

Bristol City Council

Parks and Green Space Strategy

Guidance for defining

Types of Green Space

in public use



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Types

The purpose of categorising green space by type is to:

- identify, in a clear, legible, and simple way, the full range of types of green spaces that come together to comprise the city's overall green space resource,
- confer a designation on each type of green space, or parts thereof, in a way that enables the patterns of types to be assessed, both city wide and locally, whilst recognising their collective contribution to the overall significance of an individual park or green space.
- establish, in conjunction with representative public involvement, a set of definitions of each green space type, to which all can relate.
- apply selected types, to sites, or parts of sites, through GIS (geographic information system) mapping and setting up linked databases.
- enable **Monitoring and Review** as described under section 3, below, again as advised under *PPG 17*.

1.2 Scope of Guidance on Types

Though all green space has been mapped for the purpose of the strategy, the typology focuses entirely on green space, which, irrespective of ownership, is legitimately used by the public.

The typology is a crucial element of this strategy. It will establish the types of space that people should normally expect to access across the city. In mapping parks and green space sites according to type, it will be possible to identify how existing patterns of coverage of each satisfy, or fail to satisfy current needs. In reviewing provision, it will also enable assessment of gaps in relation to projected future provision.

Where green space sites fall outside the scope of this strategy, this is explained under **4. Exclusions from this Typology**, below. It is acknowledged that sites which fall into these categories, could well be valued by the local community, and though excluded, may still have significance beyond the scope of this strategy.

1.3 Primary Purpose

The concept of 'Primary Purpose' is proposed by the *Companion Guide of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17* as a way of taking the multi-purpose nature of many green spaces into account. However, in examining the functions of Bristol's range of sites, it was felt that the concept should not be applied on a whole site basis, unless its use is homogenous, as that would conceal the very multi-functional nature that it was important for the strategy to establish.

It follows, that this typology is substantially based upon the application of the principle of 'Primary Purpose' to each of a park's component zones which are immediately recognisable as having an overriding predominant use. The only exception to this rule will be '**Active Sport - Seasonal**' which will effectively 'overlay' a zone's other type (most typically **B. Informal Green Space**) when not in use for formal sport.

Through designating type in this way, it will enable assessment of the performance of each zone type both within the context of a single multi-functional site, and as part of a comprehensive greenspace network serving a local area or the city as a whole.

1.4 Sub Type

Where a site has not only a clear primary purpose, but a strong secondary significance, this will, whilst not being specifically mapped or recorded as such, be acknowledged as being a Sub Type.

1.5 Green Space Size

The emphasis of the strategy must be such that it deals with all those greenspace sites that are significant in serving local use needs.

The strategy does not set a limit on the size of space that it takes into account. The primary consideration for the inclusion of a green space is the function of the site, expressed through the adopted typology, in relation to its size. For example, small spaces can readily act as fully recreational space when they are laid out for that purpose. Small spaces less readily act as recreational space when informal (the potential condition of many roadside verges for example). Otherwise, small spaces, including those that are roadside verges, are likely to fall outside the scope of this use-based typology, as their presence may relate more to the provision of visual amenity, screening, etc. Exclusions from this typology are covered under Section 4 (below).

Where areas are found to be both short of suitable green space, or opportunities to provide them in the future are limited, smaller sites have additional importance. Densely built-up parts of the city, such as Easton, will

inevitably have limited scope for optimum sized green space provision. In such areas, 'Pocket Parks', which may be as small as 0.03 ha will be counted, and designated according to appropriate type. Examples of such extremes include: Chaplin Road (0.0374 ha), and Adelaide Place (0.0495 ha).

Those excluded sites will not be designated as a type and shall not feature in calculations linked to local need. There has to be a cut-off point if the outcome is to be clear to all. However, it is acknowledged that whilst a site may have been excluded, importance to the community may still be recognised in other ways; a small corner site may serve no purpose for physical use, but may provide valuable existing or potential urban greening.

1.6 Green Space Shape

The shape of a green space should not, as such, have a predominant bearing on type designation.

Although the terms 'Linear Park' and 'Landscape Corridor' are widely acknowledged to be strategically significant, it is felt that this does not relate to a functionally-based typology.

Elsewhere within the strategy, the strategic contribution of green space corridors will be mapped and assessed for:

- how they penetrate the urban built environment from the rural fringe, for instance along river valleys or ridges.
- what they represent as continuous strips of relief to the sprawl of built development.
- their provision of physical linkage between green space sites, irrespective of type.
- ecological connectivity between natural green space sites, or those others that contain habitats,
- the value they add to recreational opportunities that would otherwise be limited were sites to be isolated rather than linked.
- their importance as existing or proposed greenway/ other important path routes, including public rights of way.

All this may have a bearing on why they are used, but does not directly express their function. At a 'macro' level, it will be more useful to break down major landscape corridors, such as the Frome Valley or Blaise/ Kingsweston Ridge into their component green space types.

2. Types

A. Formal Green Space

More formally laid out sites that are, if not designed in the true sense of the word, the subject of a consciously organised layout. Typically they may have a network of paths that enable people to pass through or circulate within. Their vegetation 'structure', notably including trees, is likely to have been the result of some level of design arrangement to reinforce the sense of enclosure of the park, define the spaces within, and indicate path hierarchy; often the result is a blend of both formal and informal. Ornamental planting may well also be a feature of parks and gardens.

Included also are green spaces, or parts of spaces, that are historic Parks and Gardens covered by *Bristol Local Plan Policy NE9*, adopted Dec 1997, and listed within the *Gazeteer of Historic Parks and Gardens in the County of Avon*, published 1991, and including those proposed for addition under this policy, in the *First Deposit Alterations to the Bristol Local Plan, February 2003*.

The public's image of a typical park will typically be based on Victorian examples such as *St Andrews Park* and *Greville Smyth Park*. However, more recent sites such as *Redcatch Park*, or those which have only recently been laid out, such as *Monks Park* will contain many of the same basic elements and effectively serve the same purpose. The apparent significance and contribution of more modern parks and gardens will increase with maturity, and, in some cases, investment toward raising quality.

Parks and green spaces may also contain formal features (e.g. *Bandstand - Castle Park*), and statuary/ drinking fountains/ artwork.

Whilst not separately identified when mapped, Formal Green Space should also be seen as covering the following sub types:

Sub Types:

A1 Civic Space

Formal Squares and Greens which are of civic significance, notably in the city centre; e.g. *Queen Square, King Square, Portland Square, Brunswick Square* and *College Green*.

Major predominantly hard paved spaces such as: *The City Centre Promenade, New World Square, Anchor Square, Lloyd's Arena, St James Barton 'Bear Pit.'* Though not visually true green space, their function is such that their significance within this type has to be acknowledged.

Typically, Civic Spaces are likely to be the subject of use by a range of users, including: visitors to the city centre, central area residents, office

workers and shoppers. Those which are in high profile locations, such as the *Queen Square* area, will be attractive to tourism.

A2 Community Focus Space

Whilst **A1** relates more to city centre locations, this sub type covers locations beyond the central area (whether in the inner city, or in the suburbs) where a green space functions as the focus or provides a hub within the community. Such sites may fulfil this function in conjunction with other key facilities. At best, and with an appropriate treatment, a site may function as a large community's 'town square'.

Investment may be needed to raise the quality of a Community Focus Space in order to realise its status, and contribution to local character. Typically, sites that have the potential to become Formal Community Focus Spaces have been Informal Greenspace, having lacked investment to fulfil a more significant function when they were originally laid out.; e.g. *Barnard Park*, *Henbury* is opposite the shops; *Sea Mills Square* is in the middle of *Sea Mills* and surrounded by shops; *Gainsborough Square*, *Lockleaze* is an acknowledged focus in *Lockleaze* and has shops and a church fronting onto it; and *Ridingleaze Green* at the heart of *Lawrence Weston* has shops and a church abutting it.

A3 Churchyards/ Former Church Yards/ Burial Grounds with legitimate public access

Such sites, with legitimate public access, are included within this sub type where they have the appearance and function, as described above, of parks and gardens. *St. Stephen's Churchyard*, in *St. Stephen's Avenue*, just off the City Centre and *St. Paul's Church yard*, *Coronation Road*, *Southville* are examples of this.

B. Informal Green Space

Green spaces, or parts of green spaces, that are more informal in layout and character.

They will typically contain path routes where the principal emphasis is more on informal recreation. Where a single path connects each end of a linear green space, its alignment, though being reasonably direct, will typically meander and be graded to sit comfortably within the landform. In larger spaces, networks of paths will also be informal in nature, and provide options for casual, perhaps contemplative, rather than purely directional use.

Where nature conservation considerations predominate, or where public use relates strongly to a site's natural experience, what might otherwise be

regarded as an informal green space will be designated as **E. Natural Green Space**. These sites will typically be rich in habitats, diverse in flora, and provide abundant wildlife interest, in a way that will be apparent to users. In some cases, it may be possible, through wildlife sensitive management, or, where appropriate, habitat creation, to enable the re-designation of a site from an Informal Green Space to Natural Green Space.

Informal green space within a housing context, though unambiguously publicly accessible, is excluded from the scope of the strategy, and noted under **4.7 Incidental Residential Green Space** below.

Sub Types:

B1 Green Corridors

Green corridors may be large scale and strategically significant, in having greenway routes passing through them. The narrow corridor which contains the *Bath - Bristol Railway Path* is a prime example. Another example is the *Lower Trym Valley* as it links *Blaise Castle Estate* with *Sea Mills Harbour*.

They may also be smaller and local in scale such as *Trymside Open Space*, *Southmead* and *Crow Lane Open Space*, *Henbury*.

This sub type covers those sites which are informal green spaces with their corridor form contributing a strong secondary purpose. It does not cover all green corridors in the city for the reasons described in the **Introduction** above under **1.6 Greenspace Shape**.

B2 Community Focus Space

This sub type is in acknowledgement that Community Focus Space may contribute informally, rather than formally, as is the case with the **A2**. equivalent under **A. Parks and Gardens**.

Such sites may have the character of a village green. They may fulfil their function, as focuses, in conjunction with other facilities; e.g. *Shirehampton Green* is in the middle Shirehampton, adjacent to its shopping centre.

In some cases investment may be needed to raise the quality of a Community Focus Space in a way that appropriately establishes its status, and contribution to local character. At best, and with an appropriate treatment, a site may function as a large community's 'town square'.

B3 Churchyards/ Former Church Yards/ Burial Grounds with legitimate public access

Such sites, with legitimate public access, are included within this sub type where they have the appearance and function, as described above, of Informal Green Space. *St. John's Burial Ground, in St. John's Lane* is an example of this.

C. Natural Green Space

Green spaces, or parts of those spaces, where the predominant function is one of providing people with access to, and experience of nature. The city has developed along a series of hills and river valleys and its wildlife and geology contribute to the variety of natural experience that green space sites are able to provide. In some cases, sites may benefit from retaining a rural feel, despite having been absorbed as the city has expanded.

This type will be founded on a site's inherent nature conservation value, and may be attributable to more than one habitat, of which the most typical categories include: woodland, grassland, scrub, hedgerows and wetland. A more detailed breakdown of categories is provided in the *Parks and Green Space Wildlife Strategy*, and the *Manual for Assessing Quality*. Categories have not each been treated as Sub Types, as many sites have a combination of habitats.

Identification of these sites is generally backed up by nature conservation designations that reflect their ecological significance, linked to adopted Local Plan policies. They will form the basis for future Local Development Framework policy.

The value to wildlife of some sites is already clear. The potential value of types of greenspace, may be realised through more appropriate management, or, where appropriate, habitat creation. Where this happens, any review of type will acknowledge a site's changed status and award 'Natural Green Space' status.

Sub Type:

C1 Churchyards/ Former Church Yards/ Burial Grounds with legitimate public access

Such sites, with legitimate public access, are included within this sub type where they have the appearance and function, as described above, of, and are managed as Natural Green Spaces. *Clifton Parish Churchyard abutting St Andrew's/ 'Birdcage' Walk, in Clifton* is an example of this.

D. Children and Young People's Space

These are spaces specifically designed to increase opportunities for children and young people to play or meet safely within equipped and unequipped environments. The strategy considers a number of sub types.

Sub Type(s):

D1 Children's Play Space

Formal, equipped play areas, 'stand alone' as unassociated with other green space; e.g. *Charles Place, Hotwells*.

In most cases, sites are defined and enclosed by railings and gates to exclude dogs. An exception to this is the *Clifton Downs* play area which remains open due to the character of the site.

Excluded from this typology are: equipped children's play spaces within school grounds or communal residential blocks, to which legitimate public access is inappropriate, or within incidental residential green space.

Further excluded from this typology are Adventure Playgrounds, as free-standing supervised facilities.

D2 Wheels Parks

Wheels facilities are designated, formally laid out areas for use as:

- **BMX** bike tracks, (e.g. *St George Park, Hengrove Park*).
- **Skateboard** facilities with ramps, etc. (e.g. *Dame Emily Park*)

D3 Spaces for Teenagers

Teen areas are those which provide for teenage activity or social interaction and include:

- **Youth Shelters**, as places to meet.

D4 Games Areas

Games areas include:

- **Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs)**, provided for informal activity, including kickabout, as opposed to those covered in **E. Active Sports - Fixed**, which are the subject of formally booked, organised use.

There will be sites where the distinction between **E2 Sports Surfaces, Hard and Artificial** and **D3 Teen Areas - Multi-use Games Areas** is not clear cut. *The Dings Park, MUGA*, though the subject of partial local formal

booking arrangements for competitive games, coaching sessions, etc, was provided principally to serve local teenagers, rather than to function first and foremost as a formal sports facility; it will therefore be designated as the latter.

- **Basketball** facilities with hoops and hard surfacing (e.g. *Brandon Hill Park, Hillfields Recreation Ground*)

E. Active Sports Space

This type refers to areas within parks and green spaces, and their associated buildings (changing rooms, pavilions, etc) that are permanently laid out, year-round active sport facilities, and which are the subject of formal booking/ leases to sports clubs.

The designated area may include associated amenity landscape elements such as ornamental planting, and seating areas for spectating (e.g *The Ardagh Tennis and Bowling, Horfield Common*).

Sub Type(s):

E1 Active sports - Fixed

E1.1 Tennis Courts

e.g. *Canford Park; Eastville Park; and Greville Smyth Park; The Ardagh, Horfield Common.*

E1.2 Bowling Greens

e.g. *Canford Park; Eastville Park; and Greville Smyth Park; The Ardagh , Horfield Common.*

E1.3 Sports Surfaces, Hard and Artificial

This category includes Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs). These are typically hard surfaced, enclosed with high fencing and marked for multi-purpose use, including for 5-a-side football and basketball. Occasionally they may have artificial surfacing. e.g. *Owen Square.*

As noted above, under **D3 Teen Areas - Multi-use Games Areas**, the distinction between that classification and this one, may not be clear cut. In most cases, clarity will arise from judgement on whether the facility has been provided principally for formal sports provision, or if it exists to satisfy the needs of local teenagers. Some clarity may be available in respect of the nature of bookings.

E2 Active sports - Seasonal

This type is unique within this typology, as it is the only designation which will overlay another type. It applies to seasonal pitches; i.e. Football and Rugby in the Winter, and Cricket in the Summer, which will only be in use when formally booked for fixtures.

These activities are important to map and hold data for, as these uses will be significant to the use of the site, and in the contribution of resource detailed in the Playing Pitch Strategy.

However, their mapping will be handled as an overlay to what will otherwise be the predominant type; i.e. **A. Formal Green Space** or, **B. Informal Green Space**, so as not to conceal the significance of that use, by the community of the area for the rest of the week for informal recreation.

This approach is appropriate in deriving data for all important types, the caution being when data is being presented to be clear on the extent of double counting, in relation to the actual total area of the site.

E2.1 Football pitches

E2.2 Rugby Pitches

E2.3 Cricket Pitches

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1 General

As explained in **1.2 Typology Purpose**, above, the application of a typology, the mapping and updating of green space types, and, the creation and updating of databases will be a powerful tool when monitoring and carrying out provision reviews, as advised under *PPG 17*.

Review may be appropriate at any point, when considering how actual green spaces provision, in each of its component types, performs in relation to the standard set. This may take place in the context of seeking to address gaps that have become apparent, in the provision of each type, both across the city, and locally.

In some cases, it may be possible to address shortfalls or surpluses where there may be concentrations or deficits in a particular type. Where appropriate this may be achieved by ‘moving’ a green space from one type to another. In its simplest form this may be realised either by a change in how a site is managed, or, more radically, through substantial or partial redesign. Re-designation of particular sites may enable them to contribute more positively to local character and status.

The upgrading, through re-design, of a green space at the heart of a fringe housing estate, may well result in an enhancement of its character and that of its context. It may also ‘lift’ it from being an unremarkable open space to a **Community Focus Space** within either the **Parks and Gardens**, or **Informal Green Space** type.

In an area of the city lacking in **Natural Green Space**, it may be possible to remedy this, for instance, by changing the management of an **Informal Green Space**, or, where appropriate through integrated habitat creation. In an area, where the *Allotments Strategy* has established areas of plots that are surplus to requirements, again it may be appropriate to re-designate their use as **Natural Green Space**. An example of where this approach has already been applied relates to the upper section of *Talbot Road Allotments*, which are currently the subject of proposals for a local nature park.

Ongoing monitoring and review of coverage across the city, will need to be undertaken, to ensure that provision of each type continues to respond to the evolving needs of a changing population. With future intensification of development bringing with it new green space users, coupled with shifts in demographic patterns, a regular re-focusing in relation to projected provision must be undertaken as fresh decisions are made.

4. Exclusions to this Typology

4.1 General

As explained above, this typology is limited to those types of green space that are the subject of legitimate public access. Therefore, the following categories are excluded, although it is acknowledged that they are important to the overall green space resource, within the *Parks and Green Space Strategy*:

In mapping the extent of publicly accessible greenspace, judgement has been made in respect of what appears to be a reasonable cut-off point, in locations where there is no physical boundary definition, as may be the case with open space on housing estates. In such locations, judgement has been made as to the point at which true public use, that is, without the user feeling as though he/ she is intruding, has become uncertain. A good test, in considering if a site, or part of a site, is public or private/ semi-private, would involve a view as to whether a non-resident (in nearby dwellings) would feel as though he/ she was intruding into the private domain when using the green space for recreation.

4.2 Allotments

Legitimate access, to allotments sites is limited to allotment holders rather than the general public, and therefore falls outside the scope of the typology. However they are the subject of *The Allotments Strategy*, a separate Sub Strategy of the *Parks and Green Space Strategy*, and that will steer any future review of allotments land holdings.

It is in the context of review that this typology would be relevant. In the event of an allotments site, or an area of unused plots, being declared surplus to projected allotments requirements, and becoming available for another use, the local need assessment of the *Parks and Green Space Strategy*, will identify if there is any need, in the location concerned, for parks or green space, and if so, which type(s). Where the case is supported by evidence, the land will be re-designated under the appropriate type.

4.3 Schools Grounds

Public access to these sites is not normally promoted. Certain schools' playing fields may be the subject of community access agreements, although this is limited to sports use, through formal booking.

In the event of school grounds, or their playing fields, being declared surplus to projected educational requirements, in part of the city where need for parks or greenspace is substantiated, re-designation under the appropriate type will be appropriate.

4.4 Cemeteries

Cemeteries that are operational, *Canford Cemetery*, *Greenbank Cemetery*, *Shirehampton Cemetery* and *South Bristol Cemetery*, are accessible, during daylight hours, to the public for visits and reflection. However, the nature of their use imposes respectful passive rather active use. Exclusion from the typology is attributable to the fact that these green spaces are not promoted for recreational or educational use.

4.5 Church Yards associated with Churches/ Buildings for Active Worship

Church yards which remain associated with churches/ buildings for active worship, and continue to be the subject of ownership/ management by the appropriate church/ faith.

Where church yards have become the subject of full public access and maintenance, they have been included, as a sub category, under the type most appropriate to their current primary purpose.

4.6 Grazing Land

Generally, the function of grazing land is such that it unsuitable for public use, and legitimate access is inapplicable.

4.7 Incidental Residential Green Space

Green space that is associated with housing, but which is publicly accessible and maintained.

The 'test' for what is publicly accessible is one that involves a gauge of whether a non-resident user of that space would feel to be intruding into residents 'defensible space'. If a site fails this test, it will fall outside the scope of this typology.

4.8 Residential land without legitimate public access

Includes:

- Residential Communal Gardens, for shared resident use,
- Sheltered Gardens, associated with sheltered residential accommodation, and
- Formal, equipped play areas within or associated with public or private sector housing

Residential land with true public access is covered above under **4.7 Incidental Residential Green Space** above.

4.8 Land that is not publicly owned and which does not support legitimate ready public access

Green space where public admission is the subject of a charge e.g. *Zoological Garden, Clifton*.

Green space which is only accessible to the public on certain days in each year. e.g. *Goldney House Garden, Clifton*, owned by *Bristol University*.

Green space which is used primarily for sports provision that is the subject of a charge. e.g. *Coombe Dingle Sports Complex*, owned by *Bristol University*. This category also includes golf courses, where public access may occur but is not promoted.

4.9 Highway Landscape

Whilst verges, traffic islands, central reservations, and the interstices of junctions may provide valuable green infrastructure to soften highways, they are not normally locations where public access is encouraged. The emphasis of their contribution is generally visual, including softening and screening, although it is accepted that some areas may accommodate access by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

4.10 Development associated greening

Green areas which constitute what has become termed 'space left over after planning' (SLOAP) is excluded. This is land that remained as a result of inadequate masterplanning and poorly designed site layout. Typically, it may be recognised as arbitrarily located and shaped portions of land with no obvious useful public function.

Whilst excluded from the typology, the value to the local community of some areas of greening that may be publicly enjoyed is recognised. However, they are typically not of a size, shape, or form conducive to physical use, their role being simply one of providing visual amenity, softening, or screening. Examples of exclusions within this category include landscape associated with: residential properties, office blocks, and retail or industrial premises.
