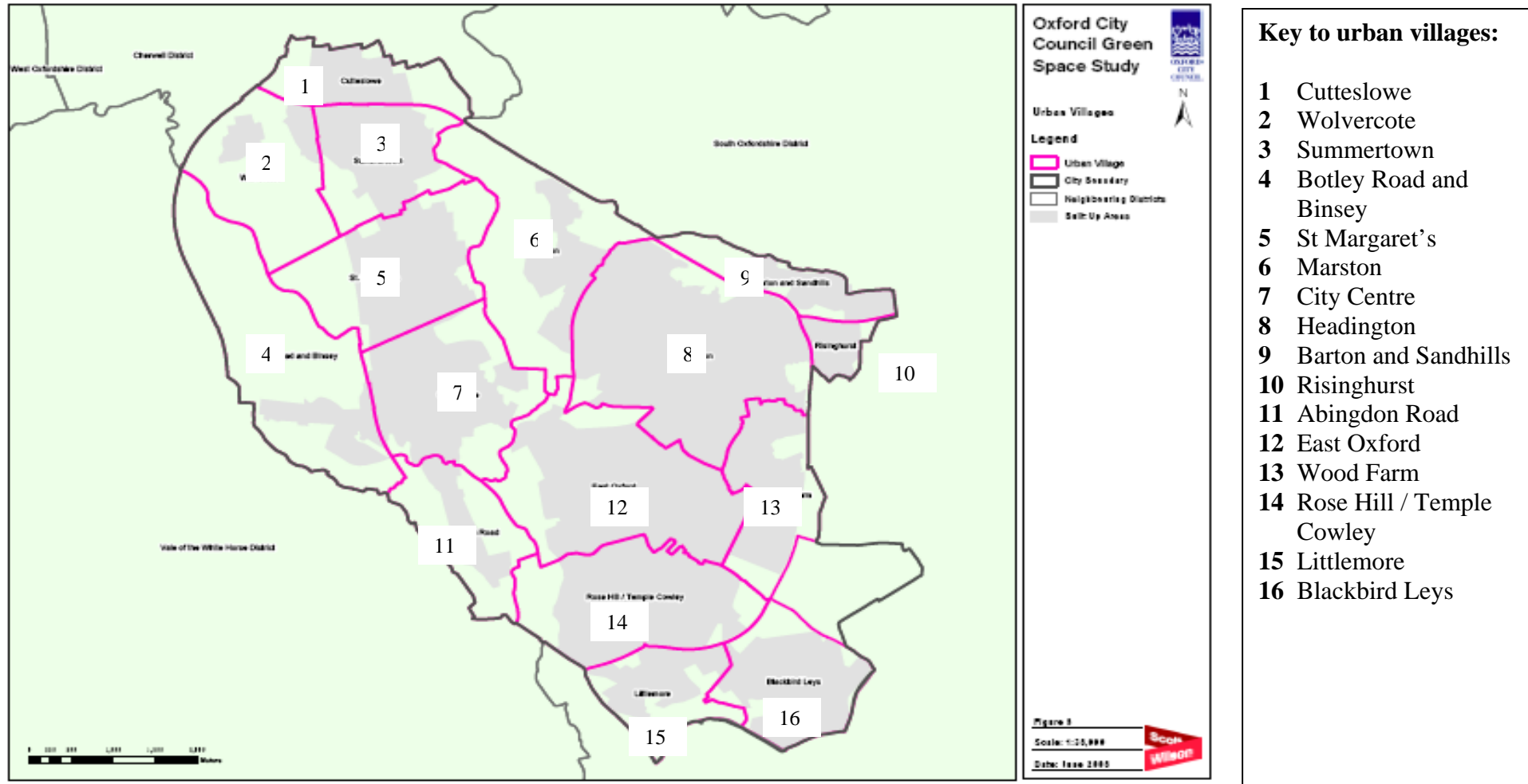
Urban Village	Supply Variance (Urban village/City) +/-	Quality		Value		Recommendations
		Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	
Abingdon Rd	+0.64	66%	52%	62%	56%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate how the quality of entrances to key sites including Hinksey Park and Grandpont Nature Park can be enhanced in order to improve assess and Urban Village character. Investigate the potential for developing a pedestrian link between Hinksey Park and the Thames Path National Trail to the east. Ensure the new open space provision within the site replacing Bertie Place includes a play facility. Ensure the play facility within Hinksey Park is of a NEAP (National Environment Action Plan) standard.
Barton and Sandhills	-3.78	64%	60%	62%	68%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out consultation to ascertain the demand for allotments with the view to creating new unrestricted open space to help address shortfall. Investigate the possibility of providing new publicly accessible open space within the countryside to the north of the settlement. Ensure new housing development provide new open space. Ensure existing facilities within FettiPlace Rec meet NEAP standard.
Blackbird Leys	-3.50	62%	56	56	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rationalise the existing level of provision of poor quality children's play facilities based on value, quality and further assessment. Revenue saved through no longer having to maintain these facilities should be spent on providing and maintaining key facilities within the urban village. Ensure facilities within local parks meet LEAP (Local Environment Action Plan) standard. Carry out consultation to ascertain the demand for allotments with the view to creating new unrestricted open space to help address shortfall. Improve the quality of the existing facilities and provide additional facilities within Blackbird Leys Park

Urban Village	Supply Variance (Urban village/City) +/-	Quality		Value		Recommendations
		Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	
Botley Road and Binsey	+1.08	62	57	43	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directional signage improvements to key unrestricted sites, especially King Georges Field and Oatlands Rec. • Upgrade children's play areas in Oatlands Rec and Botley Road Rec to a NEAP standard. • Entrance improvements to Botley Road Rec to increase quality and value score.
City Centre	-2.59	60	71	56	67	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that high quality open space facilities are provided with the redevelopment of Oxpens Rec. • Consider how children's play facilities could be incorporated into new Civic Spaces • Investigate the potential for creating new publicly accessible formal and informal open space to make up the quantitative deficiency.
Cotteslowe	+11.16	74	80	45	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the possibility of changing management regimes within Cotteslowe Park to improve access to informal open space and provide a better balance between informal and formal. • Provide youth facilities within Cotteslowe Park to include a multi-use games area, hangouts and adventure play. • Upgrade the children's play facilities and multi-use games area within Five Mile Drive Rec to meet NEAP standard.
East Oxford	-2.80	72	52	59	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the potential of securing additional open space through the acquisition, lease or joint use agreement to make up the quantitative deficiency. • Improve entrances to key sites including South Park, Angel and Greyhound Meadow and Cowley Marsh. • Ensure all play facilities within Local Parks meet LEAP and Neighbourhood Parks meet NEAP.
Headington	-3.11	56	58	50	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation and management of a number of sites to form a park of City significance. This could encompass part of Court Place Farm Allotments, Boults Rd Rec, Court Place Farm, Foxwell Drive Ground, Dunstan Park, Peasmore Piece and Northway Centre. • Protect all informal open spaces as there is a significant deficiency in this type of open space and the sites are considered highly valuable. • Ensure all play facilities within Local Parks meet LEAP and Neighbourhood Parks meet NEAP (except Headington Hill Park).

Urban Village	Supply Variance (Urban village/City) +/-	Quality		Value		Recommendations
		Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	
Littlemore	-4.75	57	49	63	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a pressing need for more open space in Littlemore. Carry out consultation to ascertain the demand for allotments with the view to creating new unrestricted open space to help address shortfall. • Consider the possibility of extending Oxford Rd Park into the adjacent Thomson Terrace Allotments to provide a formal Neighbourhood standard park with NEAP facilities.
Marston	-1.02	58	57	46	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation and management of a number of sites to form a park of City significance,. This could encompass part of Court Place Farm Allotments, Boults Rd Rec, Court Place Farm, Foxwell Drive Ground, Dunstan Park, Peasmore Piece and Northway Centre. • Ensure all play facilities within Local Parks meet LEAP and Neighbourhood Parks meet NEAP • Investigate the potential to create new open spaces in the areas of deficiency identified.
Risinghurst	-1.61	61	70	46	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider upgrading Ridgeway Rec to a Neighbourhood Park to include a NEAP standard play facility. This would improve the quality of the site, address the deficiency in this area in access to formal open space provision and respond to the demand for more facilities. • Ensure footpaths are maintained/enhanced, encouraging access to the adjacent countryside, Shotover Country Park and part of the City.
Rose Hill and Temple Cowley	-1.60	63	68	59	61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the potential to create new open spaces in the areas of deficiency identified. • Carry out improvements to the entrances of key sites including Rose Hill Park and Orchard Way Rec. • Consider what is appropriate in terms of play provision within Florence Park considering its historic character.
St. Margarets	+1.01	50	55	54	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the potential for improving access to formal open space by means of joint use agreements with college and schools. • Upgrade the play facilities within Aristotle Lane to LEAP standard • Should any development take place in the area then the emphasis should be on providing formal local open space.
Summertown	-4.59	65	-	59	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the potential of creating a new LEAP within the housing amenity land in Woodstock Close. • Investigate the potential to improve quantity of informal provision, as there is currently none.

Urban Village	Supply Variance (Urban village/City) +/-	Quality		Value		Recommendations
		Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	
Wolvercote	+70.10	47	66	61	44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of Wolvercote Bathing Place/Picnic Area as this is the only formal open space provision within the urban village. • Consider the creation of a new formal open space provision as part of the Wolvercote Paper Mill redevelopment. • Consider the role of Ulfgar Road as it is scoring low on both quality and value.
Wood Farm	+10.13	53	62	58	39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationalise the existing level of provision of poor quality children's play facilities based on value, quality and further assessment. Revenue saved through no longer having to maintain these facilities should be spent on providing and maintaining key facilities within the urban village. • Investigate the possibility of providing a footbridge over the Eastern Bypass to provide safe access to Shotover Country Park.

Appendix 1a: Map of Urban Villages used in Green Spaces Study



Appendix 2 Strategic aims of the Community Strategy and the Cultural Strategy

Please use this table to identify which of the Community Strategy's aims this Green Spaces Strategy helps to achieve.

Numeric reference	Community Strategy Aim
1	A vibrant and inclusive economy
2	Safer communities
3	A better living environment
4	Opportunities for life
5	Active and healthy communities

Please use this table to identify which of the Cultural Strategy's aims this Green Spaces Strategy helps to achieve.

Numeric reference	Cultural Strategy Aim
1	To improve engagement with, and access to, formal and informal education and continuing professional development
2	To remove barriers which prevent anyone watching and participating in cultural activities
3	To improve the co-ordination and promotion of cultural activities
4	To protect and enhance the built and natural environments
5	To prioritise and fill gaps in culture facilities
6	To maintain and increase public and private resources to develop Oxford's cultural assets
7	To reduce negative environmental impact and ensure the long-term future of cultural organisations
8	To achieve more and better partnerships
9	To improve opportunities for children and young people
10	To develop civic pride through celebration of Oxford's talent