

Bristol City Council

The Bristol Parks and Green Space Strategy - Summary Information

June 2008



1. Bristol Parks and Green Space Strategy

Bristol's Parks and Green Space Strategy was adopted at Cabinet on 21st February 2008.

The strategy sets out an ambitious plan over the next 20 years for ensuring that people have access to good quality parks and green spaces of different types, close to where they live.

The strategy contains service management policies and a set of standards for quality, distance and quantity covering different types of green space in the city. It is intended that the key standards are incorporated into the Bristol Development Framework (BDF), which is a new planning framework for the city, replacing the current Local Plan. The BDF will guide the significant growth that will be occurring in Bristol over the next 20 years.

The type of space covered by the standards are:

- children and young people's space
- formal green space
- informal green space
- natural green space
- active sports space

Key highlights of the strategy are:

- an increase of up to 70 new play spaces across the city
- introduction of natural play spaces
- improved facilities for young people
- Park Keepers in all the main traditional parks across the city as a minimum
- ensuring there is a good quality traditional park within easy reach
- establishing a network of 16 Local Nature Reserves
- making natural green spaces more accessible and welcoming
- tackling anti-social behaviour
- improving the quality of sports pitches
- creating dog free areas and tackling dog fouling

2. Area Green Space Plans

One of the first steps is to produce Area Green Space Plans for each of the Council's 14 Neighbourhood Partnership Areas across the city. These plans provide a blueprint for taking the strategy forward, identifying what will be provided in different spaces and what the investment priorities will be for each area. Area Green Space Plans (AGSPs) will also identify possible low value green space for disposal. There is an integral link to the Bristol Development Framework (BDF) process as well as the adopted Playing Pitch Strategy. A more detailed summary of what is included in an AGSP can be found at www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy

A detailed process for producing each AGSP has been constructed. In summary this involves:

- Desktop work and on-site assessments
- Linking AGSP work with other council and departmental programmes
- Stakeholder involvement for 6 weeks with interest groups
- Review and drawing up of plans
- Public Consultation focussed mainly on the local area as well as key interest groups

In order to best inform the BDF process, the programme to develop Area Green Space Plans will first focus on areas where there may be comparatively more spatial change. The current programme envisages that all Plans will be completed by December 2009.

2.1 Status of an Area Green Space Plan

2.11 Planning

- The Parks & Green Space Strategy adopted new, local green space provision standards, and as stated above it is intended that the key standards will be incorporated into the Bristol Development Framework. The standards will provide developers and the city council with clarity over the future provision of green space in planning terms. An Area Green Space Plan is the vehicle by which the standards are applied and green space needs modelled in order to develop local proposals.
- Area Green Space Plans will allow strategic planners to identify where and what bit of green space is needed in each area, and whether the green space standards are being met. They will show where there is a shortage of space which needs to be considered in any new developments and identifies potential development sites.
- Area Green Space Plans will provide guidance to Development Control Officers in terms of the types of development which are appropriate from partial green space disposals to improve the quality and sustainability of adjacent green space.

2.12 Service delivery

- The AGSP lays down the council's intentions for parks and green spaces in each area. It will direct the type of facilities and improvements needed in each area and set priorities for investment in sites.

3. What land is considered by the Parks and Green Space Strategy and within Area Green Space Plans?

The policies and standards in the strategy apply to all green spaces for which there is legitimate public access and which provide recreational benefit. There are many other green spaces in the city both in council and private ownership for which the policies and standards do not apply because they don't have legitimate public access and recreational use, such as grazing land, allotments, city farms etc. These spaces nevertheless form part of the green infrastructure of the city and when drawing up Area Green Space Plans, proposals for recreational space will be

put forward in the context of the future nature and location of other green spaces in the area.

4. Financial Implications

An estimated £87million (at 2006 prices) in capital expenditure is required to achieve the standard of 'good' across the city's parks and green spaces, over the 20 year life of the strategy. Money will come from a number of sources:

- contribution from developers - Section 106 (est £15m)
- external funding sources such as the lottery (est £21m)
- Monies raised from the sale of low value green space (est £41m)
- council's core budget for Bristol Parks (est £10m)

In addition to capital funding there will need to be an increase/or redirection of revenue budgets for improved standards of grounds maintenance, and for the cyclical repair of features when damaged or worn out. The council has adopted a formula which allows a proportion of capital, acquired during the life of the strategy to be put aside to create an enduring fund for life cycle maintenance.

5. Capital Investment Programme

An emerging capital investment programme over the next five years is available from www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy. Currently, this programme of work largely draws on funding from grants and Section 106 contributions.

As Area Green Space Plans are agreed following public consultation, any low value green space identified for disposal will be taken forward for sale enabling further capital investment in parks to be taken forward quickly.

6. Low Value Green Space

Low value in this context does not mean financial value - it means land which has limited value assessed by a range of factors including wildlife, historical, archaeological significance, and value placed on spaces by the local community. More detail on this can be found on page 36 and appendix 5 of the Parks and Green Space Strategy.

6.1 Conditions of disposing of green space

When the council adopted the P&GSS in February 2008 it was agreed that 70% of the proceeds of any sale would be reinvested in parks and green spaces covered by the strategy. Therefore the following applies:

- all green space covered by the Parks and Green Space Strategy (ie identified as publicly accessible recreational green space as shown in the maps that accompany the adopted PGSS) is subject to the 70% agreement regardless of which city council department holds it. There are a number of exceptions to this:

- Green space which had already been identified for disposal with negotiations underway prior to the adoption of the P&GSS. These include Filwood Park, land by Junction 3 of M32 in Easton and Hengrove Park - each of these has different agreements attached.
- Land which is attached to council housing (known as Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land) cannot be subject to the 70% agreement, even if it is designated as recreational open space, as it is the subject of a separate legal agreement with Central Government and must remain within this account.
- Where an area of green space **not** covered by the Strategy (ie not publicly accessible, recreational space) is proposed to be sold by the council, and recreational green space provision is improved if this is swapped with an area of land that **is** currently covered by the Strategy, then the subsequent sale of the original publicly accessible space would not be subject to the 70% agreement.

Green space not covered by the Strategy but nevertheless owned by the council (ie not publicly accessible recreational open space) such as grazing land, allotments etc is not subject to the 70% agreement. The money raised from sale of this land is held centrally and redistributed across the council according to council priorities to improve other Bristol services.

6.2 Will money raised from land disposals be re-invested in the immediate area?

This cannot always be the case as the central theme of the Strategy is to create better access to facilities and space for people across Bristol. However, in general, the greatest need to improve open spaces is in areas that have a proportionally large amount of green space - much of which is poor quality. Some of this is likely to be identified as low value and could be subject to sale. Therefore it is likely that there will be re-investment in local green space.

The full strategy and a number of background papers are available from www.bristol.gov.uk/parkstrategy.