



Green Spaces Public Places

A Strategy for
Public Open Space
in Middlesbrough
2007-2012





Acknowledgments

This Green Spaces Strategy has been developed over 2-3 years and carried out by Countryside, Parks and Open Spaces, within Streetscene Services. The first draft was consulted on across the town and with key stakeholders, partners and residents who live and work in Middlesbrough. The following are specifically acknowledged :-

Pallister and Town Farm Community Council;

Parks Forum;

Park Ward Community Council;

Friends of Hemlington Lake;

North Ormesby Community Council;

Marton West Community Council;

South Cluster;

Marton Community Council;

Acklam Community Council;

Coulby Newham Community Council;

Voiceover panel;

Campaign to Protect Rural England;

Environment Agency;

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust;

West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust;

Tees Archaeology;

Groundwork South Tees;

Urban Policy and Implementation Unit;

Tees Forest;

Middlesbrough Environment City;

Countryside Agency;

Environment Scrutiny Panel;

Councillor Maelor Williams;

Councillor Bob Kerr.

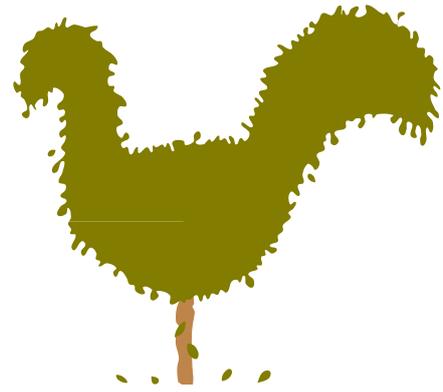
Acknowledgments and thanks are particularly due to all colleagues who work in our many parks and open spaces and all users of our many rich and varied green spaces. Special thanks to Kit Campbell Associates who carried out all the audits and advised throughout.

The strategy has been revised after consultation during 2006 and now forms 'the direction of travel' for all issues related to management, maintenance and development within our green spaces and public places in Middlesbrough.

Ian Parker

Director of Environment

Middlesbrough Council



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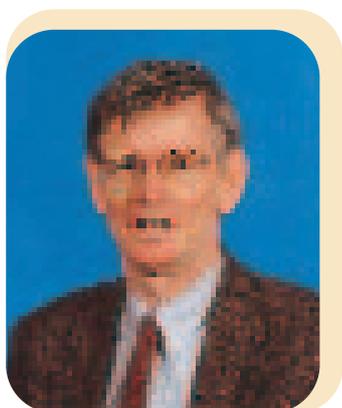
Foreword

Middlesbrough's parks and green spaces have provided opportunities for active and passive recreation, relaxation, play, peace and tranquillity for generations. From the Victorian heritage of Albert Park, the peace and tranquillity of Stewart Park and Fairy Dell, to the hustle and bustle of Newham Grange Leisure Farm and Pallister Park, Middlesbrough has a lot to offer both resident and visitor alike. As the pressures of the modern world increase, it is vital that these opportunities are still available for all and it is important that the Council works to ensure the parks and open spaces team develops to reflect the changing needs of the town and its people.

Our parks and open spaces team has achieved a great deal, with significant regeneration, 3 continued Green Flag Parks, top class facilities like Prissick Skate Plaza and the return of many bedding displays, to name but a few, but building on our achievements alone will not be enough to keep pace with the transformation required to respond to these changing needs.

This first Green Spaces Strategy is a significant step forward in identifying what needs to be done to satisfy this demanding agenda and what our priorities should be. This will be a challenging task for the service, which will require the continued development of partnerships with other public agencies and the private and voluntary sectors, innovative thinking and delivering value for money in all areas of service activity.

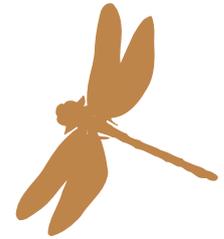
We hope you find this strategy informative and challenging. We would love to hear from you and hope you share in our enthusiasm in making Middlesbrough's parks and open spaces both high quality and of high value to our community.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Kerr". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the portrait photograph.

Councillor Bob Kerr
Executive Member for Environment.

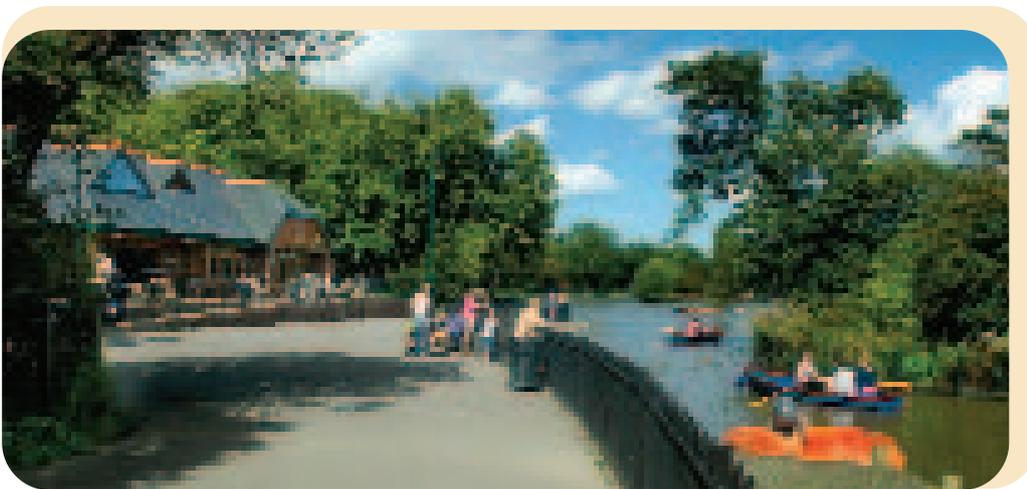




Middlesbrough's Green Spaces and Public Places

1.1 SETTING THE SCENE

Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places play an important role in improving the overall appearance of the town as well as enhancing the quality of life for the communities who live and work around them. Civic pride is often measured by the quality of the Borough's parks and gardens. Over recent years, this has become increasingly difficult with changing agendas, priorities and budget pressures. However, agendas are changing again both nationally and locally reflecting how valuable green spaces are.



Albert Park
Lake &
Visitor Centre

1.1.1 The National Agenda

For the last 9-10 years, there have been considerable changes at a national level with the profile of parks, open spaces and the public realm becoming more focused upon. For years due to changes in priorities, agendas and pressures on budgets, parks departments have seen the quality of their parks and open spaces softly eroded. It was seen as easy to reduce the number of grass cuts to large areas, but with better machinery, these reductions became less of an impact but with other pressures on tree planting, footpath repairs, bedding displays, play areas and general maintenance, these pressures became more obvious. Many local authorities actually lost their 'parks departments', swallowed up within Leisure Services Departments, Environmental Services Departments and on occasions within Planning Departments. The overall quality of parks nationally and locally will be discussed shortly.

However, the tide started to turn as far back as 1994 initially with the work carried out by Comedia Demos which resulted in the document "ParkLife", an important piece of work which called for an urban renaissance in green spaces, linking the quality of good open space to health, social well being, education and quality of life.

Following this the DoE published the document, "People, Parks and Cities" showing that there were

indeed examples of excellent practice to be followed and highlighting the benefits of parks and green space to urban living.

It is only recently that the Government has acknowledged the problems and challenges facing many towns and cities like Middlesbrough, across the whole UK. They have set up a national agency called CAFE Space, (CAFE stands for the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) to champion urban public space, especially parks and green spaces, in improving the quality of life and “liveability”. It was set up in direct response to recommendations from the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce. CAFE Space has appointed strategic partners:- GreenSpace (formerly Urban Parks Forum), Groundwork, Improvement and Development Agency, Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM), Landscape Institute, ENCAMS (formerly Tidy Britain Group) and the Green Flag Award scheme. CAFE Space has made formidable progress to date appointing Strategic Enablers to work with Local Authorities to help devise a Green Space Strategy. They have published many documents and policy statements, raising the profile of good public open space. Their manifesto for better public spaces was recently published after considerable consultation, with the results summarised below.

Table 1: Results from CAFE Space manifesto

THE 10 BEST THINGS ABOUT PARKS	THE 10 WORST THINGS ABOUT PARKS
1. They are community assets	1. They are not kept clean or safe
2. They are places to relax and escape	2. Park land is being lost to development
3. They are great places for recreation and exercise	3. They do not receive enough money
4. They are places to experience nature	4. There’s too much litter
5. They are well designed	5. There’s too much vandalism
6. They are good for children and young people	6. There’s too much crime and anti- social behaviour
7. They are kept clean and safe	7. They are not safe
8. They are green spaces	8. There’s too much dog mess and too many unrestrained dogs
9. They provide a sense of open space	9. Toilets and other facilities are in a poor state or non-existent
10. They benefit our mental health and well-being	10. There’s a lack of park keepers and wardens

It is important to recognise the national picture and how this has affected us in Middlesbrough, and consequently how we plan to address these fundamental issues of public open space identified (below).

In 2001, the Urban Parks Forum commissioned a major piece of work called the Public Park Assessment, a survey of Local Authority owned parks focusing on parks of historic interest. The survey supports the view that urban parks in the United Kingdom, in general, were in serious decline. The resource is a large one – some 27,000 parks covering 143,000 hectares with around £630 million being spent on their upkeep annually. They form a huge physical presence in our towns and cities and support a multi million pound business in their provision.





Albert Park pre-restoration
South West entrance

However, despite the importance of public parks to the quality of life and vitality of our communities, the last 20 years has seen dramatic cuts in revenue expenditure, now estimated to be in the region, cumulatively, of £1.3 billion.

Historic parks have fared worse, with significant losses of features. Park stocks are beginning to become polarised with good parks getting better and poorer parks getting worse, and in some of the most deprived areas like Middlesbrough these trends are further exaggerated.

Parks, it is estimated nationally, receive over 1.5 billion “free” visits per year by all sectors of the community. The challenge for the future is to prevent further decline in our parks and to start a renaissance in our open spaces, creating attractive, relevant and popular facilities for the enjoyment of all. The Urban Parks Forum findings make stark reading and are summarised below:-

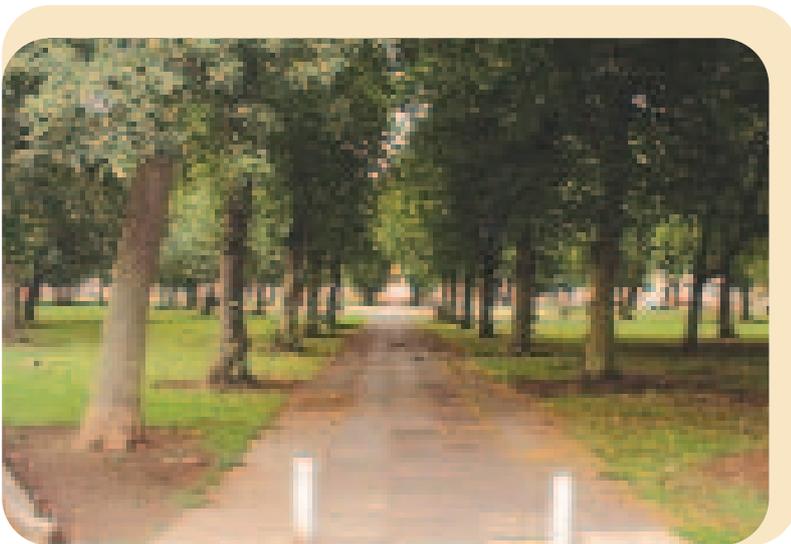
- 13% of local authorities consider their stocks of parks and open spaces to be in poor condition;
- The condition of 39% of all parks and open spaces is reported to be declining, and there is clear evidence that good parks are getting better and poor parks are getting worse;
- When the annual revenue expenditure of 1979/80 is compared to the current annual revenue expenditure, a deficit of £126 million a year is identified;
- Based on an average park stock of just over 300 hectares, rectification of this deficit would represent an average annual revenue expenditure increase in the region of £265,000 for each authority;
- It is estimated that since 1979/80 the total cumulative under-spend on parks revenue expenditure is in the region of £1.3 billion. These short-term savings have led to long term degradation and there is now a need for substantial capital investment;
- Historic parks have suffered worse with up to 75% loss of some historic features; and
- The estimated number of visits made annually to all historic parks equates to 296 million with an estimated 1.8 billion to all parks and open spaces. Local authority expenditure on all parks and open spaces equates to an estimated 42 pence per visit.

1.1.2 Middlesbrough...how do we compare?

In Middlesbrough, we are facing our own particular difficulties that result from urban decline, economic downturn and some of the worst areas of deprivation in the country. We are a compact yet diverse town. The little countryside we have is found almost entirely in South Middlesbrough. Some parts of Middlesbrough have less green space than others and in many areas, the quality is very low. As part of the work in developing this strategy, many of Middlesbrough's parks and open spaces have been audited based on value to the community and overall quality. This is discussed later in more detail in Part 4.



Westbourne Park



Tavistock Road
Recreation
Ground

There is a large number of social housing and terraced housing with small rear yards and back alleys in Middlesbrough. These residents needs are different to those that live in the leafier suburbs where everyone has a garden. The access to, and quality of our spaces is as important as the quantity. Everyone has a need for green spaces and opportunities for recreation away from home.

Many of Middlesbrough's parks and green spaces are very distinctive and reflect local identity. Albert Park is Grade 2 listed on the English Heritage of Parks and Gardens and Stewart Park, has strong links to Middlesbrough's past with the iron and steel industry. The Beck Valleys are unique wildlife habitats and one of the few habitats supporting the endangered water vole. The River Tees corridor is now subject to intense scrutiny and development potential as well as the rapidly improving town centre, creating the hub of the Tees Valley.

Many of our parks and green spaces have lost key historic features, whether a historic boat house, aviary or children's play area, tennis court or sports pavilion. As well as the physical facilities that have been removed or lost, there are the visitors who perhaps no longer feel the "need" to visit some of our green spaces. Also included the now redundant "parkie", no longer seen in many of our parks and open spaces.



Albert Park 's
restored
clock

1.2 THE NEED FOR A GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

A Green Spaces Strategy offers an opportunity to improve parks and green spaces. Its aims and objectives are to:-

- Generate political and inter-departmental support for parks and green spaces and establish clear lines of responsibility;
- Develop a vision shared by politicians, officers, key partners, stakeholders and communities;
- Define the value and role of parks and green spaces in meeting corporate and community aims;
- Create a comprehensive policy framework for the protection, enhancement, accessibility and use of parks and green spaces;
- Make sure that green spaces enhance the quality and diversity of the environment, the life of local communities and promote civic pride and social inclusion;
- Ensure that the green space network meets the needs of local people, now and in the future;
- Provide a framework for resource allocation that maximises funding to support improvements from internal revenue budgets and external funding; and
- Create a framework for voluntary and community groups to participate in green space provision and management.

1.2.1 The Public Park Assessment

Carried out in 2001 this also conducted research into Park Strategies. At that time 56% of Local Authorities did NOT have a dedicated Parks or Green Space strategy, and of those, most (64%) did not have any plans to introduce one. The assessment also showed clearly that those local authorities who had a dedicated strategy have achieved the best results. A far greater number of authorities that link Park Strategies to the wider strategic context have an improving stock of parks and far fewer have declining stock.

This is a perfect time for Middlesbrough Council to develop the way in which the various green spaces and public places are provided, improved and managed across the town. By creating a new way forward and by harnessing the energy and participation of local people and organisations, Middlesbrough and its green spaces and public places will be able to secure a better future.

In 2002, Gehl Architects and Gillespies, in association with the Middlesbrough Town Centre Company and Middlesbrough Council produced a draft report entitled "Middlesbrough, People, Places and Spaces", which summarised the need for a thorough review of the public spaces to enable a typology to be developed and the scope of spaces to be included, as well as the development of a hierarchy of public space to be formulated, to enable investment to be targeted better.

Since 1979 public space has lost out in real terms to the tune of £1.3 billion (CABE Space). Nationally, people are far from happy with the quality of their neighbourhoods, with crime, litter, vandalism, graffiti and dog mess all major issues. The Government has now recognised the state of the public realm has significantly deteriorated. The latest MORI poll (2004), shows 91% of the public

believe that public parks and open spaces improve life and that 74% of people believe being able to use a park is important to their health.

In Middlesbrough, recent Voiceover surveys (2001) have shown that 82% of people are happy with the quality of Parks in the town. However this is very general and does not relate to the quality of neighbourhoods and local communities at a local level.



Farndale Field Doorstep Green

In March 2003, the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce report “Green Spaces Better Places” showed that £500 million capital investment was needed over 5 years to make significant improvements in local green spaces. We are told that money is available to urban parks and green spaces and that it has significantly increased over the last five years. The funding is typically administered through routes such as New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal and Groundwork.

1.2.2 Enhancing Urban Green Space

In 2005 the National Audit Office commissioned a further piece of research following on from the 2001 Public Parks Assessment to examine whether barriers to the enhancement of urban green space have been well identified and considers the progress:-

- In enhancing and tracking the quality of urban green space;
- In improving the financial management of urban green space; and
- Through the planning system to protect and enhance urban green space.

This was published in early 2006 as ‘Enhancing Urban Green Space’ and is available on the National Audit Office website www.nao.org.uk

The key findings were:-

- The decline in the quality of urban green space has been halted in most areas and there are signs of recovery in many places. 84% of local authorities now believe the quality of their green space was stable or improving;
- Residents satisfaction with green space nationally has increased by 8% between 2000 and 2003;
- Around 69% of local authorities now have a green spaces strategy completed or in development. In 2000 the equivalent figure was 53%;
- New sources from the lottery have enabled refurbishment and improvement; and
- Sustainability has been encouraged as part of refurbishment schemes.

BUT

- The improvement in the quality of urban green space is not yet universal. 16% of urban local authorities green space was considered to be in decline. Residents satisfaction levels varies widely, from 54% to 92%;
- Mainstream expenditure by local authorities on upkeep required to sustain improvement over the longer term has increased, although not at the rate of increases spent on other local public services or the funding made available.
- Innovation encouraged has yet to be fully identified and spread; and
- Despite the higher profile of green space, green space strategies are not always well conceived and well supported.

1.2.3 Towards a Middlesbrough Green Spaces Strategy.

The process of consultation in preparing this Strategy has shown that there are significant opportunities and a strong community need for improving Middlesbrough's green spaces. In order to access funding and deliver the improvements, it is necessary to develop a green spaces strategy (GSS), which will be linked to the Community Strategy and Strategic Plan. By having a GSS, we will achieve a higher profile for our parks service and have greater success in attracting funding from outside our immediate service area, especially grants and local developers. By having a GSS and being part of the "bigger picture", we will attract higher levels of involvement and support from local authority colleagues working in areas such as Arts, Youth Service, Community Support, Community Protection, Planning, Regeneration and Sports and Leisure Services.

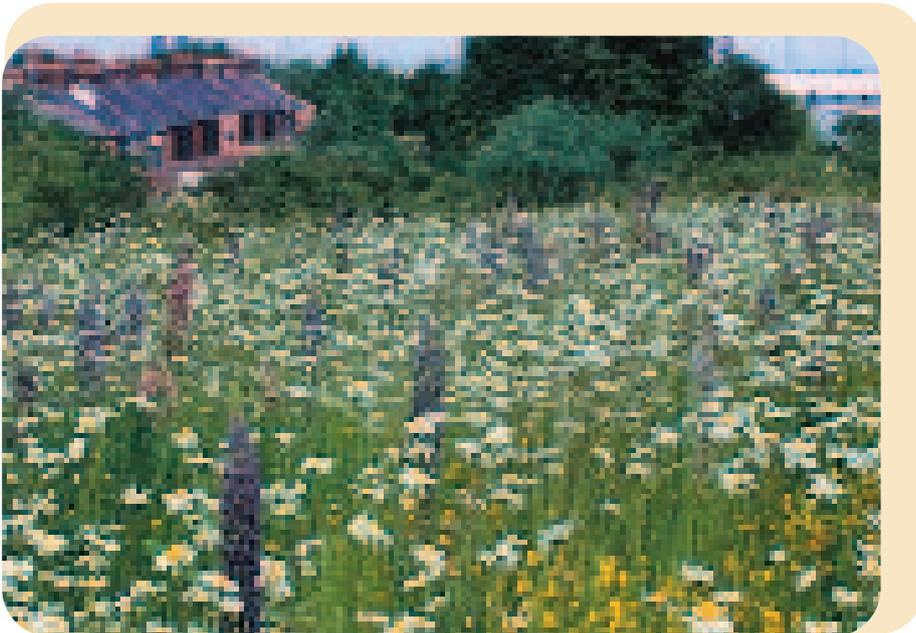
Middlesbrough Council has a good record in attracting capital grants for the construction and restoration of parks and open spaces, but often it is based on opportunity rather than a reasoned or needs based approach. Likewise, funding through developer contributions is at best "ad hoc" and also needs a reasoned and strategic approach.



1.2.4 Towards a Middlesbrough Green Spaces Renaissance

The need for a Green Spaces Strategy has been identified, yet locally progress has been made, following national improvements:-

- Middlesbrough has successfully retained 3 Green Flag Parks for many years, with Albert Park, Stewart Park and Pallister Park and now has a Green Pennant award for Stainton Quarry;
- Middlesbrough now has 3 Local Nature Reserves, at Linthorpe Cemetery, Stainton Quarry and Berwick Hills;
- Middlesbrough has successfully restored several of it's parks and play areas over several years including Ayresome Gardens, Albert Park, Laycock Gardens, Thorntree Park and is now planning to restore Stewart Park;
- Middlesbrough has introduced new facilities such as Prissick Skate Plaza, the biggest and best skate facility in the UK;
- Middlesbrough has increased it's revenue contributions within Grounds Maintenance to enhance the specification in many areas; and
- Middlesbrough continues to attract capital money through developer contributions and the lottery at every opportunity.



Berwick Hills
Nature Reserve



A successful Doorstep Green application

1.3 THE BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF OPEN SPACES

The Council for Europe identifies open space and its importance as being:

- An essential part of the urban heritage;
- A strong element in the architectural and aesthetic form of a city;
- An important educational resource;
- Ecologically significant;
- Important for social interaction and in fostering community development and is supportive of economic objectives and activities;
- Contributing to the reduction of the inherent tension and conflict in deprived parts of urban areas; and
- In providing for the recreational and leisure needs of a community with an economic value in that of environmental enhancement. (Council of Europe, 1986)

The Department of the Environment grouped the benefits of open spaces and greening urban areas into three main categories –

- Economic regeneration;
- Environmental and educational; and
- Social and cultural (DoE, 1996).

More recently, the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, through “ Green Spaces Better Places”, talked of “ enhancing the quality of life for people living in towns and cities, transforming the environment, especially in high density urban areas and encouraging inward investment in formerly run down areas”.(DTLR 2001)



Middlesbrough Wildspace!
Project

1.4 SOCIAL BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Perhaps the most obvious benefits and opportunities that green spaces and public places provide for urban living are social – they create opportunities for people to do things, take part in events and activities or just to be. We will look at these under the headings of children’s play, passive recreation, active recreation, community focus and educational opportunities. Many will be discussed in greater detail later within this strategy.

1.4.1 Children’s Play

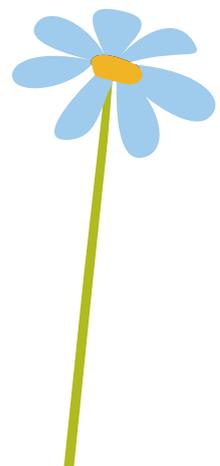
“Modern civilisation interferes with a heavy hand in the spontaneous play of children”
(Hurtwood 1968)

Children’s play is one of the main reasons for visiting open spaces (Greenhalgh and Worpole,1995). Indeed this is borne out by local research into local open spaces.

- Laycock Gardens - 27%
 - Westbourne Park - 34%
 - Ayresome Gardens - 19%
- (percentage use of local open spaces, based on local surveys)

The importance of play for a child’s development is supported by a wide range of research and is now increasingly accepted by professionals as well as ordinary people.

- Social development
 - Collaborative skills;
 - Negotiating skills;
 - Confrontation and resolution skills;
 - Emotional crises resolution;
 - Management of conflicts;
 - Development of moral understanding;
 - Development of language;
 - Problem solving techniques; and
 - Imitation of adults activities.



Some of this research has shown some interesting results. In one study, 50,000 observations were made of children's outdoor activities on 16 housing estates and in 1 adventure playground. Irrespective of building form or density, 75% of the children were observed playing near to home and this was particularly the case with under five year olds. 40% of the children played on roads, in front of garages, or on pavements, significantly more than played in gardens or play areas or on paved areas. The most frequent activities were running, walking, sitting, standing and lying. Ball games and play equipment came lowest. (DoE, 1973).

Despite the importance of play for a child's development, there are some issues in the urban context that restrict the opportunities for play in the external environment for many children. Barnardos in 1995 commissioned research that highlighted the following:-

- Parental anxiety about children's safety – especially when children are playing outside;
- Parental fear of strangers, traffic, drugs, bullying and dogs;
- Parental concern about safety; and
- Poor provision of play facilities – no playground or a badly maintained playground.

Middlesbrough Council has no current adopted strategy on play. However "Green Spaces, Public Places" seeks to address this and has identified the need for a policy or strategy on play provision for the town within this strategy. This is detailed further in Part 4.



Teenzone at Albert Park



Puppets at Albert Park



'Skate and Create' event at Prissick

1.4.2 Passive recreation

Open space for recreation and amenity accounts for 14% of the land take of the urban environment in the UK. In Middlesbrough, 16.8% of the urban environment is taken up by primary open space for both active and passive recreation, somewhat higher than the national average. Active recreation is usually such activities as football, cricket, rugby and other games or sport whereas passive recreation is taken to mean activities such as watching – children or others or wildlife – looking at views, reading, resting or meeting friends. Recent surveys of open spaces in Middlesbrough have concluded the following uses:-

Laycock Gardens

41% Walking the Dog;
27% Sport and Recreation;
23% Relaxation; and
33% Visiting Friends.
(% of responses)

Westbourne Park

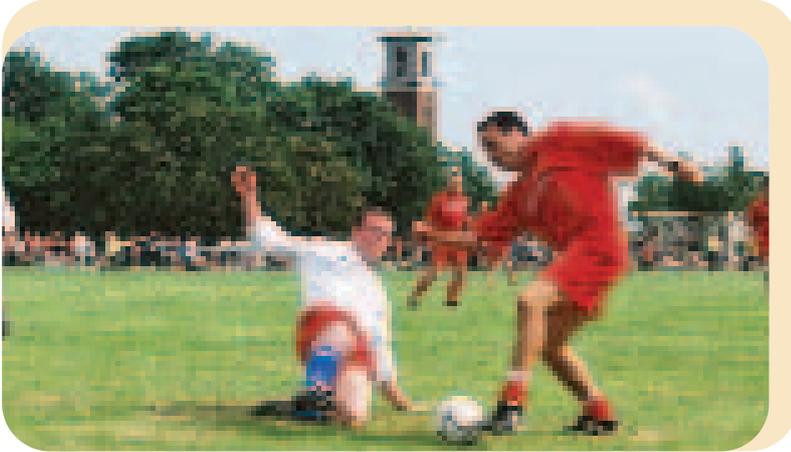
34% Walking the dog;
34% sport and recreation;
29% general relaxation;
19% visiting friends; and
20% as a shortcut or simply passing through.
(% of responses)

Ayresome Gardens

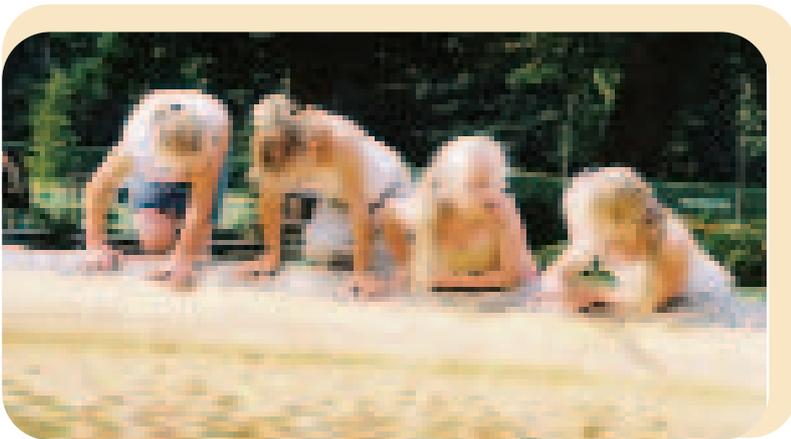
34% going for a walk;
28% relaxation;
16% walking the dog;
9% sport and games; and
10% visit the play area.
(% of responses)



The research elsewhere has shown similar trends, yet provision of resources and finance seems to be more directed to support other activities. ODPM research has shown the importance of passive recreation is far more important to individuals lives than active recreation and most parks and open space users will use an open space for passive use rather than sport or events. Middlesbrough Council research clearly reinforces this. Replacement of park benches, litter bins, better maintenance are all more important than provision of facilities for more active pursuits.



Football in the Park



Fountain at Albert Park

1.4.3 Active recreation

Despite being the minority user of parks and open spaces, nationally it is estimated that up to 16% of park users will visit for active recreation alone and account for 7.5 million visitors each year nationally. In Middlesbrough, Albert Park, Stewart Park, Pallister Park and Hemlington Rec offer the following:-

- Roller skating;
- Multi use Games areas;
- Bowls;
- Tennis Courts;
- Boating;
- Fishing;
- Football;
- Events;
- Children's play;
- Music; and
- Skateboarding.

Pallister Park and Albert Park are very active parks whereas Stewart Park is a much more passive park, but all equally popular. Striking the correct balance is very important.

However, the use of parks and open spaces for active recreation is crucial and has been recently highlighted by more significant research. For instance, the benefits of exercise have now been well proven to include the reduction of heart attacks and strokes, reduced obesity (now at record levels in the UK), reduction of blood pressure, and prevention of bone strength loss, back pain and mild depression. Exercise helps with self esteem, mild depression and coping with life in general. Middlesbrough Council's Strategy for Sport & Physical Activity Strategy (Active Middlesbrough) vision is:-

"To ensure that opportunity and excellence is available in Middlesbrough for Sport and Physical Activity"



Prissick Plaza

1.4.4 Active recreation – reduction of crime

One of the original intentions by those who bequeathed parks to the masses was the reduction of crime, as well as improvements to health. Yet we are only just rediscovering the benefits of these 140 years later!!

In 1997, it was estimated that 7 million crimes at a cost of £1 billion are committed by young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years old. (Sports Council 1997).

Diversionary activity has been positively promoted by such organisations as Sport England, the Youth Justice Board and the UK Anti Drugs Co-ordination Unit. In Middlesbrough, several initiatives have been developed and many of these are found within our parks and open spaces. "Active Middlesbrough's" Mission is :-

"To increase involvement in physical activity and to raise the levels and standards of physical activity opportunities throughout the communities of Middlesbrough – to make more people more active"

Issues relating to anti social behaviour are discussed in Part 4. CABE Space has also published a paper on Anti Social behaviour and this is also summarised in Part 4.

1.4.5 Community Focus

Research in recent years by a range of investigators (DTLR, DoE, CABE Space, ODPM, Comedia Demos) has confirmed the importance of parks and open spaces as a focus for the community, or as a place for people to meet each other, both formally or informally. This may be through organised events which may increase the sense of community. Middlesbrough's Asian Mela is the largest Asian festival in the North of England and is important not only to the local Asian population but also to the town itself. It is no coincidence that it is held in Albert Park, central to a large Asian population within the town.

However, it is not only large and formally organised events that are important to the community. Studies have shown that about one third of people entering parks do so on their own, one third with a friend and one third with a large group. Different racial groups have also been identified as having different approaches to active and passive recreation. For instance as part of the Roots Project in Middlesbrough, an initiative to encourage greater use of parks and countryside by ethnic minorities found that Asian groups who favour the use of developed formal parks like Albert Park would rarely venture into the Beck Valleys or along the River Tees corridor.



1.4.6 Cultural Focus

Urban open spaces do have the potential to be used as a cultural focus, although this potential both nationally and locally has not been fully realised. People from ethnic minority backgrounds have been identified as under represented users of urban open spaces in the UK and Middlesbrough. There maybe approaches related to design and management of parks and open spaces that could be investigated that would encourage wider use of these areas by these groups, but little research has been done to date.

1.4.7 Open Spaces as educational resources

The increasing use of open spaces as an opportunity for education can be seen from the many examples we have locally and nationally.

- **Nationally**
 1. Learning Through Landscapes;
 2. BTCV;
 3. Neighbourhood Nature;
 4. Community Forests; and
 5. City Farms.
- **Locally**
 1. Wildspace! Project;
 2. East Middlesbrough Beck Valleys / Water Vole Project;
 3. Tees Forest;
 4. Wildlife Watch;
 5. Lingfield Countryside Centre;
 6. Newham Grange Leisure Farm; and
 7. ... many more!!

The benefits to children have included:-

- Improvements in sensory perception, social skills, co-operative skills and work patterns;
- Improvements to children's behaviour, especially enabling emotions to be explored more effectively;
- A reduction in aggressive behaviour;
- Enhanced learning opportunities outdoors; and
- A greater variety of patterns of play, both in a physically demanding adventurous sense and in the provision of quieter, restful opportunities.



Lingfield Countryside Centre



Wildlife Watch Group

1.5 HEALTH BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Research shows that contact with the natural world can benefit mental and physical health. Access to a quality green environment not only benefits health in preventative terms, but speeds recovery and plays a vital part in our mental well being.

The health of our nation is currently a matter of concern as an aspect of quality of life. Coupled with this is the increased pressure that an ageing population will put upon the NHS and Social Services. Recent surveys and studies have also highlighted the enormous problems with heart disease as well as obesity, and more worryingly, child obesity. A recent survey carried out by Wirral Health Authority highlighted the increased rates of obesity in infants to 4 year olds. Previous work has indicated that childhood obesity is likely to continue into adult life, resulting in an increased likelihood of morbidity and mortality, with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. Early intervention in areas such as increased activity and a reduction of high fat and high calorific foods in the diet are recommended (Bundred et al., 2001)

Physical inactivity has been estimated to cost the NHS about 2-3% of its total budget, according to Dr. William Bird medical advisor to the British Heart Foundation. Keeping active greatly reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease, and of developing diabetes, hypertension, obesity and certain cancers and helps maintain health and independence in older adults.

A recent paper – “Green Exercise: Complementary Roles of Nature, Exercise and Diet in Physical and Emotional Well Being” – Essex University March 2003, has some clear findings and a strong message for this strategy.



Lingfield Countryside Centre

- Well-being is enhanced through close connections to both nature and communities;
- Increased connections to nature, by both being there and seeing it, increase well-being. A fitter and emotionally more content population costs the economy less; and
- “Green Exercise” – physical activity in green places can give physical and mental benefits. Regular physical activity positively affects mental well-being and self esteem, reducing depression.

New research commissioned by the RSPB underlines the strong links between good physical health and the natural environment. Dr. William Bird’s research into green spaces, physical activity and public health, “Natural Fit – can biodiversity and green space increase levels of physical activity?” has been endorsed by the Faculty of Public Health. Summarised below in Tables 2 and 3:-

Table 2 Natural Fit Study - summary

1. Physical inactivity is a major preventable health risk, which affects about 60% of the population, and correcting this is a public health priority. There are clear Government guidelines on the amount of physical activity required for optimum health. The recommendation for adults of 30 minutes of moderate activity at least 5 days a week is still not as well understood as diet or smoking recommendations.
2.can be achieved through brisk walking, cycling, swimming and nature conservation or gardening activities. Exercise through sport, gyms or aerobics appears not to add any further health benefits.
3. Moderate regular activity appears to maintain the vitality of the body and prevents heart disease, diabetes, strokes, cancers, disability, osteoporosis, depression, anxiety and sleep problems.
4. The cost of physical inactivity to the economy is calculated to be £8.2 billion (£1.7 billion for the NHS, £5.4 billion for work absence and £1 billion for early mortality).
5. More than 5 billion visits are made to the English countryside each year and about 2.5 billion visits to urban parks. Despite the large population density in the UK, there is existing natural green space to support physical activity. The most important of this green space is near to large populations.
6. There is evidence that green space in an urban environment can improve life expectancy and decrease health complaints. Much of this is thought to be due to a favourable environment for people to exercise.
7. It is possible to estimate the economic benefits that green space can provide through provision of physical activity. The estimates are based on an urban park providing 20% of total local physical activity provision and a 3km footpath providing 16% of total local physical activity provision, and are dependent on the population (density) who can access the green space. Using this, a park in Portsmouth, for example, could, annually, save the economy £4.4 million, including £910,000 to the NHS. A 3km footpath on the edge of Norwich would save the economy £1 million, including £210,000 to the NHS.
8. To increase physical activity levels in a green space, the space should be accessible (within 2km of home), have a good surface with no obstructions such as stiles, but above all, it should feel safe. There is a need for imaginative ways to promote a wild-life rich green space, and for it to be marketed to different age groups. The green space must appear attractive; being natural, but access routes and facilities must be well kept. It is possible to have sensitive wildlife rich areas visible from smaller well kept areas, without promoting physical access to them, as the view of nature is a main motivator.

“Natural Fit – Can green space and biodiversity increase levels of physical activity?” A report by Dr. William Bird for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds October 2004

Table 3 - Recommendations from Natural Fit study

1. Both the short and long term benefits of moderate exercise, and in particular walking, should be promoted to the public as many people still believe that health improving exercise means the gym or vigorous exercise.
2. For the NHS physical activity promotion specialists should work with local authorities to identify local green space and rights of way as a major resource to increase levels of physical activity.
3. In principle, biodiversity should be brought to people by developing areas of green space within villages, towns and cities. Large reserves and wildlife sites outside towns should continue to become more inclusive and less restrictive. It is recommended that access to these areas is both equitable and sustainable. This includes walking, cycling and public transport.
4. All green space, including nature reserves, should aim to fulfil people's physical activity needs. This should become a success criterion alongside environmental and educational objectives.
5. Each local authority needs to understand the current use of local green space for exercise and in particular the reasons why local people do not currently use open green space. The public should be consulted as to how local green space could be improved to become more inclusive particularly for those wanting informal exercise.
6. Conservationists, landscape architects, architects and NHS physical activity promotion specialists should work together to design diverse green space benefiting the health of both the environment and local population. This may include the use of buildings whose exercise facilities merge seamlessly into the natural environment.
7. New recommendations should be set up for a minimum quantity of green space that will provide enough opportunities for physical activity for a given population. Even small public gardens may act as destinations for a walk in cities with a high density population.

Dr William Bird October 2004

Case Study 1 Walking the Way to Health

An initiative of the British Heart Foundation and the Countryside Agency. It aims to improve the health and fitness of more than a million people, especially those who do little exercise or who live in areas of poor health. Middlesbrough Council and Middlesbrough PCT currently work in partnership and employ a Walking the Way to Health Leader who leads walks throughout the area and has been working in many areas of the town.



Case Study 2 Women's Walking Network

Set up 5 years ago, and now extending across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland, the project was all about encouraging more women to get out and enjoy the local countryside either by attending arranged led walks or by encouraging women to walk independently. Funded originally by the Countryside Agency, the scheme is now self supported and managed by the group themselves, with over 100 members.

1.5.1 Aesthetic appreciation

Aesthetic appreciation relates to beauty, or ugliness, of the open space and some research has been carried out with some models developed. The value of an open space lies partially in the knowledge that it exists and is important to some by just being present as a resource to physically use. The importance of the knowledge that an open space exists was very clearly identified by research in Delaware where non users of a space stated that "just knowing the park was there" or "having it nearby" was important. This has been borne out by other research in Chicago (Kuo et al 1998), and by Worpole (1999) and many others.

The survey work in Middlesbrough has revealed the benefits that well cared for environments bring to local communities. The examples below show how communities have come together, empowering local people to transform their local environment with support from Middlesbrough Council.

- Carter Park – Doorstep Green, active involvement by the Friends of Carter Park with their own garden area for them to maintain, improving a run down space and replacing a derelict building that created anti social behaviour;
- Thorntree Park Play area – a newly developed play area designed in consultation by the Friends Group and parents from Sure Start replacing a poor play area that attracted anti social behaviour and was unusable; and
- Ayresome Gardens – the restoration of the gardens which led to the formation of an active Friends Group that have organised Ayresome Gala, 5 years consecutively actively empowering the local community to "get involved".

The following parks and open spaces demonstrate how local residents and park users have worked in partnership with Middlesbrough Council to raise funding to support a programme of environmental improvements that reflect local need:-

- Westbourne Park;
- Thorntree Park play area;
- Carter Park Doorstep Green;
- Longlands Doorstep Green;
- Ayresome Gardens;

- Glebe Park;
- Bonnygrove Park;
- Beechwood Park; and
- Henry Street Rec.

There are clearly health benefits linked to high quality urban open spaces. These can be identified primarily as physical and mental health benefits, with the latter including the restorative effects that nature can have and the importance of near nature in daily life. How often the opportunities to improve health by utilising urban open spaces is taken up by any individual or community is something that cannot be measured – it may even be that some people are not aware of the many opportunities for jogging, running, or contemplating nature that exist in our urban open spaces. Yet many people are, even if not consciously, using their urban open spaces for improving and restoring their physical and mental health.



Friends of Thorntree Park



Doorstep Green gets under way

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Our green spaces and trees can ameliorate the harsh urban environment, making it feel more liveable by screening eyesores, reducing noise and absorbing harmful pollutants. They support diverse wildlife habitats in our town, connecting people with nature close to home, school or work. The environmental benefits of urban open spaces are there for all regardless of social class, creed, ethnic background or gender.

1.6.1 Amelioration of Urban Climate and Environment

- **1.6.2 Airflow**

The localised airflow can increase in urban environments due to the turbulence caused by tall buildings. Trees reduce wind speed and provide shelter in locations adjacent to buildings which can be a positive attribute towards an individual's level of comfort.

- **1.6.3 Air Pollution**

In Middlesbrough, air pollution is produced predominantly from industrial processes and motor vehicles. These include metals, oxides of sulphur, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen, hydrocarbons and carbon dioxide. Due to the blanket of pollution that covers most urban areas radiation that penetrates to ground level is reduced. Estimates have indicated that in heavily polluted areas this can cause the air temperature to increase by as much as 10 degrees C a day.

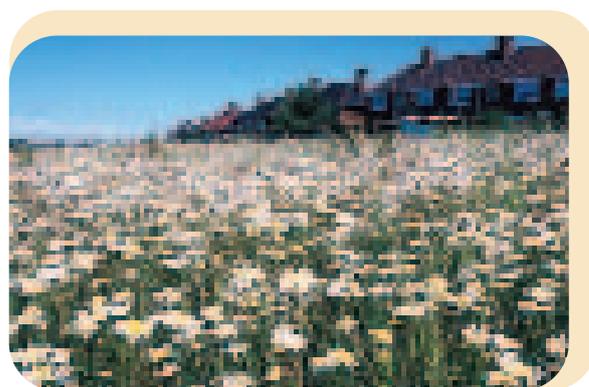
Certain tree and shrub species can absorb elements such as heavy metals and carbon dioxide without affecting the plant material which is effectively removed at leaf fall! It has also been reported that trees in a parkland setting can filter out up to 85% of suspended particles from the air, with this figure being reduced to 40% in winter.

- **1.6.4 Temperature**

Generally built up areas are warmer than rural areas, especially at night due to materials in buildings conducting heat. Pollutants also contribute to increased temperatures and ranges in difference to rural areas from 5-11C. The size of an urban green space can have a significant impact upon reducing the level of temperature. Thus a space of less than one hectare has no specific cooling effect whereas a larger open space like Albert Park would be termed a “park cool island”. Further research has also shown that broad leaved trees can reduce the ambient temperature by up to 17%, over and above grassland.



Fairy Dell



Berwick Hills Nature Reserve

- **1.6.5 Humidity and precipitation**

Generally urban areas have low humidity but higher precipitation, in some cities this being significant. Overall the hydrology of cities is different from rural locations due to changes in total run off of precipitation, changes in peak flow characteristics and changes in water quality.

- **1.6.6 Noise pollution** – the impact of trees and their amelioration of noise pollution is commonly accepted, whether it is a psychological barrier, or the actual rustling of leaves that distracts us from every day city noises.

1.7 WILDLIFE – OPPORTUNITIES FOR HABITATS AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Middlesbrough is reasonably well endowed with nature conservation interest. “ Space for Nature” written in 1993 categorises areas of wildlife in Middlesbrough. The Beck Valleys project in the early 1990’s was an initiative which sought to raise the public profile of wildlife and recreation in the Beck Valleys. This was carried further with the Middlesbrough Access Project. The Wildspace! Project in partnership with English Nature, is now looking at the designation of four local nature reserves in the town. Public consultation has highlighted the desire to see more birds, wild flowers, butterflies, trees, mammals and these species need green spaces to survive. Wildlife concerns continue to feature in public consultations about parks and open spaces. The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust has recently reviewed Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI’s). Results will be incorporated into the revised Local Development Framework, and an updated “Space for Nature”.

1.8 ECONOMIC VALUE OF GREEN SPACES

Historically there has been little UK research between the link of having quality green spaces and benefits to economic vitality. However, it is recognised that a clean attractive green environment not only gives social, recreational and health benefits to our citizens but is a vital part of attracting investment. However, recently CABE Space commissioned research on the economic benefits of good open space in 2005.

Their report investigated the economic benefits of urban green space, specifically examining the impact of recent improvements to parks and green spaces on local property values as an indicator of the relative attraction local green spaces have for house buyers.

Each of the case studies surveyed revealed that some form of higher property value was associated with the presence of a high quality park. In some cases, this effect was highly localised, impacting only the properties immediately adjacent to the park, in others the influence appeared to go wider.

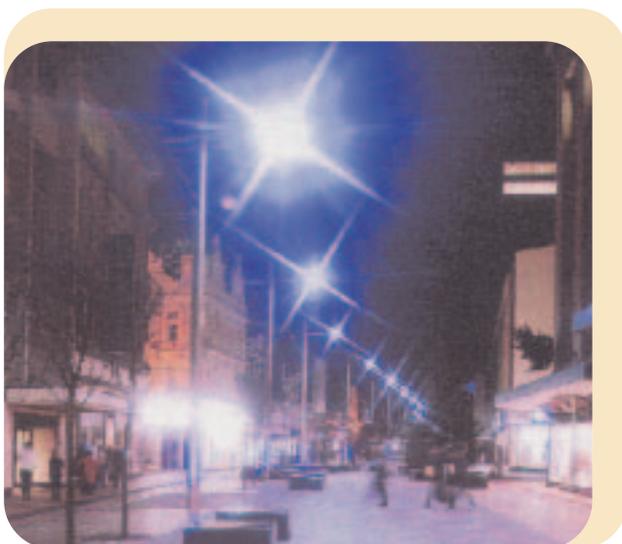
“Does Money Grow on Trees?” – CABE Space 2005

Current US research (Wolf,K) also indicated that green public spaces contributes to:-

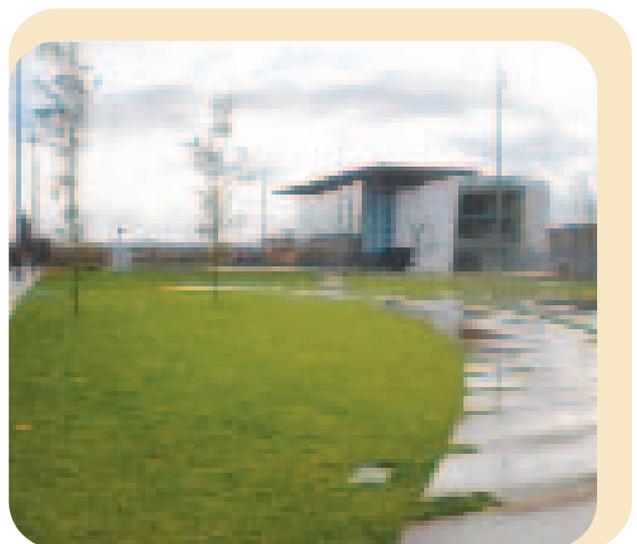
- A positive impact on property values – proximity to good parks, street trees, rivers, woods or wildlife;
- Employment opportunities – through development, management, maintenance, design, community involvement, as well as businesses that have set up due to the added value a good green space brings to a neighbourhood; and
- Tourism – Regional or national attractions for tourists. These can include botanical gardens or civic spaces and in Middlesbrough, Albert Park or Stewart Park with the facilities that they offer attract tourists regionally. The new square developed as part of mima will strengthen the emerging Cultural Quarter within Middlesbrough Town Centre.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister’s report “Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces” showed that evidence now suggested:

“ Environmental enhancement not only makes places more attractive and pleasant but green space initiatives can result in community strengthening and local economic stimulation as well as improvement to local environmental quality”



Middlesbrough Town Centre



Middlesbrough Centre Square

1.9 MIDDLESBROUGH'S GREEN SPACES AND PUBLIC PLACES – THEIR HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Middlesbrough is in comparison to many established industrial centres relatively “new”. Established in 1830, it owes its direct existence to the activities of the proprietors of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, started in 1825 and the transportation of coal from pits in the Auckland area of County Durham to centres of population like Stockton and Darlington. This led to export trade from purpose built staiths at the port of Stockton. Problems with these staiths and the Tees led the promoters to look further east towards the small agricultural community of Middlesbrough. During the decade following 1830, other industries were established in the specially created town of Middlesbrough, which was in itself the first urban offspring of the railway system. It was not until 1841 that the first major breakthrough occurred, with the opening of the Middlesbrough Ironworks, established by Henry William Ferdinand Bolckow and John Vaughan.

The discovery in 1850 of a deposit of ironstone at Eston proved to be crucial, in that it did away with the inconvenient necessity of transporting ore from the Whitby area by sea, then the construction of furnaces at Middlesbrough in 1852 solved another problem. From that time, it was no longer necessary to take the local ore for initial processing at the firm’s furnaces at Witton Park in County Durham. It was the iron, and later steel, trade which really established Middlesbrough as an important centre of heavy industry, with both a national and international reputation.

1.9.1 Middlesbrough’s Social Background

Even when well established in the 1850’s, the town itself was still confined to the area between the river and the railway line to Redcar, which had been opened in 1846. The rapid industrial explosion and southern urban expansion of the following decade had a dramatic effect upon population and housing density in the town, with living conditions leaving a great deal to be desired due to the practice of running mile after mile of terraced dwellings as close as possible to the growing number of works. However, one crucial factor could not be evaded – that of the environment, which was pervaded by the fall-out of heavy industry.

By 1859, Middlesbrough Town Council started to consider the desirability of a People’s Park.

“Sickly looking youth and pallid manhood would receive a boon indeed by the establishment of some recreative institution or the enclosure of some ground where cramped limbs might be exercised, and the mind dragged from the everlasting monotony around us”

– **Middlesbrough Weekly News and Cleveland Advertiser, 22nd October 1859.**

By 1868, Bolckow had bequeathed and donated Albert Park to the residents and inhabitants of Middlesbrough after suggestions made to him by members of the Temperance Society. For many years Albert Park was Middlesbrough’s only open air recreational facility. Others were developed much later as summarised below:-

1905 Glebe Road Recreation ground;

1901 Victoria Square;

1921 Hustler Fields at Newport;

1925 St Barnabas Recreation Ground;

1923 Stewart Park given to the town as the remains of the former Marton Hall Estate;

1929 Pallister Park laid out and opened;

1954 Mill Hill Playing Fields laid out;

1954 Linthorpe Rest Gardens laid out;

1960 Ormesby Playing Fields laid out;

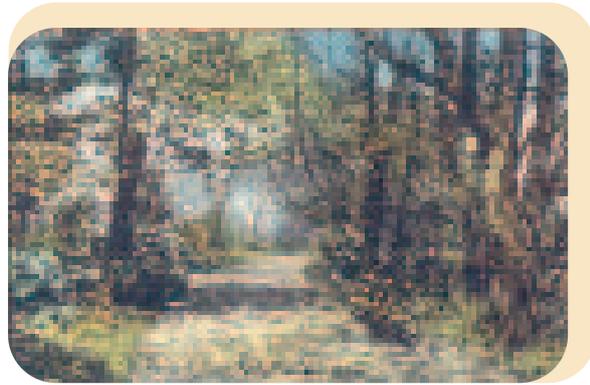


1962 Thorntree Park was laid out;
1962 Ayresome Gardens became a public park;
1963 Westbourne Park was laid out; and
1967 Prissick laid out.

In 1967, the parks and open spaces covered nearly 500 acres of land, employing 190 people, bedding out each year 300,000 salvia and antirrhinums, 400,000 geraniums and 100,000 wallflowers.



Victorian Albert Park



Sunk Walk, Albert Park

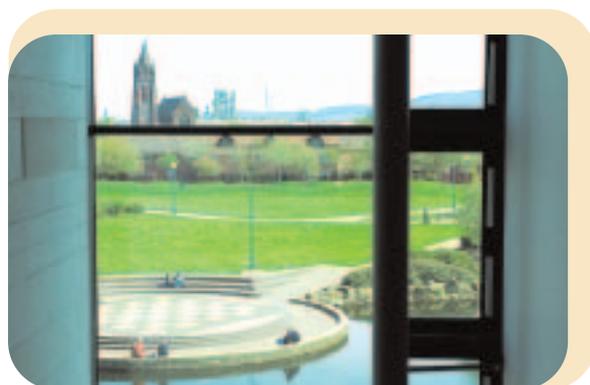
The spread of the urban conurbation has continued since the 1960s. New estates have been developed, especially in South Middlesbrough with Coulby Newham a large addition to the conurbation as well as expansion of Hemlington, Nunthorpe and Marton. New open spaces have been developed as part of the planned development of these, in particular Hemlington Rec, developed as part of a flood prevention scheme, Fairy Dell and larger areas of green space in Coulby Newham.

Countryside areas within Middlesbrough have found themselves under increased pressure, with the spreading urban area. Middlesbrough does not have a designated Green belt. However, its rural areas are designated as either Green Wedge or land beyond the limits to development where development will be strictly controlled in order to protect the countryside. A Special Landscape Area is also designated. Within the limits to development, the Local Plan, designates important areas of open space as Primary or Secondary open space and Green Wedge, but does not provide a more detailed typology of open space. Part of this strategy's remit is to look at a landscape typology and classification for all open space in Middlesbrough. This is detailed further in Part 4.

The Civic Space is as important as the green space in Middlesbrough with much of this evolving as part of the growth of the historic urban fabric of the town – Exchange Square, Linthorpe Village, Town Centre. However the amount is limited and varies in condition, but is often found where we have most of our most historic open space.



Jack Hatfield Square



Central Gardens from Mima

The decline of open space provision and the reductions in quality are detailed previously, with budget pressures, service provision, CCT and lower profile all discussed. However, development of open space is now being considered strategically to ensure that it enhances development, as demonstrated below:

- A major park is to be developed over the next 5 years, returning the Whinney Banks “backland” to the town as a significant park to the area. It is being developed as part of the regeneration of West Middlesbrough, funded through West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust, Bellway Homes and Middlesbrough Council. This park will contribute significantly towards open space provision for residents of West Middlesbrough;
- The development of a Country Park in South Middlesbrough will have links to Lingfield Countryside Centre, Community Forest and the Poole Hospital development; and
- The restoration of Albert Park and Linthorpe Cemetery has preserved two of the most significant parks and open spaces in Middlesbrough.

The condition of Middlesbrough green spaces and public places is discussed in Part 4. The future development of these areas is highlighted in the action plan.



A Profile of Middlesbrough - Vision, Policy and Principles

The gathering of data that has been carried out in the development of this Green Spaces Strategy is important in setting local standards for the type, location, quantity, quality and accessibility of parks and green spaces, helping to identify gaps in provision and to define key priorities for investment. More detailed information is available as a background paper: “Middlesbrough Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) Assessment Document Review” – KCA March 2005.

This information has been gathered and compiled in line with PPG17 guidelines and its companion guide “Assessing Needs and Opportunities”.

2.1 NATIONAL POLICY

As soon as they are created, landscapes start to adapt and change. Even well conceived and delivered parks and urban green spaces can quickly show signs of decay and dereliction if adequate and continuous management and maintenance regimes are not put in place. Similarly, urban parks and green spaces, which have historically performed well, can have their quality and value undermined by periods of uncoordinated and incremental changes, and by the adoption of inappropriate maintenance practices.

The Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) “Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation” (July 2002), advises local authorities to carry out assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space and recreational facilities. PPG17 also advises that local authorities should undertake an audit of quality, quantity and accessibility of open space, and to base their investment plans on their condition and value to the public. Middlesbrough has audited over 200 open space sites within the town, including all primary and secondary open space, play areas, allotments and becks. The findings of this study have been used to formulate much of the direction of this strategy. The results are available as a background paper but are also summarised in Part 4.

2.1.1 The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce recognised that urban parks and green spaces in English towns and cities are often criticised on a range of grounds:

- **For being poorly maintained** suffering from layer upon layer of minor, uncoordinated development and maintenance activities;
- **For being insecure** because of perceived high crime rates in some areas and the generally inhospitable and even hostile nature of many green spaces;
- **For lacking a coherent approach to their management** with uncoordinated and often conflicting interventions by a multitude of agencies, without clear overall responsibility;
- **For offering little to their users** with a general lack of facilities and amenities, and being a haven for anti social behaviour; and

- For being poorly designed proving unwelcoming to people, created with poor quality materials, and featuring uncoordinated or sometimes over elaborate landscape design.

These problems can lead to severe adverse impacts on the quality of life of urban communities, especially to those already disadvantaged in other ways. They emphasise that the quality of parks and urban green space does not rely solely on their initial planning and design, but depends to a very large extent on how that initial quality is managed and maintained over time.

As research in “**Living Places : Caring for Quality**” published by ODPM 2004, further highlighted the issue of long term quality management and maintenance is compounded by the impression that there are too many hands all trying to do their best with limited and declining resources, with little co-ordination between efforts and with few attempts to question the rulebooks which guide key public services.

So it is clear that if we are to rise to the challenge of improving the quality of our public space, a major shift in thinking is required.



Bottle of Notes, Central Gardens

2.2 LOCAL POLICY AND BACKGROUND

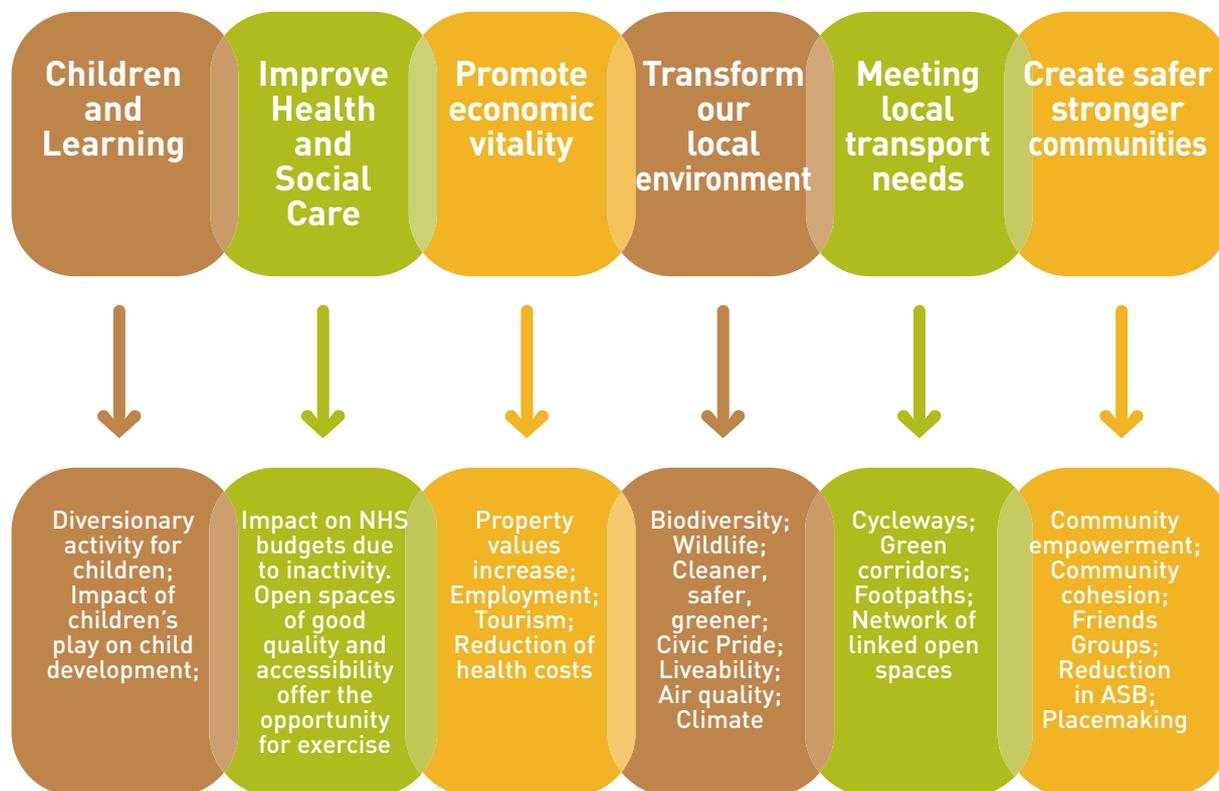
2.2.1 The Strategic Plan / Community Strategy

The Community Strategy, prepared by the Middlesbrough Partnership, a group bringing together representatives from the town’s communities and its public, private and voluntary organisations, is currently being revised with the following key themes:-

- Children and Learning;
- Improving Health and Social Care;
- Promoting Economic Vitality;
- Transforming our Local Environment;
- Meeting Local Transport Needs; and
- Creating Safer and Stronger Communities.

How can parks and green spaces be used to deliver across this broad range of Community Strategy priorities? This strategy highlights many examples and research that details how these can be delivered but are summarised below:-

Table 4 – Community Strategy themes – links to Green Spaces



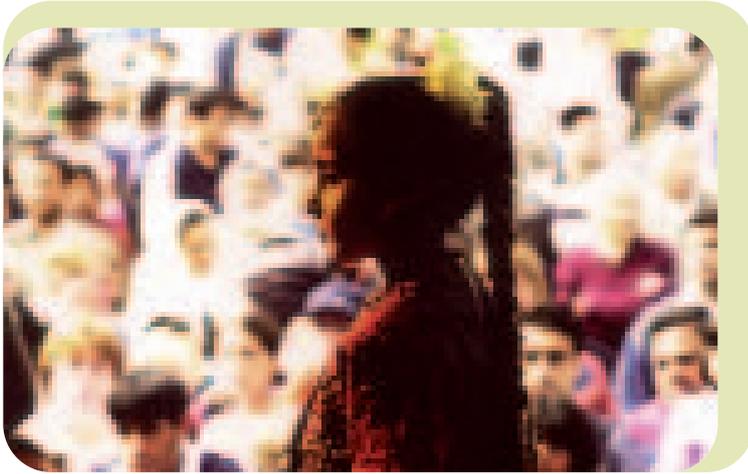
The Strategic Plan is the development of the annual Best Value Performance Plan. The Strategic Plan sits below the Community Strategy, which sets out the vision for Middlesbrough shared by members of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) together with the priorities supporting this vision.

It has 6 key interlinked themes and green space has a role to play in many of them. In particular, the “Transforming your Local environment” theme aims to:-

- Improve street cleanliness;
- Increase recycling;
- Improve access to Environmental Services;
- Adapt to future changes in climate; and
- Promote urban renaissance of green spaces.

It commits us to develop a Green Space Strategy for the town stating:-

“ Parks, play areas and green spaces enrich peoples lives. Transforming our green spaces and play areas to ensure they serve the needs of our communities better is a major opportunity to develop a step change in improving our town and the lives of our residents”



Middlesbrough Mela, Albert Park

2.2.2 Middlesbrough Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaces Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDF). These are similar to Local Plans, but are spatial plans and consist of a portfolio of development plan documents, covering the Core Strategy, Regeneration and the Environment.

The Middlesbrough Local Plan sets out a number of policies for the protection and enhancement of open space and wildlife habitats. It also sets standards for provision of these areas, which are largely based on national standards. Since the Local Plan was adopted in 1999, PPG17 has been revised and advises that local provision standards should be established. The Local Plan was due to expire in 2006, but under transitional arrangements of moving to LDF, it will be saved until the Core Strategy is adopted in November 2007.

The review of the Local Plan as an LDF will consider the need for any revisions to the boundaries of existing open space designations and associated policies. These changes will be informed by the PPG17 audit. If surplus open space (based on a locally set provision standard) is available that is of low quality and value, proposals for alternative uses may be designated in the LDF. It will also set out requirements for additional open space provision and developer contributions towards the provision and enhancement of open space.

2.2.3 This green spaces and public places strategy has to fit with Middlesbrough's **corporate aims** as stated in the Strategic Plan and Community Strategy as described in Section 2.2.1 .

2.2.4 The Mayor, Ray Mallon, in his “**Raising Hope**” agenda has focused on the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour by working in partnership with the Police and other local agencies. But “Raising Hope” is about far more than tackling crime – important though that is. It is about a comprehensive vision for the future of the town, built upon “the four pillars” of environment, regeneration, business and transport. His vision is for a clean, safe environment in which people can go about their business without a fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The physical regeneration of the town’s rundown sites and buildings is also important.



2.2.5 In 2003, Middlesbrough also published “**Green Spaces & Public Places, a public consultation document on Middlesbrough’s green spaces and public places – Strategic Plan**”. It was used to seek views on three basic proposals that would collectively work to improve the quality and local value of Middlesbrough’s green spaces and public places.

- 1. The Green Spaces and Public Places Strategic Plan -**
a draft framework for the creation of this strategy that will guide all future green spaces and public places improvements;
- 2. The Green Spaces and Public Places consultative network –**
identifying a way in which we could effectively involve local people in decisions about the management and development of our green spaces and public places; and
- 3. Measuring progress –**
suggesting how we can measure what has been done and how much there is still to do.

2.2.6 The vision for Middlesbrough’s Green Spaces and Public Places:-

“ Middlesbrough will have a network of accessible, quality, highly valued green spaces creating a place to be proud of, and promotes sustainability, supports bio-diversity and extensively contributes to the economic, social and environmental aspirations of the borough.”

This vision will guide and support Middlesbrough Council’s actions on green spaces. This must be born in mind when designing both spaces and management regimes for them.

The vision has a number of key components:-

- The network of spaces and facilities is more important than any individual space or facility: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts;
- Every space and facility does not have to be suitable for every possible use. Spaces that are designed and used for specific purposes can be of as much value as multi functional spaces. The Council will therefore adopt a different regime for different forms of provision;
- Quality and accessibility are more important than quantity;
- Meeting local needs is more important than retaining spaces if they have no or very low value;



- Green spaces and facilities support “liveability”. Green spaces in particular help to form an image of the town for residents and visitors;
- Green spaces support sustainability in various ways; provided they are managed in a manner which makes this possible;
- Green spaces should be designed and managed in ways which support and encourage biodiversity; and
- Making the best use of land implies that the Council will see low value low quality spaces as an opportunity to make better use of the land. This approach requires political courage, because the need to protect a green space is something that many people believe should be a “given” policy.

Ten principles were developed and now form a manifesto and will expand the vision into real deliverable statements with clear deliverable Action Plans.

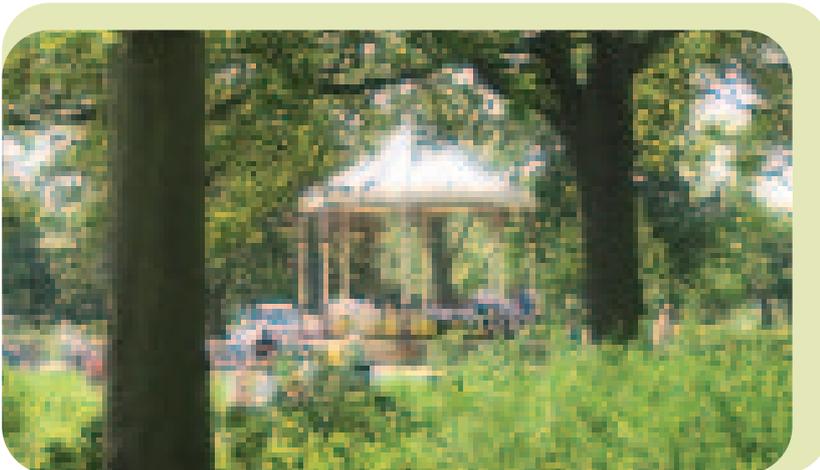
STEWARDSHIP

1. Our Stewardship role

As the representative of the people of Middlesbrough, we will manage the green spaces and public places in the interests of the whole community. The Council is the steward of Middlesbrough’s green spaces and public places and owns them in trust now and for future generations.

2. Our History and Heritage

We will protect and preserve the historic and architectural heritage found within Middlesbrough’s green spaces and public places. We will ensure that this heritage is protected, now and for the future.



The recreated bandstand in Albert Park

MANAGEMENT

3. Green Spaces and Public Places as community assets

Middlesbrough’s green spaces and public places are an essential and permanent community resource. The Council will work in partnership with users and involve them in the decision making process relating to the use, development and management of the town’s green spaces and public places.

4. Investing in our green spaces and public places

We recognise that our green spaces and public places require investment and nurturing. We will actively secure resources for the regeneration of our green spaces and public places, in partnership with the local community and external agencies. We will ensure investment is sustainable, maintenance regimes are developed and where new developments and initiatives are introduced, maintenance issues are taken into account in the design, management and ongoing sustainability of the facility.

USE

5. Universal access to green spaces and public places

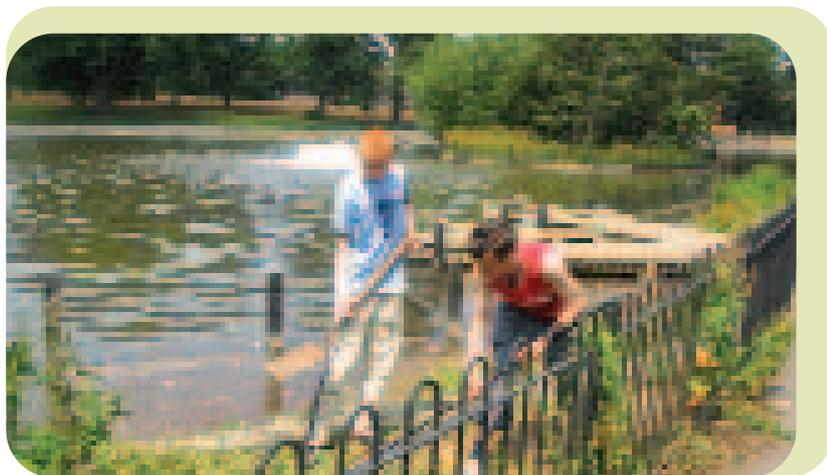
Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places are available for use by all sections of the local community, including the business community. We will support and promote fully inclusive access and use of Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places for all lawful purposes.

6. The right to safety

All sections of the local community have the right to use Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places in safety and without fear of crime. We will work in partnership with local people and other agencies in order to provide cleaner, safer and greener environments.

7. Education for Citizenship

We recognise that our green spaces and public places are a rich resource for learning, not only about the living environment, but Middlesbrough's history and culture. We will encourage the use of our green spaces and public places as important centres of education as well as places to celebrate Middlesbrough's cultural diversity.



The lake at Albert Park

8. Spaces for play, sport and recreation

Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places are an essential community resource in providing quality spaces for play, sport and recreation. We will ensure that these uses are provided for, in health, enjoyment and well being of the town's local communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

9. Our living spaces

We will continue to develop our green spaces and public places to ensure that they remain “living spaces”. In line with our Environmental Sustainability Strategy, we will protect and enhance the town’s biodiversity, maximise resource efficiency by increasing recycling opportunities, establish a better use of essential energy sources and minimise the use of pesticides and chemicals.

10. Aiming high and ensuring quality

We will make best use of resources available to ensure the highest quality for all our green spaces and public places. We will strive to adopt the principles of the Civic Trust Green Flag standard across all of our green spaces and public places and assess the quality and value of them all as set out in the recently revised PPG17. Our aim is to build on our success in gaining and retaining three green flag awards.

Table 5 Middlesbrough Council’s strategic vision



2.2.7 Playing Pitch Strategy

Middlesbrough adopted its Playing Pitch Strategy, “ Spaces to Play” in 2002 after considerable consultation. Its conclusions are summarised below.

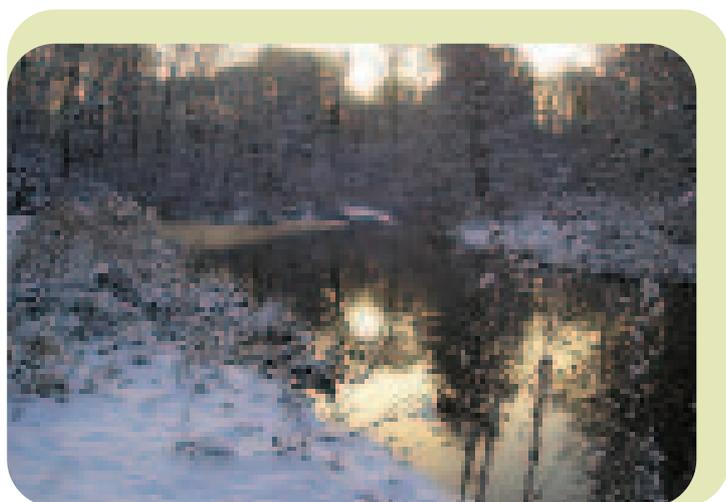
The findings of the study would support the continued adoption of a lower level of provision than the nationally established “six acre standard” (1.2 hectares of playing field per 1000 head of population). Some facilities in Middlesbrough are currently experiencing low levels of use and are operating below maximum carrying capacity. It must be however stressed that the quality of facilities is generally poor. Addressing standards of quality of provision is critical.

Recommendation - that a new local standard is established of 1.06 hectares of playing fields per 1000 head of population. Enhanced quality of provision on the sites is critical. Middlesbrough Council must recognise that enhanced quality of provision may lead to increased use of the facilities. Improved standards of provision would enable growth in recreational physical activity and sports participation.little space for the development of new facilities.... To be addressed by working with education and other providers.the value of playing field space goes beyond the actual sporting provision, they provide green space and informal recreation and physical activity areas for a community.

2.2.8 Middlesbrough Biodiversity Action Plan

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was produced in 1995 in response to the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. This has now been fed down to the local level and the Tees Valley BAP was published in 1999. Middlesbrough Council is a partner with other local authorities and the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust in the implementation of the Tees Valley Biodiversity Action Plan. The aim of the process is to stop the decline and loss of habitat, ensure sustainable management of wildlife and provide more opportunity and space for wildlife. In 2004 a set of targets and action plans were drafted for 23 habitats and 12 species for the whole Tees Valley. 15 habitats and 3 species have been identified as being relevant to Middlesbrough Council. The aim of all biodiversity projects in Middlesbrough is to prevent the area turning into a monoculture of mown grass with the odd tree and culverted water course and involve people in the process to raise awareness of the value of the natural environment on their lives.

The adoption and implementation of the Action Plans and Targets within the Tees Valley BAP will be a detailed Action Plan for the Green Spaces Strategy.



Beck Valley



Fairy Dell

2.2.9 Space For Nature Strategy

The Council's Nature Conservation Strategy, Space for Nature (1993) lists local "Nature Space" sites and other major spaces that contribute to the wildlife network and where improvement for wildlife should take place.

Recent work has been completed to re-survey all Middlesbrough's Sites for Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI's) in 2005.

This work will be fed back into a revised Space for Nature Strategy 2006.

Also a series of Action Plans have evolved in relation to targets under the Biodiversity Action Plan which will link closely with the Space For Nature Strategy.

2.2.10 Cultural Strategy

Middlesbrough Council has also adopted a cultural action plan "Creative Frontiers" which has 5 objectives:-

- Driving **economic regeneration** through cultural initiatives;
- Improving **access** to provision;
- Offering cultural opportunities that **enrich** peoples lives;
- Providing **excellence and innovation** in cultural endeavours; and
- Developing the **cultural infrastructure** to encourage **sustainability**;

It has key actions based on "built environment, green spaces and public places". To:-

1. Ensure effective stewardship of public green spaces and public places, including the protection and preservation of the historic and architectural heritage of the town;
2. Ensure available resources are effectively applied and new resources sought in order to manage and regenerate green spaces and public places in partnership with the community and local agencies;
3. Support and promote safe, inclusive access to our green spaces and public places;
4. Utilise public spaces, green spaces and the built environment as a resource for developing citizenship and learning, and raising public awareness;
5. Provide quality spaces as a community resource for play, sport and recreation, promoting health, enjoyment and well-being;
6. Create "living spaces" in line with our Environmental Sustainability Strategy, protecting and enhancing the town's biodiversity, maximising resources and increasing recycling opportunities; and
7. Adopt the principles of the Civic Trust's "Green Flag" Standard across all public spaces, assessing their quality and quantity, building on the success of our 3 green flag parks.

These will be reinforced by the adoption and work planned through this strategy.

2.3 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment is an important component in the overall quality of the Town – which has always had a strong visual character. Major structures, public buildings, strong building lines, selective redevelopment, and pedestrianisation all combine to create a strong sense of character and identity.



This provides a positive asset on which to build.

The Local Plan has a policy on Built Form and Urban Design which states:-

Spaces between buildings are of the utmost importance. Development should create a series of linked and varied spaces defined by buildings and integrating buildings and landscape design, and having clear and specific functions.

In the Final Report in November 2002, "Middlesbrough Town Centre – Townscape Reappraisal and Aspirations", prepared by Gillespies and GEHL Architects, it states:-

The public realm provides the physical framework within which the business of the city – formal and informal – is conducted. Public space mediates between the various roles and functions of the city – shopping centre, entertainment district, residential area, cultural centre, and so on. The public realm is the domain of the city's public life, providing the environment for:-

- Transaction – walking, sitting, watching and meeting;
- Exchange – commercial activities; and
- Access and movement – for people and goods.

Further work by the Town Centre Company (Middlesbrough Town Centre Strategic Options Study – EDAW 1998; Middlesbrough Town Centre Access and Circulation – Oscar Faber 2000;) resulted in a series of recommendations which included:-

- A pedestrian study which highlights the areas that require design resolution;
- A set of aspirational design principles for the public realm; and
- A design language for application to the public realm / projects including specification of street furniture, trees, lighting etc.

At the heart of all the Town Centre regeneration, the public realm has been recognised as crucial in delivering economic regeneration and sustainability and has resulted in a vibrant and unique town centre public realm.



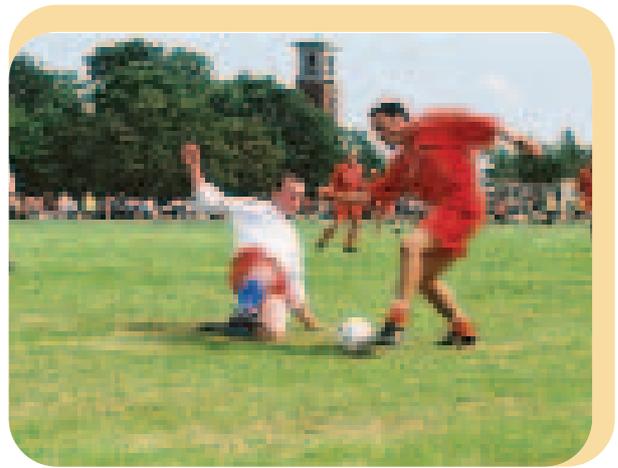
Involving Communities

3.1 GREEN SPACES STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are people who have an interest, so when we talk about green space, this potentially means everyone. They may use them passively (walking through them on their way to work, school or the shops), or actively (playing sport, visiting a facility there, or an event, or walking the dog) or live or work next to a green space. Green space touches most of us. With this in mind we have carried out considerable initial consultation.



Bowling in Albert Park



Football in the Park

3.2 Steering Group

A steering group was set up to guide the development of the strategy, made up from officers from Parks Management, Countryside, Parks and Open Spaces Development, Grounds Maintenance, Planning, The Tees Forest and Groundwork South Tees.

3.3 Consultative Forum

A Consultative Forum (People's Parks Forum) has been established as part of the consultation process. This group met for the first time in January 2005 and again in July 2006 and agreed to act as a sounding board for the Strategy team. The Forum is made up from Chairs of Friends Groups and their representatives, Chairs and representatives of local Community Councils as well as individuals who filled the consultation forms on the Strategic Plan. Likewise, presentations have been made at Officer level as well as Senior Management Team and to elected members.

3.4 Public Perceptions of Leisure Services in Middlesbrough

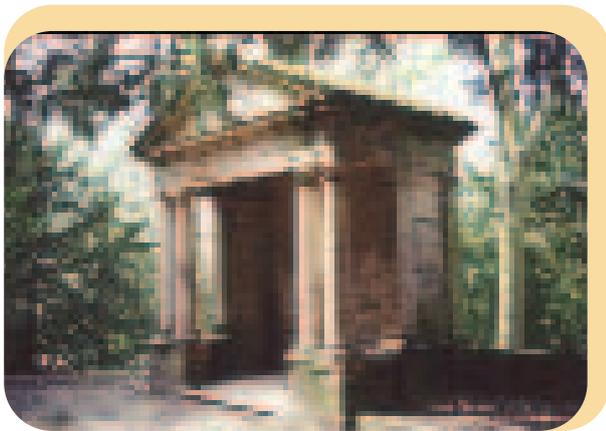
Although the Parks and Open Spaces service is now delivered within the Environment Department, a Voiceover Citizens Panel was carried out in November 2002 on the perception of the Middlesbrough Leisure Services (now Sport and Leisure). It asked for views on the current service and was supported by a 64% return rate.

82% of respondents are satisfied with the parks that are managed by Middlesbrough Council. Parks are also the leisure facility that people are most likely to use. However only 46% were satisfied with general open spaces elsewhere (playing fields, unmanned parks etc).

The leisure venues that respondents were most likely to use were Stewart Park (19%), Albert Park (18%) and the Rainbow Leisure Centre (17%).

20% of people who don't use Thorntree Park did not know it existed. Inconvenient locations and poor car parking (Albert Park) were among the main reasons for not using Albert Park and Stewart Park.

Generally, respondents agreed that participation in leisure activities would contribute to many of the key priorities in the Community Strategy, including improving health (95%), reducing obesity (88%) and improving urban living (83%).



Stewart Park



Pallister Park

3.5 Town-wide consultation with residents

As part of the consultation process, a detailed questionnaire was circulated, with returns completed by February 2004.



Albert Park

A detailed survey was also distributed to Middlesbrough Council staff who live and work in Middlesbrough. The residents survey was not well responded to, and these are summarised below. The staff questionnaire generated a good response and is also summarised below.

Table 6 Green Spaces and Public Places Strategic Plan Questionnaire Summary

Green Spaces and Public Places Strategic Plan Questionnaire Summary

1. Do you think the vision for Middlesbrough's green spaces and public places is meaningful? – the majority of respondents clearly supported this vision;
2. What do you think of the 10 fundamental principles for green spaces and public places? – the majority of respondents support the 10 principles;
3. Do you agree with the key strategic objectives of safety, inclusion and quality? – very strong support for the three objectives;
4. What do you think about the consultative network proposal? – again, strong support for the Council's proposals;
5. Do you agree with the structure of the Middlesbrough Green Spaces Public Places Forum? – strong support for the Council's proposals;
6. Do you think the national performance measures are relevant to Middlesbrough? – some in favour, some doubting the value of national indicators and preferring more local ones;
7. What do you think of our suggested local performance indicators? – much stronger support for the proposed local indicators than the national ones;
8. What other performance measurements do you think could be used? – many responses given ranging from level of user involvement to emotive impact on people's health;
9. What are the good and bad points of our green spaces and public places? – litter, vandalism, dog fouling top the list of bad points. The good points were landscape features in general and the chance to be in open fresh air;
10. What is the name of your local park, green space, whether good or bad, what do you think of it? – Albert Park had huge support but many concerns on other spaces in general; and
11. What do you think is the most important thing that needs improving in your local park, green space or public place? – the comments mirror those relating to good and bad features of local parks and green spaces above.

Age range was mainly 25-49, 50-64, and 65-74. The distribution was 59% female, and 41% male, with 83% white British and the remaining Black/Asian/European

Table 7 Middlesbrough Council Local Quantitative Survey

(the full results are available as part of the background papers)

The majority of respondents rated most facilities (parks, gardens, play areas, pavilions, tennis courts, bowling greens etc) as at least good, the exceptions being public use changing pavilions, club tennis courts, allotments, children's play areas for under 8's and 8-12 year olds and teenage facilities. The highest rated facilities were the Borough's parks and public gardens. There was good support for more areas of provision related to nature conservation and wildlife areas.

Respondents also felt there was a need for more of most of these facilities except grass pitches on school sites, club tennis courts and allotments.

Walking is the main means of travel to rural footpaths, bridleways, community centres, local recreation grounds, parks and public gardens, green spaces in housing areas, public and public gardens, green spaces in housing areas, public and school pitches, public changing pavilions, public and club tennis courts, bowling greens, allotments, churchyards and cemeteries, children's play areas and teenage facilities. Most respondents travel by car to nature conservation and wildlife areas, woodland areas and copses, water sports areas, commercial fitness centres, public leisure centres, youth centres, public swimming pools and club tennis courts.

For most forms of provision, acceptable travel times are in the 10-20 minute range. The form of provision respondents are willing to spend the least time walking to is public green spaces in housing areas (10 minutes) and the longest bridleways, water sports areas, club tennis courts, allotments and teenage facilities. Distance thresholds are discussed in Part 4.

3.6 Consultation with Young people

28% of the Middlesbrough population is made up of young people up to the age of 19. They are a difficult group to involve in decision - making, design and management of the green spaces they use. We have had some successes to date with Albert Park Teenzone Play area, Prissick Skatepark and the Wildspace! Project but more work is required to ensure we engage fully with young people. Their needs depend on age and level of parental dependency. The young children need access to safe green spaces closer to home than older children who want to play alone or meet friends but still be relatively close to home. The older teenagers will travel quite independently within their own or an adjacent neighbourhood or simply "hang out" and be well away from other residents to avoid potential conflict.

A recent study for the Heritage Lottery Fund (May 2003), shows that 86% of parents with children aged 11 or under, say that on a warm day, their children would rather go the park than sit in front of a television.

No research has been carried out as to what young people and children want from their open spaces and play areas in Middlesbrough. The 1991 Draft Middlesbrough Play Strategy has no mention of any consultation with regards to play provision. Any future development work with regards to play development and youth facilities delivered through a new play strategy will involve major contributions and consultation with user groups.





Wildlife day, Berwick Hills
Local Nature Reserve

3.7 Ethnic Minority Groups

People from ethnic minority backgrounds face a variety of problems when accessing services. These may be through cultural differences, language barriers or fear of prejudice or harassment (real and perceived). The recent Roots project highlighted the limited use of some spaces by ethnic minority groups. A recent partnership initiative REACT (Regeneration through Environmental Action) demonstrated how cultural barriers can be removed by working with the Showpeople and their neighbours to improve neighbourhood space in North Ormesby. A detailed Action Plan will be developed that will look at how increased usage of open spaces by ethnic minority groups can be delivered with reference to the Black Environment Network research, “Ethnic Communities and Green Spaces – Guidance for green space managers”

3.8 Access for All

Disability affects around 9.2% of Middlesbrough’s population but it is important to note that good access benefits everyone. Disability may be physical or mental impairment and both may equally limit someone’s chance to enjoy green space. Physical barriers may be gates and stiles, narrow paths, overhanging branches, lack of seating or uneven surfaces. Other barriers may be a lack of confidence to access facilities, the need for a carer to accompany them, the need for transport or being unable to read information during or before a visit.

As part of the accessibility audits carried out as part of this strategy, a basic survey was carried out of access and geographical spread to open spaces in Middlesbrough. It highlighted that within the strategy the following access provisions should be considered:-

- Making access for all an integral part of all policy, strategy and activity in the planning, development and management of Middlesbrough’s green spaces;
- Ensuring that a specific access and accessibility statement should be developed and integrated into any existing “access policy”;
- In relation to site prioritisation, we should be considering the reasons a person has for choosing and using a space. Where sites are part of a linked network different levels of access can be present and justified eg Beck Valleys. If there are sites that, either through their specific nature or location, are the only ones available to an individual or group, access for all is more important;

- As far as this strategy is concerned, we will be programming an ongoing comprehensive survey and audit of the parks and green spaces to meet future needs and responsibilities. The Disability Discrimination Act requires the removal of physical barriers to disabled people’s access from October 2004, or the justification of the services and facilities as found;
- Ensuring we consult with disabled people from a variety of interest / user groups allowing us to consider the access and accessibility issues around parks and green space within the town; and
- Adopting the “BT Countryside for All” standards and their accompanying approach as an integral part of their physical access policy.



Events for all

3.9 Older People

Older people are a diverse and expanding group and regular users of parks and green spaces for walking dogs, relaxing or taking grandchildren to play. They are often the ones who are most likely to fill in a “questionnaire” or form a Friends Group!

The feedback received from these groups indicates that seating areas, toilets, resting points, tree and shrub planting and colour are all as important as is the perception of safety.

3.10 “Friends” groups

Middlesbrough has a number of “Friends” groups across the town associated with a number of open spaces, from Albert Park, to Linthorpe Cemetery, to Acklam 2020, to Ayresome Gardens. None of them are typical, some are constituted, some are not, and some are large whereas others are very small. They are however all very important to parks and open spaces in Middlesbrough, as they have one common goal – to improve their local green space.

The support from Middlesbrough Council has been sporadic due to lack of staff resources but officers have attended meetings and have found attendance useful, as has the group. A part time officer is now in place to support these groups but further support is needed. There is also strong feeling from staff and groups that a town wide “People’s Parks Forum” would be useful to help influence policy and as a means for sharing ideas and information. This has been started as part of the strategy development with chairs of Friends Groups and Community Councils consulted upon at open meetings. This is to be developed into a constituted group.

3.11 Staff Consultation

Middlesbrough Council have many staff who are involved in Parks and green space delivery.

- Countryside, Parks and Open Spaces Development;
- Parks Management;
- Sport and Leisure;
- Horticultural Services;
- Community Protection / Bereavement Services;
- Planning; and
- Regeneration.

As well as many partnerships with outside agencies:-

- Groundwork South Tees;
- Tees Forest;
- Natural England;
- Tees Valley Wildlife Trust;
- Environment Agency;
- Erimus Housing; and
- Middlesbrough Environment City.

An away day was held in December 2002 and was followed up in December 2004 with representatives from all the above. A workshop was held about green space issues and how a strategy could be developed. The results are summarised below.



Lingfield Countryside Centre

Table 8 Staff Away Days Summary

Why are we writing it?

- Clear directions;
- Bid for funding;
- Management tool;
- Prioritising, selling, rationalising land; and
- Community Groups aid.

Negative images of Parks and Green Spaces

- Derelict;
- Isolated;
- Not valued, safe or inviting;
- Lack of resources;
- Crime, ASB, dog fouling, drugs; and
- Poorly designed, quality vs quantity?

Positive image

- Beautiful;
- Safe and well maintained;
- Diverse;
- Educational;
- High public use;
- Positive partnerships;
- Sport for all; and
- Free.

What did we want for the future?

- Improving the quality of life;

- More Partnerships;
- To engage local people;
- Better quality;
- Greater co-operation;
- Use rather than abuse;
- Inclusiveness;
- Places without fear;
- Cleaner, safer, greener; and
- A Vision.

How could we make a strategy work?

- Make it user friendly;
- Share ideas;
- Champions (at officer level and member level);
- More resources;
- Be radical;
- Rationalise land ownership;
- Continually review;
- An action plan;
- No more new build;
- Disjointed management system;
- Champion the cause – raise the profile;
- Management vs Maintenance;
- Sustainability issues resolved; and
- Create a focus for many open spaces.

3.12 Involving the Private Sector

There are many ways in which to involve the private sector especially if they border an adjacent open space, particularly Hospitals, Colleges, local business, all as potential users as well as possible funding / management partners.



Improvements and Priorities to our Green Spaces and Public Places

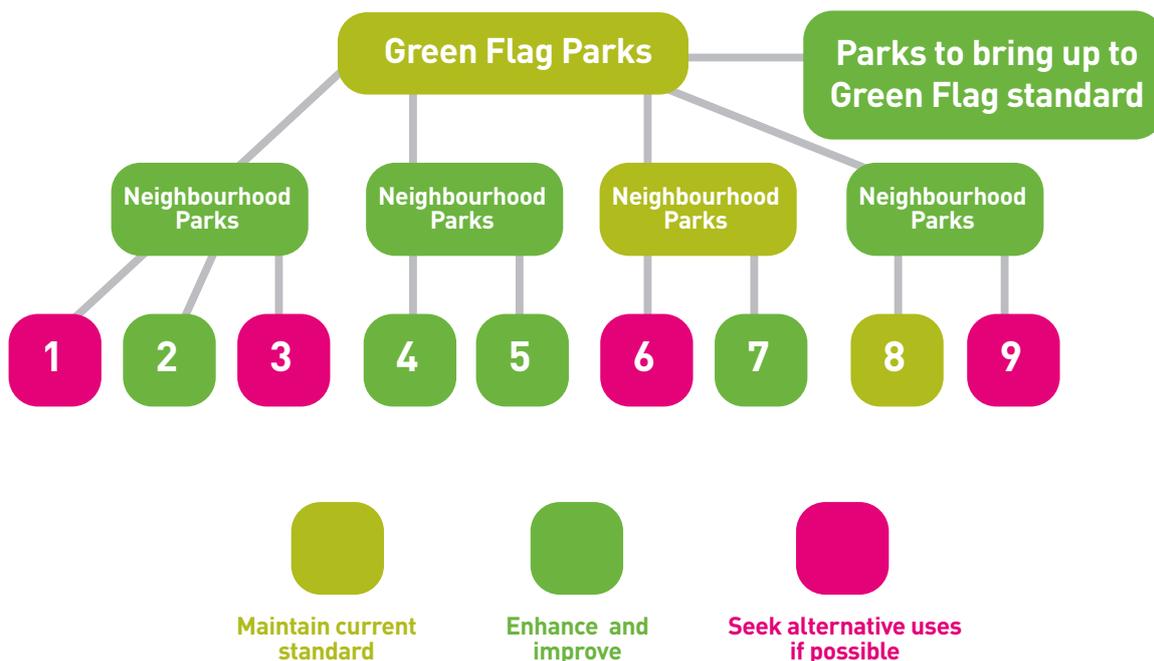
4.1 IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITISING

Without a doubt, there needs to be substantial improvements to parks and open spaces in Middlesbrough and many have been carried out to date. However, despite the enthusiasm to do so, these changes cannot all be brought about at once and action needs to be organised, prioritised, resourced and adequately funded. The PPG17 quality and value audits carried out (discussed in section 4.6) will help us do this and will be highlighted in this Strategy and developed in the Action Plan. With the help of audit scores and a quality / value matrix that categorises spaces and places, it will be easier to identify key priorities for action.

Some initial suggestions have been made - see below

- Make sure we maintain the quality of our best and most popular open spaces (the green flag parks of Albert, Pallister and Stewart Parks and the links to them, the Beck Valleys);
- Improve areas that are high in value but low in quality and in areas where the quality of life is most wanting;
- Improve spaces that are most in the public eye;
- Those spaces which are a lesser priority are kept at least clean and safe; and
- Children’s play areas should be a priority as many are in poor condition and the need to “start at a younger age” to influence future generations.

Table 9 Key Priorities for action

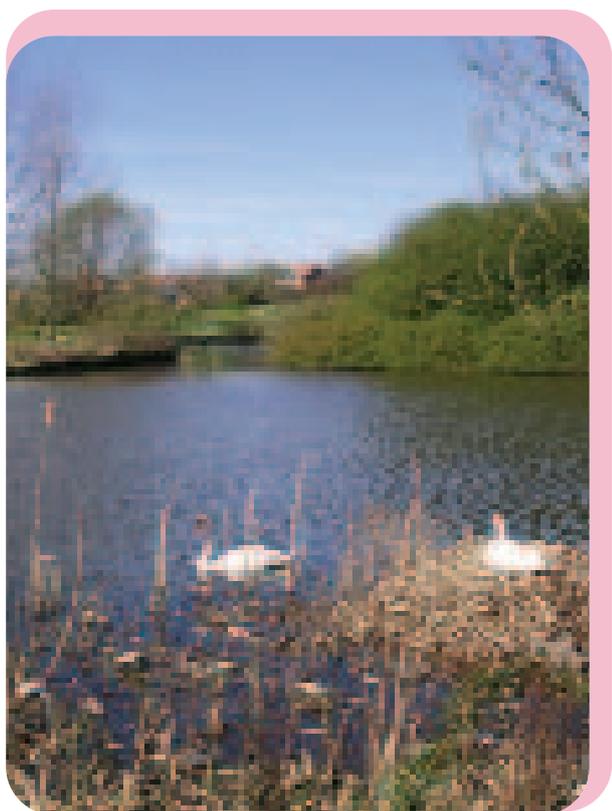


Green Flag Parks – eg Albert Park, Pallister Park, Stewart Park (high quality, high value)

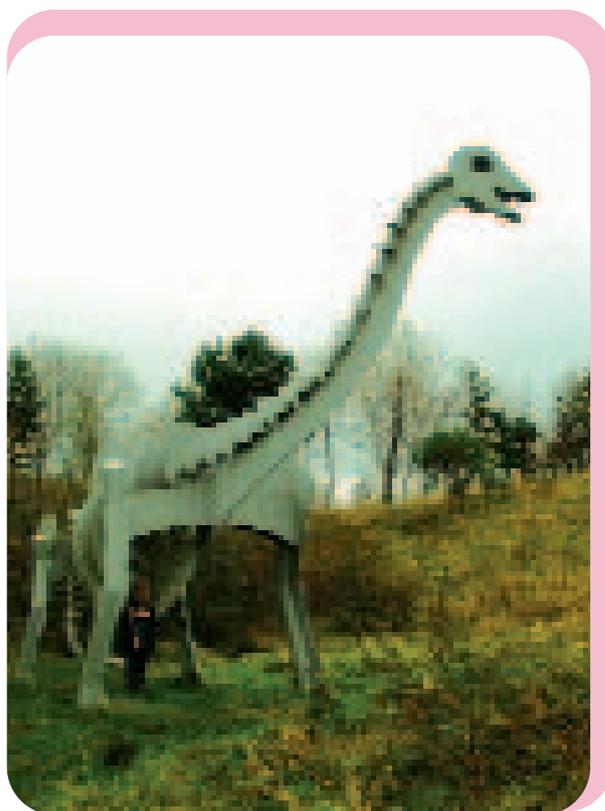
Neighbourhood Parks – eg Thorntree Park, Westbourne Park, Ayresome Gardens, Teessaurus Park, Henry St Rec, Carter Park, Farndale Field and others (generally low quality, high value, though some high quality)

1, 2, 3 etc – amenity open spaces (many low quality, low value, some high value)

Parks to bring up to Green Flag Standard ? – Hemlington Rec, Linthorpe Cemetery, Fairy Dell. Currently low quality but high value.



Hemlington Rec



Teessaurus Park

4.2 INVESTMENT IN GREEN SPACES AND PUBLIC PLACES

Middlesbrough has invested substantial funds into many parks and open spaces to date (from the Town Centre to Albert Park to neighbourhood play areas), but this has often been opportunity driven as and when funds have become available.

The ODPM has advised Local Government to undertake rigorous audits of parks and open spaces through PPG17, and to use this as a basis for future investment. This is linked to the Local Plan (now Local Development Framework) and other regeneration initiatives. Funding is often theme based within strict operational areas with little direct funding for parks or open space funding. Any investment plan must take this into account and be flexible as these are often the only sources of funding that may be available. An excellent case study recently developed in Middlesbrough in partnership with Groundwork, Tees Forest and the Countryside Agency is detailed below, called REACT, Regeneration through Environmental Action.

Middlesbrough REACT works in partnership with area based initiatives such as NRF and SRB to use urban and community forestry to help complement regeneration activities to improve neighbourhoods, attract inward investment, deliver education and national curriculum targets, improve health, reduce pollution, improve wildlife habitats, and help create a town where people feel proud to live and work.

Investment is discussed further in section 4.7.

4.3 VALUE FOR MONEY

One of the greatest assets from parks and open spaces is that they are freely available for everyone to use. However, management and maintenance costs are expensive. Cost effective asset management is about getting the best out of your assets. Can we get more out of some of our open spaces by extending the range of facilities on offer?

We also need to look at space that is under-performing, and is surplus to requirements, or too difficult to bring up to standards. If this is the case, we need to dispose of for better or alternative uses, with the proceeds and savings used to improve spaces nearby. Local provision standards help to assess whether an open space is surplus to requirements and this aspect of green space provision is explored further in the section that follows.

4.4 GREEN SPACE STANDARDS – QUANTITY AUDITS

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) have for many years advocated open space provision, the most well known being the 6 acres of open space per 1000 head of population and adopted by Middlesbrough Council in the most recent Local Plan.

English Nature has carried out some detailed research on accessible green space and the need for people to have access to natural green space or wildspace. Their latest recommendations (1996) are for an accessible green space within 300 metres of home, a hectare of local nature reserve per 100 people and larger sites further from home. In Middlesbrough, the Wildspace! Project has developed 3 Local Nature Reserves over the last 4 years from previously having none with 2 further proposed. Middlesbrough Council has developed new green space standards based on distance thresholds and quantity standards as detailed below.



Wildspace Project

4.4.1 Local standards development

Current government guidance on standards of provision urges local authorities to set standards that reflect local conditions and local needs, in consultation with local people.

Middlesbrough currently has the following Urban Parks Space Hierarchy and Standards:-

Table 10 Middlesbrough Open Space Standards – Local Plan 1999

The following minimum standards of provision or urban parks readily accessible from residential areas, are adopted as targets for the whole urban area.

- i) Pocket Park (open space for young children’s play)
At least 0.1 ha (0.25 ac) in one unit, within 100 metres of houses suitable for families with children, without crossing a main road or similar barrier to safe movement. (Minimum provision ratio 0.2ha (0.5ac) per 1000 people)

Space serving adjoining developments may be physically combined to achieve the minimum unit size.
- ii) Local Park (open space and play facilities for children of all ages and general amenity).
At least 0.7ha (1.75 ac) in one unit within 400 metres of houses served, without crossing a main road or similar barrier to safe movement. (minimum provision ratio 0.4ha (1.1ac) per 1000 people).

Space serving adjoining developments may be physically combined to achieve the minimum unit size.
- iii) Area Park (varied play for all ages, games courts / greens, substantial amenity space).
Approximately 10ha (25 ac) within approx 1 mile (1600 metres) of houses served. (minimum provision ratio 0.2ha (0.5ac) per 1000 people.

New residential developments which would create a shortage when considered against these standards will normally be required to provide pocket parks and local parks (but not area parks) to this standard. Contributions will be based on provision of at least 0.8ha (2 ac) per 1000 people for general purpose house building.

Standards differ throughout the country. Within the Council, there is a view that we have sufficient green space in many areas and insufficient in others and that we do not look after what we have. Elsewhere, there are views that there are never enough and many want more children’s play space. Areas of perceived deficiency include Gresham, Linthorpe and University Wards whilst areas like Beechwood, Coulby Newham and Marton are seemingly well served with green space.

“In short, most organisations have plenty of land, and two good sites are worth many mediocre ones”

Ken McAnespie KMC Consultancy, Horticulture Week 10th July 2003

Middlesbrough has developed a new set of quantity standards and distance thresholds through work carried out by Consultants appointed by Middlesbrough Council. This work is summarised as a background paper but is summarised below.



Local consultation by consultants has established that in general, Middlesbrough residents would like to have more green spaces, and a better range of indoor sports and community facilities;

- Nature conservation areas - 70%
- Local recreation grounds - 61%
- Teenage youth provision - 56%
- Equipped play areas - 57%.

(Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – KCA August 2005)

However, Middlesbrough already has a lot of green space, some 12.4 million square metres of it, or an average of around 92 square metres per person. In the paper, a number of issues stand out:-

- Natural green spaces, including the Beck Valleys, are the largest green space land use apart from education. The other major green space land uses are parks and gardens and pitches and courts;
- The average size of amenity green space, at just under 30,000 square metres, is very large;
- Equipped play areas, youth facilities and ball courts in aggregate account for less than 0.5% of green space land use. The under-19 age group in the town, however, accounts for around 19% of the population; and
- Pitches and courts are also a major land use, with a significant average site size.

Table 11 Overview of Existing Provision

Typology	Area (sq m)	Sq m / person	% Total	Sites	Average size (sq m)
Natural green spaces	2,549,341	18.88	25.98%	48	53,11
Amenity green spaces	1,004,441	7.44	10.23%	34	29,542
Parks and gardens	2,183,465	16.17	22.25%	43	50,778
Allotments	309,777	2.29	3.16%	6	51,630
Churchyards/Cemeteries	484,826	3.59	4.94%	9	53,870
Civic Spaces	3,874	0.03	0.04%	2	1,937
Youth	7,886	0.06	0.06%	3	2,629
Play	39,521	0.29	0.40%	38	1,040
Ballcourts	17,820	0.13	0.18%	14	1,273
Pitches and Courts	2,235,515	16.56	22.78%	32	69,860
Tennis	24,761	0.18	0.25%	5	4,952
Bowls	21,161	0.16	0.22%	5	4,232
Golf	931,606	6.90	9.49%	2	465,803
Sub totals	9,813,994	72.70	100%		
Education	2,584,942	19.15			
TOTALS	12,398,936	91.84			

Note: natural green spaces includes the Beck Valleys

(Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – KCA August 2005)



In aggregate, around 7% of the town's area is in recreational use and over 6% in school and educational use, including school playing fields. As Middlesbrough is also a compact and flat town, this means that most residents live within a fairly easy walk or cycle of a choice of green spaces.

Quantity standards are discussed below. Further details are discussed in the background paper.

Parks and Gardens – summary

- **Existing Quantity Standard:** 8 sq m per person
- **Existing provision:** 16.2 sq m per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 13 sq m per person

The Local Plan currently includes a parks hierarchy as detailed in Table 10. However clarification is needed as to what constitutes a park and what is classed as amenity green space. When combined, parks and gardens and amenity green space exceeds the Local Plan standard comfortably. However, the main issue that arises from this analysis, is whether the Council should allow development on some of the town's present green space, and if so, how much it should release. This is an issue that relates primarily to amenity green space rather than parks.

4.4.2 Key Issues from the Audit

The audit database contains details of 43 parks, many of them lacking in facilities and of poor quality, with four very obvious exceptions: the Green Flag Parks and Hemlington Lake and Recreation Centre. As stated, clarification is needed on what is a park and what is amenity green space. The following definition of a park is suggested:-

“ A high quality green space, with a specific local name and enclosed by walls, railings or hedges, containing a range of landscape features or built facilities, designed and maintained in such a way as to be seen as an attractive place to visit by people of all ages”

4.4.3 A new two tier hierarchy is suggested as detailed below:-

- **Town Parks:** major parks with a good range of facilities, intended to serve a town wide catchment. These parks will be different and complementary. The three Green Flag Parks and Hemlington will make up this level of hierarchy; and
- **Neighbourhood Parks:** smaller parks within walking distance of each of the main neighbourhoods in the town, with a lesser range of facilities, designed to complement those in other spaces in the same neighbourhood but generally with an emphasis on providing a high quality landscape and horticultural interest. It follows that we will actively seek to maximise pedestrian and cycling access to these spaces.

Town Parks

The specific role of the town parks should be:

- **Albert Park:** the town's premier heritage park and intended primarily for passive recreation with some active recreation;
- **Pallister Park:** the main sports park in the north-eastern part of the town;
- **Stewart Park:** the town's “country” park in town for primarily passive recreation and with specific facilities;



- **Hemlington Recreation Ground:** (which is proposed to be re-named after local consultation) the main sports park in the south western part of the town; and
- **Central Gardens and Middlesbrough Square** – open space and leisure facility serving the working and student population within the relatively high density town centre.
- **TOTAL AREA:** 1,137,922 sq m

This equates to approximately 8 sq m per person.

Neighbourhood Parks

The neighbourhood parks are listed in Table 19. Their aggregate area is approximately 682,000 sq m which equates to approximately 5 sq m per person.

The Map below summarises this hierarchy and shows that most areas of the town will be within the basic distance threshold of a town park, neighbourhood park or beck valley. The Council will focus its efforts primarily on ensuring that this network is of high quality and accessible.

Distance thresholds are discussed in details in Section 4.4.4

Proposed Quantity Standard

The Council will protect all the spaces identified as town and neighbourhood parks and these will form the foundation for this Green Spaces Strategy. However, many of them require significant enhancement if they are to fulfil their role.

As new developments will increase the demand pressure on parks, it will be for developers to contribute to their enhancement as a matter of course. The appropriate provision standard is therefore:

- Town parks 8 sq m per person
- Neighbourhood Parks 5 sq m per person
- Total 13 sq m per person

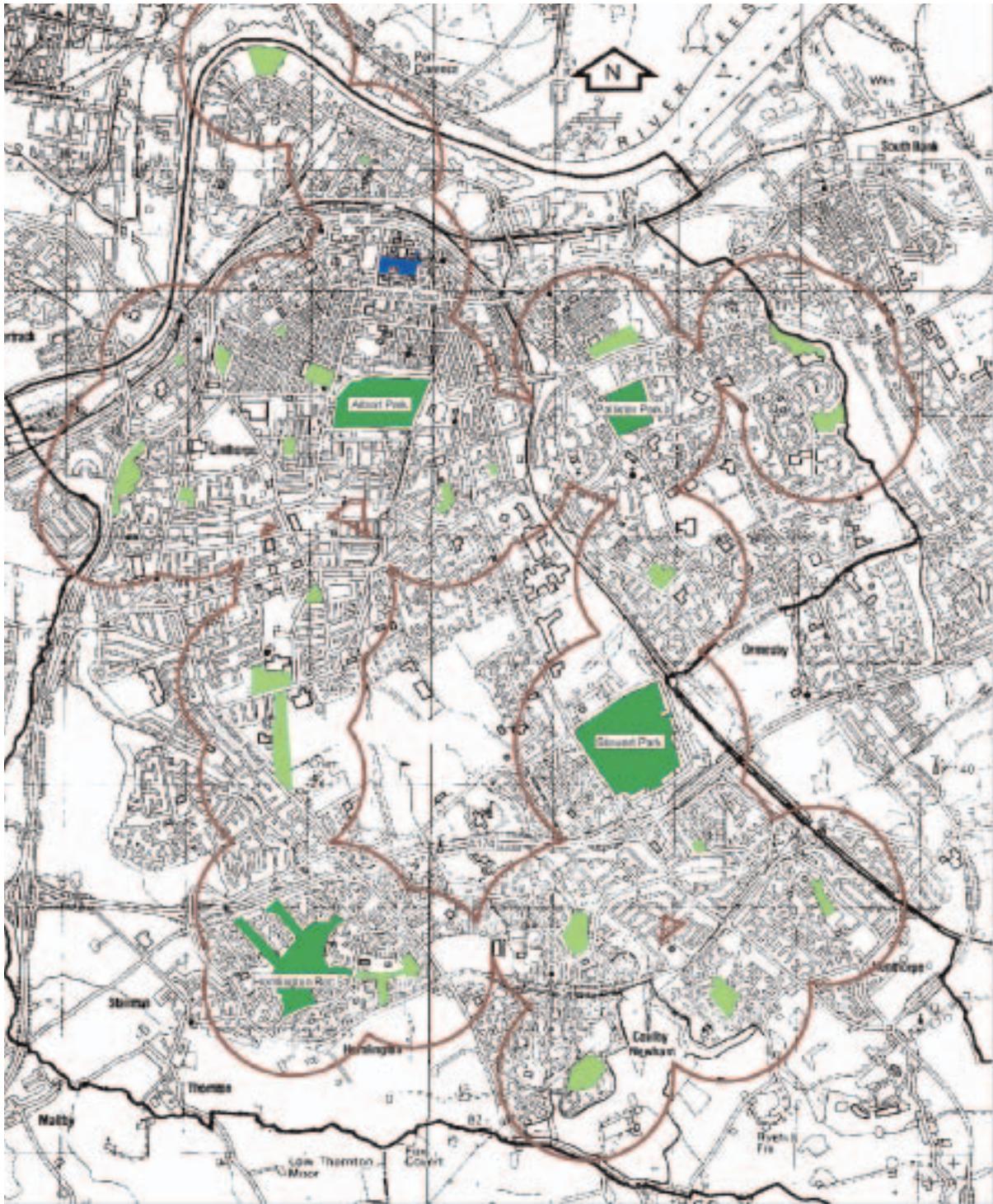
Application of the Quantity Standard

For the foreseeable future, the Council's priority will be to enhance its existing parks and especially those designated as neighbourhood parks. More specifically, we will seek contributions from all developments which will increase the use made of parks, such as residential and office developments, based on two components:

- A contribution towards the general improvement of town parks, based on 8 sq m per person; and
- A contribution towards the enhancement of the nearest neighbourhood park, based on 5 sq m per person.

The summary of proposed standards for other green spaces is as detailed in "Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – KCA August 2005."

Map 1 Proposed Parks Hierarchy and 600m Distance Thresholds



Kit Campbell Associates, Edinburgh

Map: proposed parks hierarchy and 600m distance thresholds

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Middlesbrough Council, LA078603, 2005

- distance threshold 600m
- Middlesbrough centre square
- neighbourhood parks
- town parks

Amenity Green Spaces - summary

- **Existing provision standard** : none;
- **Existing provision**: 7.45 sq m per person; and
- **Proposed Provision standard**: 6.5 sq m per person.

While there is ample amenity green space in Middlesbrough as a whole, there is a geographical imbalance in the distribution of these spaces, with a paucity in the central area and a reasonably high number of sites in the south. Communities in the south, while lacking access to facilities, therefore have a greater choice of amenity spaces than those in other areas.

Proposed Quantity Standard

There is no clear rationale for determining the appropriate quantity of amenity green space in a residential or other area and indeed the need for it will vary from one area to another.

Broadly speaking, Middlesbrough has more than enough amenity green space already; the Council's clear priority is to enhance existing run down spaces rather than seek provision of more. The Council will also be seeking to dispose of some of its existing poor quality and low value open spaces. It will also be looking at some open spaces where there is over provision of amenity green space that is of perhaps a high quality but of low value, that may also be disposed of that is of a high land value. Accordingly, the amenity green space standard is slightly lower than the present level of provision at around 6.5 sq m per person.

Application of the Quantity Standard

In Middlesbrough, most new residential development is generally four types: housing market renewal, developer suburbs designed for owner-occupation, infill and other small developments and the "densification" of those areas in which houses have large gardens. The following approach is proposed;

- Housing market renewal areas: a requirement that masterplans should ensure as many dwellings as possible face onto a network of amenity green spaces, linked by landscaped pedestrian and/or cycle paths which provide reasonably direct routes from dwellings to local community facilities and the wider network of paths and cycleways through the town. The maximum distance between each distinguishable amenity green space must be less than the distance threshold for amenity green spaces and each space must be of at least the minimum size given in the quantity standard. However, the spaces must be designed in a way that provides variety in terms of sizes, vegetation and other landscape features;
- Developer suburbs: If there are no existing amenity green spaces within the distance threshold of each dwelling, the development must include an on-site network of green spaces and paths similar to those required in housing market renewal areas. In addition, the total amount of amenity green space must be not less than that required by the application of the quantity standard to the development. If there are existing green spaces within the distance threshold of the development, the developer must contribute to their enhancement on the basis of the quantity standard. In addition, all developments should contribute to the enhancement of neighbourhood and town parks;

- Infill and other small developments: no requirement for new on-site green spaces but development must contribute to the enhancement of the nearest amenity green space and neighbourhood and town parks; and
- Densification areas: no requirement for new on-site green spaces but development must contribute to the enhancement of the nearest amenity green space and neighbourhood and town parks.

Natural Green Spaces

It is proposed that the quantity standard for natural green space should be the same as the present level of provision, i.e. some 19 sq m per person.

Application of the Quantity Standard

For the foreseeable future, The Council should not ask developers to provide on-site natural green spaces but seek contributions towards the enhancement of existing spaces, in particular the Beck Valleys.

Equipped Play Area – Summary

- **Existing Quantity Standard:** none
- **Existing provision:** approximately 0.3 sq m per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard:** 0.5 sq m per person.

Theoretical standards

Because play areas do not have a fixed capacity to accommodate use, it is not possible to adopt a supply and demand approach to determine an appropriate quantity standard. Accordingly a standard has been developed from first principles based on a conceptual model and the key requirements of the recommended quality standards and distance thresholds. This is detailed in “ Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – Kit Campbell Associates August 2005 ”.

Application of the Quantity Standard

When applying the proposed quantity standard, the Council will:-

- Aim to achieve only the minimum level of provision, but with the highest possible quality and play value;
- Give priority, in at least the short term, to using developer contributions and any capital investment it can afford to improving the quality, interest, attractiveness, safety and security of existing sites with potential and value; and
- Encourage, if not require, residential developers to adopt a “home zone” approach in order to make it possible for children to play safely and informally in their immediate home environment.

Youth Activity Areas – Summary

- **Existing Quantity Standard** – none
- **Existing Provision** – approximately 0.19 sq m per person
- **Proposed Quantity Standard** – 0.3 sq m per person

Theoretical Standards

The same basic conceptual model is used for youth provision as for equipped play, with different parameters. This is detailed in “*Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – KCA August 2005*”.

Application of the Standard

When applying this standard, the Council will:-

- Require developers to involve young people in the design of facilities intended for them; and
- Continue to support brightly coloured facilities.

Allotments – Summary

- **Existing quantity standard:** none
- **Existing provision:** 2.3 sq m per person
- **Proposed quantity standard:** not required

Proposed Quantity Standard

As Middlesbrough appears to have more than enough allotment sites, there is no need for a quantity standard. Instead, the Council will review the demand for plots and look at improving existing sites accordingly.

Sports Pitches – Summary

- **Existing quantity standard:** 9.1 sq m per person (Local Plan) and 10.66 sq m per person (Pitches Strategy)
- **Existing provision:** 16.6 sq m (includes other tennis and other courts)
- **Proposed quantity standard:** 11sq m per person (grass pitches) plus 0.3 sq m per person (artificial turf pitches)

Proposed Quantity Standard

The quantity standard for grass pitches in the 2002 Pitches Strategy was thoroughly researched and a quantity standard recommended. This is endorsed within this Green Spaces Strategy.

Separately, it seems clear that Middlesbrough should have at least three ATPs (Artificial Turf Pitches). An ATP requires a site area of around 11,000 sq m, including parking and changing. This gives a quantity standard of some 0.3 sq m per person.



Application of the Quantity Standard

Ideally, Middlesbrough should have its pitches on a limited number of sites as this will maximise economies of scale in development, management and maintenance costs. In particular, the Council will not create any more pitches but will require developers to make contributions to off-site provision on a town-wide basis, using the pattern of participation in pitch sports as the justification for this approach. This will allow the Council to aggregate contributions from different developments in order to make a worthwhile difference on priority sites.

Golf Courses – Summary

- **Existing quantity standard:** none
- **Existing provision:** 7 sq m per person
- **Proposed quantity standard:** 7 sq m per person

Proposed Quantity Standard

The quantity standard is the same as the present level of provision, i.e. around 7 sq m per person.

Application of the Quantity Standard

There is no need to require developers either to provide or contribute to the provision or upgrading of golf courses.

Other Outdoor Sports Facilities – Summary

Existing quantity standard: 5.4-6.9 sq m per person

Existing provision: 0.67 sq m per person

Proposed quantity standard: 0.7 sq m per person

Proposed Quantity Standard

Given that the present level of bowls and tennis provision appears to be about right, there is no need for a quantity standard other than one which post-rationalises the present position.

Athletics has been included on the basis that the Council will retain Clairville as an athletics facility, a provision standard for other outdoor facilities is recommended as:

- Athletics – 0.33 sq m per person
- Bowling greens – 0.16 sq m per person
- Tennis courts – 0.18 sq m per person
- **TOTAL – 0.69 sq m per person**

Application of the Quantity Standard

There is no need to require developers either to provide or contribute to the provision or upgrading of bowling greens or tennis courts. However Clairville is a strategic facility for the town and therefore all developments should contribute to its enhancement.



4.4.4 ACCESSIBILITY

For green spaces or facilities to be of value to people in Middlesbrough they have to be accessible. Accessibility is therefore of key importance to assessing the adequacy of provision in the town.

In order to assess accessibility deficiencies, we developed a range of distance thresholds for walking, cycling and driving and outline the background to them in "Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment : Appendices August 2005 – KCA." We have based the assessment on maps that show the distribution of provision plus the various distance thresholds. These maps are available within the appendices, and on www.middlesbrough.gov.uk

There are 3 key factors relating to Middlesbrough's geography which have an important bearing on the formulation of distance thresholds for the town and determining which communities have "accessibility deficiencies" to different forms of provision. The key factors are:-

- The compact nature of the town;
- The relatively high degree of community severance; and
- The relatively high level of multiple deprivation and related low levels of car ownership.

4.4.5 The Nature of Distance thresholds

Distance thresholds are not hard facts, but a broad and flexible guide to the distance which people in general will be willing to travel in order to use or visit a facility or space. They are affected by many factors and in particular:-

- Most people will be willing to travel further to something of high quality than low quality; and
- Many people will be willing to travel further to something big or high quality than small or poor quality: therefore distance thresholds vary according to the nature of the space or facility visited.

An analysis of distance thresholds was studied and forms a background paper to this strategy but is summarised below in Tables 12, 13 and 14.

Table 12 Straight Line Walking Distance Thresholds - Proposed

Form of Provision	Walking thresholds
Allotments	700m
Amenity Green spaces (local)	350m
Bowling greens	650m
Equipped play areas	500m
Grass pitches	600m
Parks and recreation grounds	600m
Sports and recreation centres	850m
Nature Conservation sites	950m
Tennis and multi-courts	600m
Youth facilities	500m

Table 13 Straight Line Cycling Distance Thresholds - Proposed

Form of Provision	Cycling thresholds
Allotments	2km
Amenity Greenspaces (local)	1km
Bowling greens	1.5km
Equipped play areas	1.5km
Grass cricket, football and rugby pitches	1.5km
Parks and recreation grounds	1.5km
Sports and recreation centres	2km
Tennis and multi courts	1.5km
Youth facilities	1km

Table 14 Straight Line Driving Thresholds - Proposed

Form of provision	Driving threshold
Allotments	4.5km
Bowling greens	5.2km
Equipped play areas	4km
Grass cricket, football and rugby pitches	5.5km
Parks and Recreation grounds	3.3km
Sports and recreation centres	3.5km
Tennis and multi courts	5km
Youth facilities	5km

Table 15 Results of a Sport England, Countryside Agency and English Heritage survey 2003.

- Two-thirds of adults in England visited a public park during the previous year – 24.3 million people making a total of 1.8 billion visits per year
- 68% said that the park that they most visited was one closest to where they lived.
- 56% walked, only 4% used public transport
- Older, poorer and disabled as well as those from ethnic minorities do not feel safe or welcome in their local park
- 64% of 16-24 year olds visited a park in the last 12 months



4.5 ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

This section analyses the extent to which local residents are able to access different forms of provision within the recommended distance thresholds. This is based on the assessment on maps as shown in the appendices which show the distribution of provision plus the various distance thresholds suggested above. The distance thresholds are shown as simple circles. The maps reflect a Middlesbrough – wide assessment and relate to cycling and walking thresholds. They include a detailed interpretation taking into account factors of local geography and community area severance. In each case, there are identified accessibility deficiencies with a dashed yellow line. Further detail is available as a separate background paper to this strategy.

The Maps are part of the report, *“Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment : August 2005 – KCA.”*

4.5.1 PROVISION STANDARDS

Here, the recommendations are made for how the different components of the provision standards should be applied.

PPG17 states that planning agreements designed to mitigate the impact of new developments should relate only to deficiencies in quality and quantity. However, in terms of assessing current deficiencies, all three components of the standard must be balanced according to typological and spatial requirements. In broad terms, because of Middlesbrough’s compact nature, accessibility is more important than quantity. It is proposed that the Council will use two policy tests:

- Apply either the quantity or accessibility standards, together with the quality standard. If this test is not satisfied by existing provision, the Council’s priority should be to remedy that deficiency; and
- If the first test is satisfied, apply the remaining part of the standard and then seek to remedy any deficiency that the test identifies.

See Flow Chart opposite

Provision standards represent both a requirement in relation to new developments, and an aspiration in relation to areas that have already been developed. While developers can be required to comply with adopted standards for new developments relatively easy, it is more difficult to achieve results in developed areas. In some areas, the only way to achieve a standard might be to demolish buildings in order to release land – a technique which may be employed in the north area and in certain parts of the central area depending on the final outcome of the Housing Visioning Study.

In some circumstances, it may be possible to overcome an identified existing deficiency in a way which is linked to a new development, but developers can be required to fund or provide only the level of community infrastructure required as a direct result of their developments. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

The Companion Guide to PPG17 sets out a Development Control ‘line of thinking’ which we show opposite. It summarises how the Council will apply its quantity, quality and accessibility provision standards in a transparent, logical manner to identify the need for on-site or off-site provision.

After the development is complete, will there be sufficient open spaces and sport and recreation facilities within appropriate distance thresholds of the development site to meet the needs of both existing residents and the residents of the proposed new development, as assessed using the Council's adopted quantity and accessibility standards?

YES

Does the quality of each of the existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities within the appropriate distance thresholds match the adopted quality standard?

YES

The developer will normally **not** be required either to provide on-site open space or sports facilities or contribute to the provision or enhancement of off-site provision

NO

The developer will normally be required to **contribute to the enhancement of off-site open space or sports facilities** within appropriate distance thresholds in accordance with the adopted provision standards. This is normally achieved by a planning agreement.

NO

If any new spaces or sports facilities are on-site, will they be large enough to be both fit for purpose and cost-effective to maintain and meet the appropriate adopted quality standard?

YES

The developer will normally be required to make **on-site provision** in accordance with adopted provision standards. This is normally achieved by a condition attaching to a grant of planning permission.

NO

The developer will normally be required to **contribute to off-site provision** within appropriate distance thresholds in accordance with the adopted provision standards. This is normally achieved by a planning agreement.

The Council, at its discretion, will use any contributions that developers provide towards enhanced provisions, or new off-site provision, or a combination in the following ways:

- To enhance local provision, or make new provision, as close as practicable to the proposed development;
- To enhance town-wide provision; and
- To pursue a combination of both the above approaches.

The Council is proposing to publish a Supplementary Planning Guidance Document setting out how it will apply its provision standards and calculate developers' contributions. It is proposed to develop an on-line tool which will allow developers to assess, for any proposed development:

- The amounts and types of on-site provision the Council may likely to require; and
- The contributions it may require towards the enhancement of existing provision.

4.5.2 Application of Provision Standards

In general, the Council should aspire to all green spaces and facilities meeting the quality standards. How the accessibility and quantity standards should be applied to each of the typologies of green space set out below.

Accessible Natural Green Space

The Council and its partners will adopt a policy of supporting the integration of natural green space into other forms of green space wherever possible. In addition to this strategy, the Beck Valleys will be a key focus for improving the quality, quantity and accessibility of natural green space.

- **Accessibility:** Every dwelling should be within 350m of at least one accessible natural green space; and
- **Site size and accessibility:** Every dwelling should be within 2km of at least one accessible natural green space of at least 20ha.

Well located accessible natural green space will be given a high degree of protection by the planning system and should be protected by policies relating to nature conservation or specific nature conservation designations.

Justification

Natural green spaces offer local residents and visitors the opportunity to experience the great outdoors and to be close to nature. Such sites should be easily accessible to all residents. When coupled with high quality, accessibility is more important than quantity because smaller but higher quality sites should have a greater capacity to accommodate users than larger but lower quality ones. They should also provide a better experience for visitors.

Allotments

- **Quantity:** The amount of provision of allotments should at least match the amount of provision required by the application standard; and
- **Accessibility:** All dwellings should be within walking distance threshold of at least one allotment site.

Justification

The main need for allotments is in the most densely built-up areas where gardens linked to dwelling tend to be very small, shared spaces or almost non-existent. In the more affluent, low density leafy areas where dwellings have large gardens demand for allotments is generally lower.



A local allotment

Amenity Green Space

Most forms of green space are multi-functional and therefore serve a number of purposes.

- **Accessibility:** Every dwelling should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one amenity green space or public access pitch;
- **Quantity:** The total amount of amenity green space should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard. This may include some of the parks that could be downgraded from parks to amenity space.

Justification

Accessibility is more important than quantity because accessible, high quality green spaces meet local needs better than larger, more distant sites.

Equipped Play Areas

- **Accessibility:** All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one town or neighbourhood equipped play area;
- **Quantity:** The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.

Justification

All children should be able to use play areas. These spaces also meet a valuable social need for parents and carers. Accessibility is more important than quantity because many young children will not be able to walk far to a play area.

Sports Pitches

- **Quantity:** The total quantity of grass and artificial pitches available to community based clubs and teams should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standards;
- **Accessibility:** All dwellings should be within walking distance of at least one football pitch and the driving distance threshold of at least one publicly accessible pitch site or recreation ground.

Justification

All residents should have the opportunity to take part in the pitch sport of their choice. In the first instance this requires that there should be enough pitches and accessibility is secondary as the competitive nature of sports pitches means that participants will not always use the pitch nearest their home. In addition, roughly half of all matches are played away. Cricket and rugby teams tend to draw their membership from a wider area than football teams and many football pitches are also used by young people for mini-soccer or casually for kickabouts. Especially in the more built-up areas, there is a need for football pitches to be more accessible than cricket or rugby pitches.

Other Outdoor Sports Facilities

- **Accessibility:** All dwellings must be within the walking threshold of at least one bowling green, multi-use games area (MUGAs) and tennis court;
- **Quantity:** The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the provision standards.

Justification

Bowling greens are particularly popular amongst older people, but to be viable needs 80-100 members.

MUGAs and tennis courts are needed most in densely populated areas and tend to be used by young people, many of whom lack personal transport. Therefore a walking distance threshold is most appropriate. For both forms of provision it is possible to improve their capacity by using artificial surfaces or floodlighting and therefore accessibility is more important than quantity.



Parks, Gardens and Recreation Grounds

- **Accessibility:** All dwellings should be within the walking distance threshold of at least one park, garden, recreation ground or a sports pitch site providing opportunities for informal recreation; and
- **Quantity:** The total amount of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the application of the quantity standard.

Justification

All residents should have easy access to a park, garden or recreation ground. This means that accessibility is more important than quantity. Suitable designed and managed sports pitches can fulfil some of the functions of parks and recreation grounds, but there will be a need for additional space over and above that required for the pitches and support accommodation alone. Where particular forms of green space can be multi functional – and recreation grounds generally contain a mix of several recreation opportunities – this makes the most effective use of land.

Youth Activity Areas

- **Accessibility:** All dwellings with more than one bedroom should be within cycling distance of at least one neighbourhood youth area; and
- **Quantity:** The total quantity of provision should at least match the amount of provision required by the quantity standard.

Justification

Young people tend to be a neglected group in terms of access to community infrastructure, partly because their needs can be difficult to define. Indeed, many young people are unable to give a clear answer when asked to identify the facilities they would like in their area; and if they can, may be fickle with the result that what they want today may be ignored tomorrow. However, young people have every right to “hang about” and indulge in largely harmless but sometimes noisy activities close to home, so there is a clear need to provide for them. Given the nature of youth culture and the difficulties of territorialism, it is important that young people should have a degree of choice, through access to more than one youth area within their neighbourhood.



Prissick Plaza

4.6 AUDITS - QUALITY AND VALUE

Essentially a quality and value audit has three purposes:

- To ascertain the quality and value of each site through evaluating a range of features or characteristics as objectively and consistently as possible;
- To identify the features or characteristics which result in some sites being of low quality or value, to provide a focus for improvements or enhancements; and
- To identify those sites that the Council should protect from development, those that would benefit from improvement and enhancement or those that may benefit from consideration for alternative uses.

Although driven partly by PPG17, the audit encompasses wider implications than land use planning and seeks to provide the basis for prioritising improvements in site management and maintenance. It is not intended to provide detailed information for use in planning appeals affecting green space provision.

PPG17, Paragraph 11 states:-

“ Open Spaces and sports and recreational facilities that are of high quality or of particular value to a local community, should be recognised and given protection by local authorities through appropriate policies in plans”

For the purpose of this strategy, open space has been re-classified as detailed in table 16, based on the PPG17 typology. In seeking to maximise consistency, the “Companion Guide to PPG17” recommends the use of standard forms, which have been used in the Middlesbrough audit and is enclosed in the background papers.

Table 16 PPG17 Typology

- Accessible Natural Greenspaces;
- Allotments;
- Amenity greenspaces;
- Becks and green corridors;
- Bowling greens;
- Cemeteries and Churchyards;
- Equipped Play Areas – Local;
- Equipped Play Areas – Neighbourhood;
- Parks and Gardens;
- Teenage facilities;
- Sports pitches;
- Multi-Courts and Tennis Courts; and
- Sports Halls and Swimming Pools.

Middlesbrough PPG17 Audits

- Allotments;
- Bowling greens;
- Equipped play areas;
- Multi-functional green spaces (covering amenity green spaces, parks and gardens, churchyards and cemeteries, natural green spaces and the becks)
- Pitches and Courts (covering sports pitches and tennis and multi-courts)
- Teenage facilities

Identifying those spaces and facilities of high quality or value clearly requires an on the ground audit based on the above typology of open space. Consultants were commissioned to audit over 200 sites (see Map 2) in the town in summer and autumn 2004, using a suite of forms to record scores for the quality and value of a variety of site characteristics. The scores provide a basis for comparing sites and also provide an overview of the present state of open space in Middlesbrough. As such, they have provided a preliminary identification of those spaces the Council should protect through the planning system and those that are a priority for future enhancement. The matrix developed in Table 17 shows how this has developed under PPG17 guidelines.

A report was produced which forms a background paper to this strategy and is detailed in appendices. The report had three main purposes:

- To suggest draft quality standards for the various forms of green space and sport and recreation provision in Middlesbrough to provide benchmarks for the audit. These are discussed in section 4.6.2;
- To provide details of the audit process. This is detailed in the report; and
- To provide an overview of the audit results. See Section 4.6.1.

Definition of Quality and Value

Quality relates to the range of facilities or features on a site. The quality audit covers factors such as site accessibility, safety and security, management and maintenance and the presence of planting, trees, seats, and other facilities.

Value relates to the contribution the site makes to local amenity, recreation and well being, bio-diversity, cultural heritage, community or other strategic objectives. Sites were audited on the following typology which is a combined summary of the PPG17 typology:-

- Allotments;
- Bowling Greens;
- Equipped play areas;
- Multi-functional greenspaces (covering amenity green spaces, parks and gardens, churchyards and cemeteries, natural greenspaces and the becks);
- Pitches and Courts (covering sports pitches and tennis and multi courts); and
- Teenage facilities.

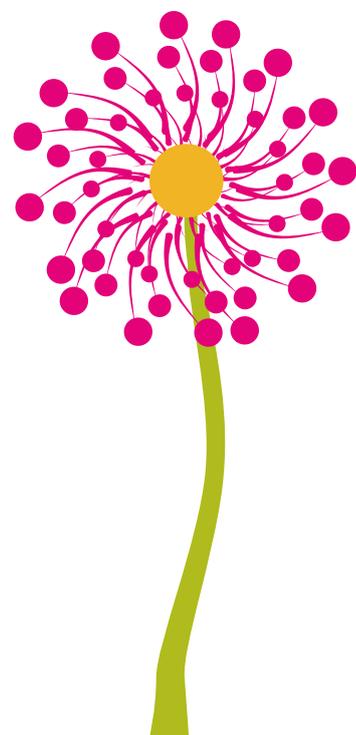
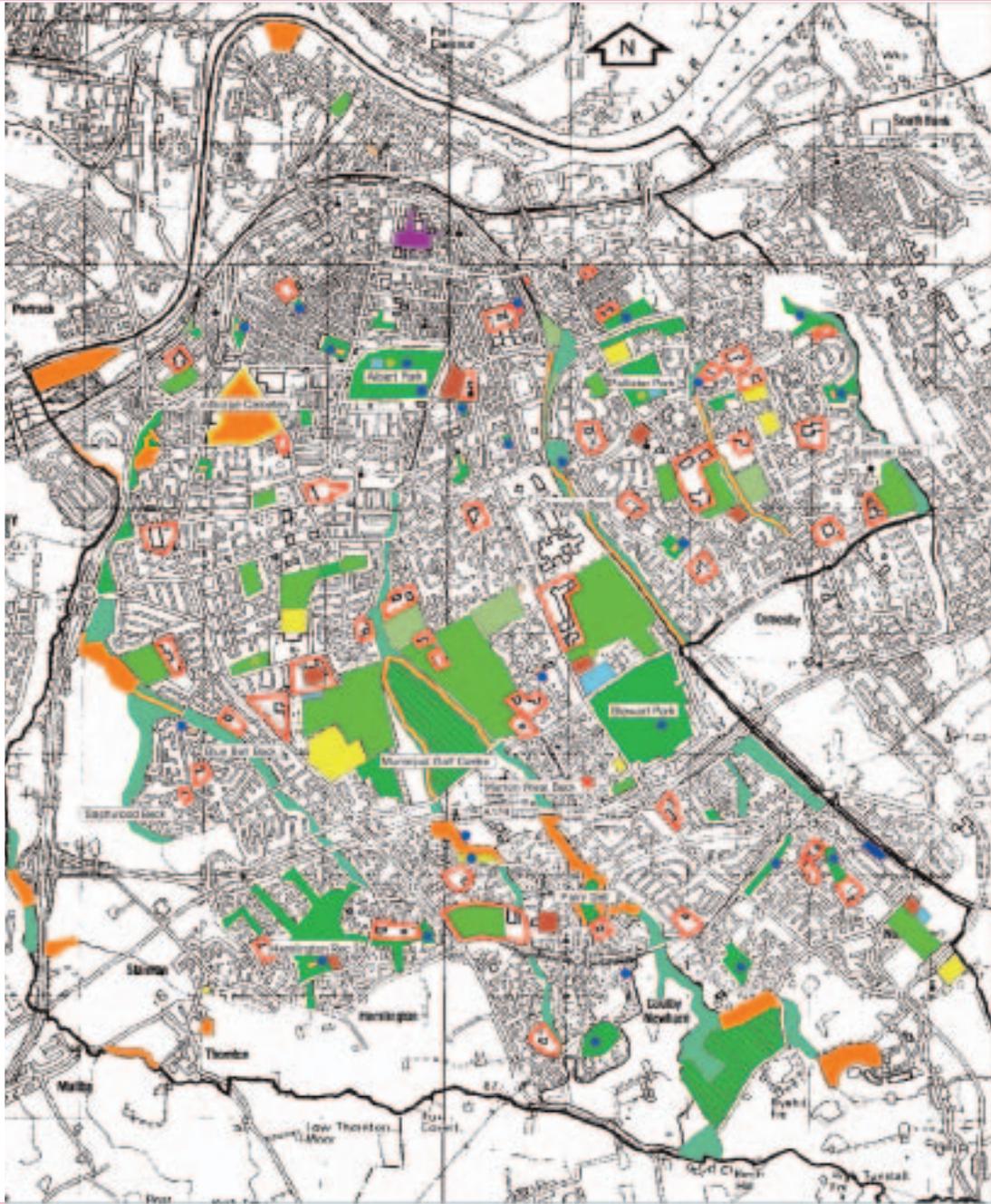


Table 17 PPG17 Quality / Value Matrix

<p>High Value</p>	<p>These spaces should be protected, because they are of high value. They should be enhanced in order to improve their quality; ideally to see them move into the high value / high quality category</p> <p>These spaces or facilities should be protected through the planning system as they are both high value and high quality</p>	<p>These spaces are of high quality but have only low value in terms of serving a strategic purpose or meeting local needs, supporting bio-diversity and nature conservation, local cultural identity and heritage. Therefore the priority is to find ways of improving their value, while retaining their high quality.</p>
<p>Low Value</p>	<p>These spaces may be important if they are the only ones in an area but unless it is possible to improve their quality and value, it may be better to use them for some other purpose. PPG17 requires that the first policy option should be to consider using the space to remove or reduce a local deficiency in some form of other green space. If this is not necessary, or impractical, it may be acceptable to develop the land for some other purpose</p>	<p>If this is not possible, it may be acceptable to use them for some other purpose. PPG17 requires that the first policy option should be to consider using the space to remove or reduce a local deficiency in some other form of green space. If this is not necessary, or impractical, it may be acceptable to develop the land for some other purpose.</p>
	<p>Low quality</p>	<p>High quality</p>

Map 2 Typology of Open Spaces



LEGEND TYPOLOGY OF OPEN SPACES

 Allotments	 The Beck Valleys	 Bowling
 Ballcourts	 Civic spaces	 Sports and Rec Centres
 Nature Conservation sites	 Golf courses	 Tennis courts
 Play sites	 Churchyards etc	 Sports pitches
 Parks and Gardens	 Education sites	

This work now enables Middlesbrough Council :-

- To rank sites across Middlesbrough in terms of value or quality either in general or in relation to specific features or characteristics;
- To identify priorities for investment or changes to management and maintenance practices;
- To identify the need for developer contributions to fund the enhancement of existing provision within the vicinity of a proposed development; and
- To enter the audit results into a Geographical Information System for mapping purposes.

4.6.1 The Audit Results

Details of the audit results are too detailed to list within the scope of this strategy and are available in the background paper, "Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment August 2005, KCA". However, they are summarised as below. Map 3 details the distribution of multi functional green space across Middlesbrough showing parks, gardens and natural green space. Maps for all other typologies are detailed in the Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment.

Allotments (6 in total)

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	35% (Berwick Hills)	27% (Berwick Hills)
Average score	54%	49%
Maximum score	70% (Whitehouse)	60% (Letitia Street)

Bowling Greens (5 in total)

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	54% (Westbourne Park)	50% (Westbourne Park)
Average score	89%	89%
Maximum score	100% (Albert, Pallister, Hall Drive)	100% (Albert, Pallister, Hall Drive)

Equipped play and teenage facilities (41 in total)

	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	29% (Marlborough Gardens)	16% (Brabourn Gardens)
Average score	69%	63%
Highest score	93% (Lingfield Park)	100% (Albert, Glebe , Hem. Rec, Lingfield)

Multifunctional green spaces (96 in total)

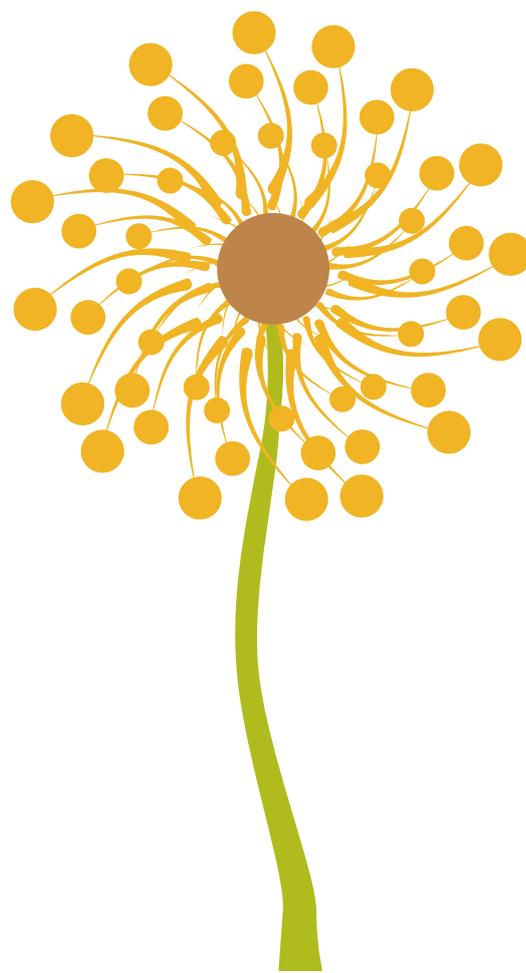
	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	2% Lambton Road	2% (Lambton Road)
Average score	61%	64%
Highest score	100% (Marton West Beck)	100% (Marton West Beck)

Sports Courts and Pitches (49 in total)

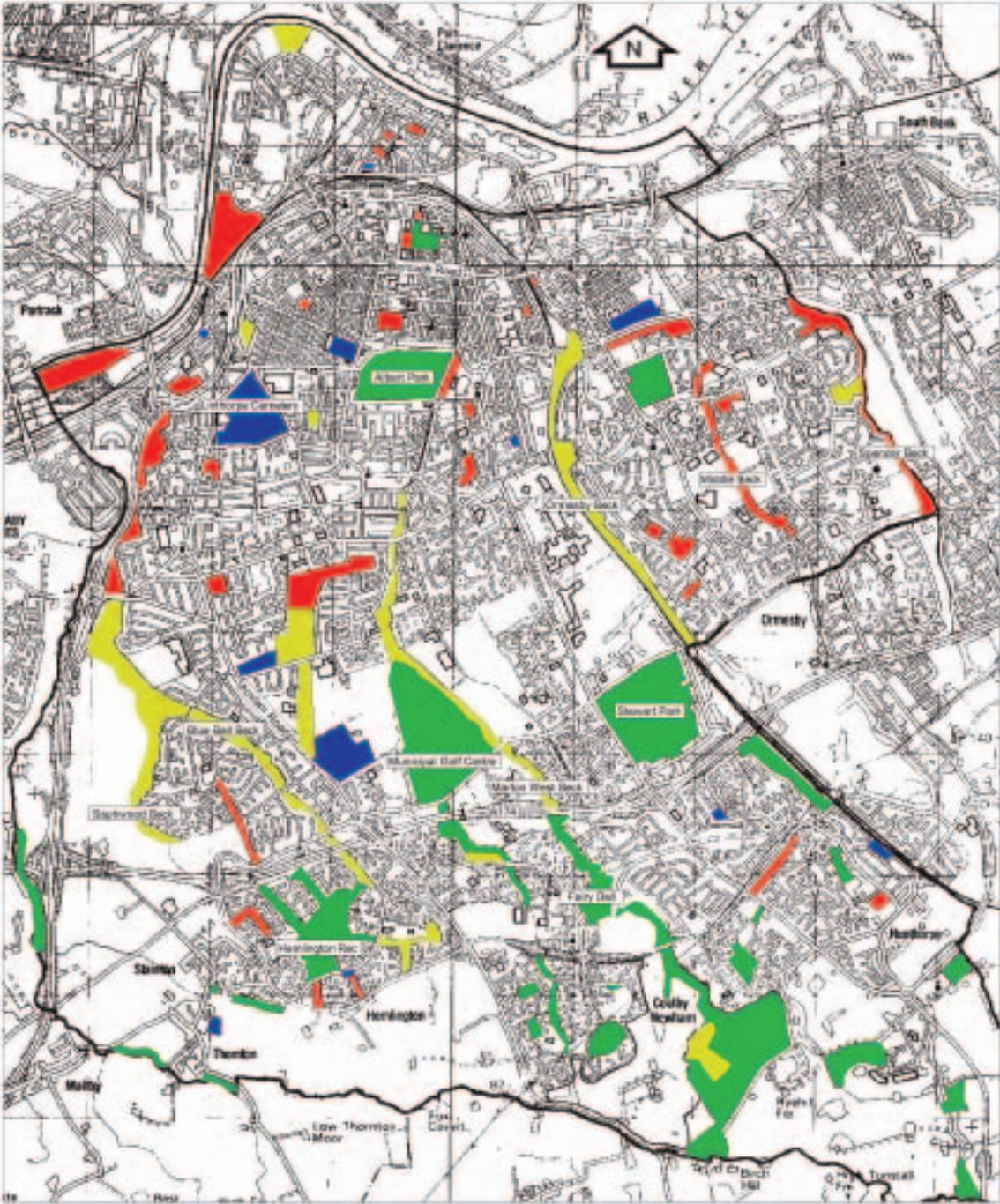
	Quality	Value and Amenity
Lowest score	29% (Depot Road)	7% (Westbourne Park)
Average score	68%	72%
Highest score	100% (Vicarage Road)	100% (various incl. Hem Rec, Albert Park)



Hemlington Rec



Map 3 Quality and Value - Multi functional Green Spaces



Middlesbrough PPG17 Assessment
Map -
Quality and Value - Multifunction Greenspaces

Kit Campbell Associates, Edinburgh
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 Middlesbrough Council, LA078603, 2005

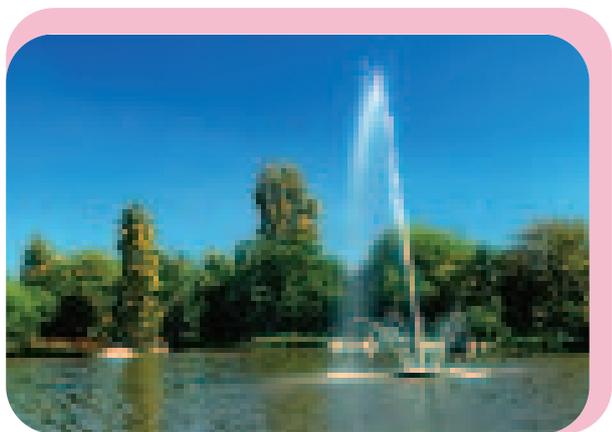
	High Quality; High Value
	Low Quality; High Value
	High Quality; Low Value
	Low Quality; Low Value

4.6.2 Quality Standards

The Council has set a policy aspiration that all of the spaces and facilities in its area should be of both high quality and high value. The audit scores obviously provide comparative data on each site, but it is necessary to use an essentially arbitrary “cut off” point above which sites are classed as high quality or value and below which they are classed as low quality or value. This approach provides an initial method to assess the sites in a broad brush manner and underpin further policy assessments, based on the matrix shown in table 17. In Middlesbrough, the Green Flag pass / fail score which is 66% is used to distinguish between a high quality / value open space, and low quality/value open space.

The audits have detailed what the present standards are in Middlesbrough. As part of the audit process, visions and quality standards for the various forms of green space and sport and recreation provision in Middlesbrough are suggested. These are detailed in Appendix 5 of “ *Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment – Appendices August 2005, KCA*”.

The two images below summarise what is acceptable and what is not!



High quality



Low Quality

These standards have two main uses:-

- They provide benchmarks for the Council to assess and compare the quality of different facilities of the same type within its area as an aid when determining priorities for improvement or changes to management regimes. Given that it will not be always be possible to achieve all aspects of the standards in relation to existing provision – for example because of limited resources – quality standards are an **aspiration**. As such they should be challenging, but broadly achievable, and the Council will aim to achieve them wherever practicable; and
- They set out the Council’s requirements as a guide for developers on the quality of provision the Council will expect them either to provide or fund. In this context, quality standards are a **requirement**, although they must obviously be applied in a way which is reasonable given the specific circumstances of a proposed development.

The quality standards cover the following typologies:-

Green Spaces:-

- Accessible natural green space;
- Allotments;
- Amenity green spaces;
- Civic Spaces;
- Green corridors;
- Local equipped play areas;
- Neighbourhood equipped play areas;
- Sports pitches;
- Athletics tracks;
- Bowling greens;
- Tennis and multi courts;
- Urban parks and recreation grounds; and
- Teenage facilities.

The quality standards focus on five specific topics:-

- General characteristics;
- Accessibility;
- Planting and biodiversity;
- Facilities and features; and
- Management and maintenance.

Each of the quality standards is derived from examples of best practice, such as the Green Flag Award criteria for parks, or published guidance, and links directly to the audit forms.

4.7 INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

The PPG17 quality audits carried out give a clear view of how to develop our priorities. However, as identified, the greater emphasis is on quality. An annual investment plan will be drawn up based on these audits with key details showing proposed timescales, targets, funding possibilities. Specifically, key priorities within parks, gardens and natural green space are as follows as detailed in table 18:-

Table 18 Investment Priorities based on audit scores

Parks and Gardens/ Natural Greenspace	Quality Score	Value Score	Capital / Revenue
Albert Park	87%	83%	R
Ayresome Gardens	68%	65%	R
Avenue, Nunthorpe	70%	77%	R
Blue Bell Beck	65%	89%	C&R
Bonnygrove Park	70%	93%	R
Carter Park	77%	55%	R
Fairy Dell	85%	92%	C&R
Hemlington Rec	75%	93%	C&R
Henry St Rec	72%	63%	R
Laycock Gardens	64%	67%	R
Lingfield Park	83%	89%	R
Marton West Beck	76%	100%	C&R
Middlebeck	32%	35%	C&R
Ormesby Beck	51%	77%	R
Pallister Park	79%	67%	R
Spencer Beck	28%	53%	C&R
St. Barnabas Rec	64%	69%	C&R
Stewart Park	88%	92%	C&R
Teessaurus Park	41%	67%	C&R
Thorntree Park	66%	68%	C&R
Westbourne Park	43%	42%	C&R
Whinney Banks Backlands	47%	58%	C&R
HQ/HV	LQ/HV	HQ/LV	LQ/LV

Play areas priorities will be determined by a detailed play study, leading to a strategy for play, with the emphasis on quality rather than quantity and it is proposed to adopt the following principle:-

“to remove play areas that are no longer viable, unusable and in areas that make them difficult to manage or maintain. There will be a move towards larger but fewer sites that are in manageable locations, where quality maintenance standards can be attained”.

Allotment priorities will be determined by the Allotment Strategy.

Further details are discussed in the section “Issues and Options” in Part 6.

4.8 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – MEASURING PROGRESS

At present there are a range of nationally recognised performance measurements provided by the Audit Commission that are applied to green spaces and public places. These measurements are useful to see how well Middlesbrough is doing compared to others in the country. However, these generally mean little to local people and local issues.

These measurements are:-

- Percentage of area of the authority's parks and green spaces which are accredited with a Green Flag Award;
- The number of playgrounds and play areas provided by the Council per 1000 children under 12;
- The number of Sports pitches available to the public per 1000 head of population; and
- Total net spending per head of population on parks and green spaces.

If we developed our own locally recognised performance measurements, we would have a greater impact on local people. The measurements would be more relevant and provide more accurate feedback to how well we are delivering green spaces improvements.

4.8.1 Suggested local measurements

- Re-assessment of audits based on quality, whether the open space has declined, maintained or improved. This is without doubt the most significant measurement that could be undertaken to ascertain improved local performance with data collected as part of the PPG17 quality, quantity and value assessments. It is proposed to re-audit 20% of all those green spaces audited annually;
- Annual survey of Middlesbrough's parks users – what do people think about certain aspects of the parks;
- How much external funding has been sought and how much has been spent on delivering the key objectives;
- The state of the environment in our green spaces, such as litter (BVI199); and
- Number of activities and attendance at them.

The British public value their public spaces as much as local schools, according to "Parks and Squares: who cares?" – a recent study released by CABI Space.

CABI Space worked with the Centre for Urban and Regional Ecology at the University of Manchester to analyse the comments of thousands of signatories to its Manifesto for Better Public spaces launched last year.

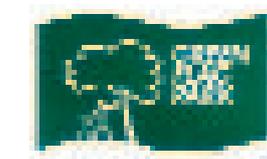
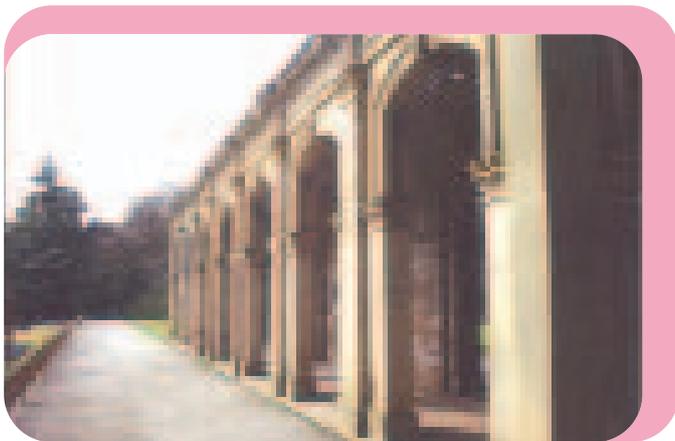
Further to this, a recent MORI poll shows how strongly the public feels about the health benefits of parks, with 91% believing that public parks and open spaces improve the quality of life.



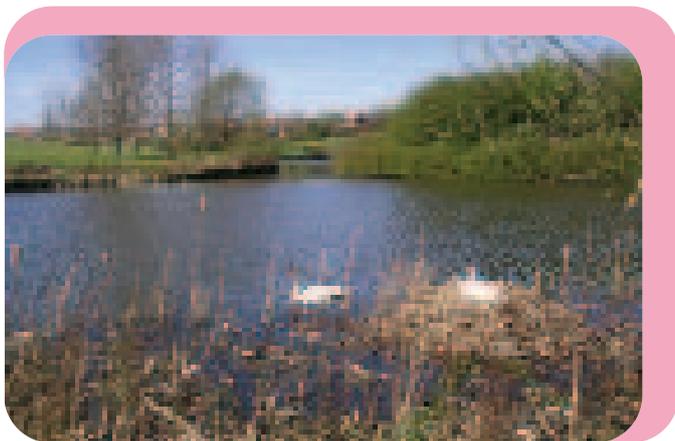
4.9 GREEN FLAG AWARDS

The Green Flag Award scheme was launched in 1996. It was designed to encourage good standards in parks and green spaces, recognise the diversity and what makes those sites special and recognise the value of the green spaces to the people who use them. The award is the benchmark by which the quality of green spaces are judged. The Civic Trust, using a steering group of national, public and voluntary sector organisations and informed individuals, independently runs the Green Flag Scheme. Two recent additions are the Green Pennant for sites managed by voluntary and community groups and the Green Heritage Site Award which is for sites of heritage value.

Middlesbrough has 3 Green Flag parks with Pallister, Stewart and Albert Park retaining their Green Flag status for several years. There are plans to submit applications for Linthorpe Cemetery and Hemlington Rec as well as Fairy Dell .By 2015, it is proposed to have a Green Flag Park accessible within 1000m of every resident.



Stewart Park



Hemlington Rec

The importance of the Green Flag Parks is highlighted as it relates to the policy that we maintain the quality of our best and most popular parks and open spaces, and that most people do in fact travel further to something of high quality than low quality.

4.10 MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF GREEN SPACE

In order to identify the “big” issues that are challenging practice in Middlesbrough, a review of the current key sources of urban green space research, policy and advice has been undertaken. Reference was made in particular to the work and findings of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce and CABE Space.

This was done in order that suitable comparative approaches could be sought that address these issues, and so lessons learnt could be related to the Middlesbrough experience. Thirteen sets of issues emerged that can be grouped under seven headings, representing seven fundamental issues challenging current practice in Middlesbrough.

Understanding urban green space

Types and Needs By failing to understand the nature and purpose of urban green space, it is difficult to appreciate the needs and values that are attached to them by different stakeholders.

Aspirations for high quality urban green space

Political The quality of parks and urban green spaces is often low on the list of local government priorities, an issue compounded by a lack of political support and commitment to the provision of quality urban green space.

Community The general lack of community engagement in urban green space provision and management has resulted in low demand and aspirations for quality urban green space from local residents, local interest groups and businesses.

Responsibilities for urban green space management

Powers In part because of their low political priority, the status and influence of the parks and urban green space services within local authorities have been greatly reduced in relation to other public service areas.

Skills The low status of the parks and urban green space services within local authorities has led to difficulties in recruiting and retaining high calibre staff who are able to meet the challenge of providing and maintaining quality urban green space.

The Coordination and resourcing of management responsibilities

Organisation The lower profile and status of parks and urban green space provision has also led to a situation where local government splits up the responsibility for managing urban green space between different departments and agencies.

Funding Sources The ability to imaginatively maximise the potential of all funding sources for urban green spaces has been hindered by uncoordinated organisational structures and activities.

Delivery of Urban green space maintenance and reinvestment

Standards of maintenance delivery The setting, implementation and monitoring of desired standards of provision and maintenance is under developed due to the continuously low priority given to urban green spaces in Middlesbrough and elsewhere.

Reinvestment The decline in local authority leisure services spending over the last 20 years has been particularly dramatic in its impact on urban green spaces, which have been targeted for cuts.

The application of management practices to local contexts

Regulation The regulatory framework reflects the inadequate strategic policy context for protecting green space and green space heritage assets.

Monitoring Data collection systems are generally poorly developed, as are systems of monitoring systems and mechanisms for auditing the urban green space.

The Outcomes from urban green space management practices

Perceptions As public space quality has declined, so has its perception in the eyes of the public, with real and perceived problems of vandalism, insecurity and crime colouring people's opinions.

Learning lessons As other public sector activities have increasingly adopted sophisticated management processes and means to spread and absorb good practice, in the green space management sector the adoption of reflective management systems has remained limited.

If we turn the sets of issues into a series of fundamental questions to be addressed by those with a responsibility for the provision and management of urban parks and green space, including politicians and practitioners, we should ask:-

Seven fundamental questions

1. How well is the nature and purpose of Middlesbrough's urban green space understood?
2. What are our aspirations for urban green space, and how are they defined?
3. Who is responsible for our urban green space, and are they equipped for the role?
4. How are we coordinating the organisation and resourcing of these responsibilities?
5. How are we delivering our maintenance and reinvestment processes?
6. Are our day-to-day management processes responsive to different local contexts?
7. What outcomes are we achieving – and can they be better?

These questions are tackled below.

4.10.1 How well is our urban green space understood?

- The successful management of Middlesbrough's green spaces depends upon a correct understanding of the nature and needs of different types of green spaces;
- Locally derived green space typologies are valuable to differentiate between green space types and their appropriate aspirations and management regimes;
- A coherent **management strategy** is required to cope with the diversity of green spaces, and to integrate management regimes, preferably under the auspices of one organisation;
- A clear distinction between ownership and management responsibilities for urban green space can help to establish a **unified** and **integrated** management regime;
- The benefits of a **dedicated urban green space unit / service area** are readily apparent;
- Diversity in the problems associated with different types of green spaces needs to be acknowledged and dealt with;
- Dedicated **management regimes** set up to tackle particular types of green space or green space problems can be effective.

4.10.2 What are our aspirations for Middlesbrough urban green space?

- There is a need to link green space aspirations to broader national, regional and local policy areas and aspirations through the effective use of the available policy instruments eg in spatial planning;
- Detailed **green space strategies** should be prepared, reflecting both a spatial vision for public green space, and day-to-day management policies;
- Successful green space management depends upon a long term, cross **political commitment to green spaces**; strong local leadership is the key determinant of success;
- **Marketing the value** of green spaces and local successes is an important task for green space managers, both to internal and external audiences;
- A key dimension of successful green space management is a willingness to **engage local communities** in the task, and to think creatively about means to make this happen;
- **Active community support** for green space issues is vital if green space is to remain a political priority, and if changing needs and preferences is to be reflected;
- Effective community participation requires an **information system** to facilitate the dialogue between green space managers and the community;
- **Community participation** needs to happen within a framework which gives weight to different voices within the community, and that is not un-duly influenced by sectional interests.

4.10.3 Who is responsible for urban green space management?

- The way different **management responsibilities are coordinated** is more important than the formal distribution of those responsibilities;
- Ideally, the **amalgamation of capital investment responsibilities, management and maintenance responsibilities** is preferred with improved coordination and communications;
- Clear structures are required to manage the relationship between public bodies and private contractors, the need is to strike a balance between quality outputs and a competitive environment, together with adequate monitoring of standards and vetting of contractors;
- It is important to recognise the contexts and tasks in which the private sector can add value (both qualitative and economic) over and above that of the public sector, and vice versa;
- **Involving the voluntary sector** in urban green space management can tap an under-utilised resource;
- The availability of a coherent, green space-friendly **regulatory framework** at the strategic level can be important, but a capacity is required to skilfully combine any available powers to their most effective use, as well as a political will to use them;
- The importance of **experienced staff**, from the strategic to the operational level, is clear, requiring an emphasis on ongoing training across all management and operational levels, and a continual investment in staff resources.

4.10.4 How are management responsibilities coordinated and resourced?

- The quality of working relationships between those with separate responsibilities for green space is the most important variable in delivering better coordination;
- Exact organisational structure is less important than the **integration of activities** it should give rise to, but conscious efforts should always be made to remove organisational barriers to inter departmental cooperation;
- Coordination is most effective when key responsibilities are unified under **clear lines of management responsibility**, and externally through a single point of contact for green space services;
- **Protecting revenue expenditure** streams (if necessary over and above capital budgets) must be the priority of green space governance;
- **'Pledged' funding** specifically for green space should be explored in areas of major new development;
- Elsewhere, adequate funding for green spaces will be dependent on the skills and political clout of green space managers and committed politicians;
- **Innovative accounting methods** which explicitly link green space expenditure to other environmental benefits, or which are more transparent in the relationship between the costs and the benefits they provide, can be powerful tools to promote the cause of green spaces;
- **Supplementary funding sources** are important for the political benefits they offer and for the quality improvements they bring in particular locations; as long as resources raised in this way are returned in full as 'additional' income to the departments responsible for their generation.

4.10.5 How is urban green space maintenance delivered?

- **Maintenance plans** are vital tools for structuring, coordinating and delivering maintenance routines, and to establish linkages between daily routines and long-term management priorities;
- When adequately monitored, maintenance plans can help to identify trends in the performance of green space designs, facilities and equipment, and thus prevent costly remediation work;
- There is no single best way to organise maintenance routines, but recognising where specialist (authority wide) knowledge and where geographically-bound knowledge is required is key;
- Contracting out should be viewed as an outcomes-focused, mutually supportive partnership between the parties, rather than a cost cutting exercise; the setting and monitoring of clear standards of delivery through considering the cost / quality ratio for all tasks is required;
- **Delegation of some responsibilities** to the operational level can help to ensure that maintenance routines are flexible enough to incorporate the changing demands of users and contexts, but requires good communication channels between maintenance teams and green space users;
- Where local flexibility is required, public rather than private employees are likely to be more adaptable, unencumbered as they are by necessarily prescriptive contractual arrangements;



- Systematic approaches are required for assessing and **justifying reinvestment needs** – thematic reviews, asset management systems, and long term financial planning provide possible models;
- Reinvestment decisions should factor in **lifetime costs** on the basis of the close participation of maintenance staff in development and investment decisions.

4.10.6 How are management practices applied to local contexts?

- Successful cities & towns understand the diversity of green space types and actively plan for them;
- Some **devolution of management responsibilities** eg through individual park maintenance plans, dedicated park keepers, area-based managers and user participation, can contribute to the overall quality of green spaces, if backed by a responsive, town wide management system;
- Some management tasks will be most efficiently delivered at a town wide scale to ensure the optimum use of specialist skills and machinery;
- Ensuring that necessary local regulations are in place (eg to combat anti social behaviour, littering, vandalism and dog related problems) and reacting promptly to problems, is critical;
- **Internalising enforcement** processes into the overall green space management system can deliver a more integrated and effective enforcement regime;
- Enforcement should be **properly resourced** and backed up by information, education and consensus-building about the relative importance of certain norms of behaviour;
- Effective **monitoring and complaints management systems** are essential to monitor management processes, cost efficiency and the impact of decisions on green space quality to encourage stakeholder participation and to feedback intelligence from enforcement activity;

A balance needs to be struck between responding promptly to local resident views and delivering the strategic and long term objectives of green space management.

4.11 MANAGEMENT PLANS

A strong theme coming from consultation with staff involved with green space management as well as “clients” has been the need to have a management plan or management brief for each green space. This would give the following:-

- A vision on how the site will develop;
- A prescriptive work programme for grounds staff to work from;
- A clear view of opportunities and constraints to maintenance and development;
- A collection of information – all in one place – pertaining to the site;
- Recognition of the various aspects, which come together to make the site what it is eg community use, nature conservation, heritage interest, recreational use. It is important to remember that each site and the community who use it has its own identity and needs and that management plans need to reflect this diversity;
- Strong guidelines for how each site can improve its wildlife value by incorporating habitat improvement plans where possible;
- Standards of maintenance, and
- Long-term development plans for the site.



Local Parks recognise and support local needs

Specific parks recognise and support specific issues

Along with the development of Management Plans, the development of strategies for specific service areas, for example, children's play, allotments, trees and woodlands is important as these are distinctive service areas within green space management.

4.12 MIDDLESBROUGH PLAY STRATEGY

In 1991, a comprehensive review of the provision of fixed play equipment play areas in Middlesbrough was undertaken. This resulted in a pilot study being undertaken in East Middlesbrough with the draft strategy for play adopted across the town. In 1999, a Scrutiny Panel review of children's play was carried out which made various recommendations. This is summarised below.

Aim 1 - "To increase the quality of fixed play areas in Middlesbrough"

Aim 2 - "To improve access to play areas by providing new facilities in areas deficit"

A new and developed play strategy is required. A play strategy process will consist of five main stages.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • DIAGNOSIS | Awareness of the problem |
| • VISION | Analysis of existing situation and future |
| • STRATEGY | Review objectives and develop options |
| • ACTION | Implementation through structure and people |
| • MONITOR PROGRESS | Review progress and feedback |

Middlesbrough has approximately 40 play areas, distributed over a wide area, some in good condition and some in poor condition. In some areas, no play facilities exist.

A strategy for play will consider the following in detail:-

- No change;
- Consolidation;
- Withdrawal;
- Rationalise;
- New provision;
- Target; and
- Sustainability.

There needs to be considerable consultation with children, young people and their parents and carers. Equipped playgrounds are however, only one aspect of play provision. Consideration needs to be given towards "supported" play schemes, youth work and links to Surestart schemes as well



as provision of facilities for teenagers. There are specific deficiencies in West Middlesbrough and South Middlesbrough. A detailed strategy will highlight the need for quality rather than quantity, based on the fact more people will travel to a quality facility rather than a local smaller poor quality one.



Low quality



High quality

4.13 ALLOTMENT STRATEGY

Middlesbrough has just carried out a major Scrutiny Panel Review of allotment provision in the town. As part of their proposals, it was highlighted as essential that a 5 year Allotment Strategy is developed. This process started in March 2005. There are around 35 hectares of allotments on 6 sites across the town with approximately 28% of land surplus or vacant. The strategy will look at ways to resolve these issues and will also look at developing standards for model allotment sites and community gardening to ensure better use by more sections of the community. There are also significant deficiencies in South and West Middlesbrough. These will be addressed in the allotments strategy. Again, the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity.



Letitia Street allotments



Berwick Hills allotments

4.14 TREES AND WOODLAND, A STRATEGY FOR URBAN FORESTRY?

Middlesbrough currently has approximately 1% covering of woodland and as such is ten times worse off than the national average. This is partly historical but also partly due to the massive impact of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1980s. Tree cover in Middlesbrough is still very poor.

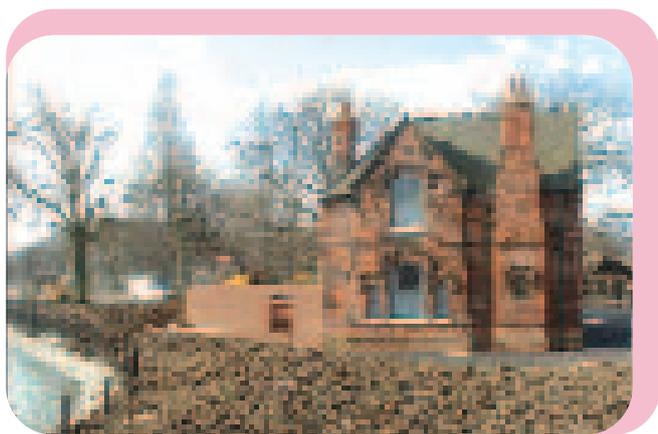
Present tree care and management has also followed a reactionary system based on the care and retention of individual trees for maximum life expectancy rather than a structured approach to the long term management of the towns limited tree cover. In 1994, *“The Middlesbrough Forest, A strategy for Urban Forestry in Middlesbrough”* was developed with broad aims and specific targets. Unfortunately, due to restructuring, staff losses and loss of status, many of these remain

“unfulfilled”. Middlesbrough Council is now re-visiting many of these and is working towards a “tree policy” and will as part of this strategy devise an action plan for a revised strategy for trees and woodlands in Middlesbrough.

The Tees Forest have also developed a “*Countryside Sport and Recreation Strategy*” launched in 2001. Improving the opportunities for public recreation and promoting healthy lifestyles through the use of the “countryside and forests” are key objectives of the Tees Forest Partnership. Middlesbrough Council will continue to develop the partnership it has with the Tees Forest. The development of a Country Park in South Middlesbrough is seen as a significant step towards increasing a rich and diverse woodland cover in Middlesbrough, and this is detailed in section 4.21.2. The Tees Forest will be a major partner in this development, and management of other woodland sites in Middlesbrough.

4.15 PARK HOUSES

The Council has a number of houses that are situated in parks and open spaces. These are often let to members of staff who provide an additional site presence. The condition of some of these is poor and some are vacant and have restrictive covenants limiting future potential use. Considerable work needs carrying out to review the provision of these properties and their current condition.



Park House at Albert Park



Linthorpe Cemetery

4.16 CEMETERIES

The cemeteries are currently managed by Bereavement Services within the Environment Department. There are 6 Cemeteries across the town, ranging from Historic Linthorpe Cemetery (subject to £1.1 million HLF restoration), to smaller cemeteries such as Thorntree. In many areas, the cemetery is the only open space within the vicinity (Linthorpe Cemetery, now also a designated Local Nature reserve). The scope of cemetery provision in the context of open space standards is considered within this strategy and is an important aspect of green space in Middlesbrough.

4.17 HISTORIC LANDSCAPES AND BUILDINGS

Middlesbrough has several historic landscapes including Albert Park, Acklam Hall, the Ironmasters Site and Stewart Park that contain historic buildings, features and structures. These include lodges and memorials that are either integral to the landscape, or are part of the original design of the historic landscape. Many of these structures are statutory listed buildings while the remainder are of local architectural and/or historic importance. Most, though not all, are retained in Council ownership.

Government advice (in Planning Policy Guidance note 15 on the Historic Environment) is that 'local authorities should maintain and strengthen their commitment to stewardship of the historic environment and reflect it in their allocation of resources'. These built structures make an important contribution to the overall character of the historic landscape and their upkeep and management should be integrated with the management of the historic landscape.

Tees Archaeology is a key strategic partner in relation to historic landscapes within Middlesbrough having worked with Middlesbrough Council on projects within Albert Park (Sailor's Trod) and Stewart Park (Deserted Medieval Village).

Specifically, the Ironmasters Site has significant remnants of the Newport Ironworks on this site, one of the few accessible remains of this type in the country. These provide an immense opportunity for presenting and interpreting the industrial origins of Middlesbrough in a pleasant setting with the added opportunity to interpret life of the river.

Stewart Park is also the site of a Deserted Medieval Village, and some excavation work has already been carried out within this vicinity and the importance of future work in continuing this is seen as important and is reinforced within this strategy.



Stewart Park - Stable Block, Grade 2 listed



Acklam Hall, Grade 1 listed

4.18 SITE CLASSIFICATION BY USE – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE IMPLICATIONS

4.18.1 Maintenance standards

The current grounds maintenance regimes apply equally to all sites. For example, in Middlesbrough grass is cut to the same standard in housing estates, grass verges and parks, shrubs are maintained to the same standard town-wide. The standards of grounds maintenance are low because the level of specification is now so low. The Middlesbrough Grounds Maintenance specification as a "document" is very detailed, but the current standards have been reduced to the bare minimum as is discussed and detailed in the Green Budget reviews, highlighted in Section 4.18.2 and 4.18.3.

The changes in standards need to be agreed locally and to fit with the existing budget for the area as well as the new proposed typology of open space. Research on maintenance standards will be carried out as an Action Plan of this strategy looking specifically at:-

- Existing standards;
- Level of specification;
- Typology of open space;
- Management Plans for Green Flag and Neighbourhood Parks;
- Green Budget;
- Service delivery;
- Alternative methods of maintenance; and

- Volunteer labour and use of reparation “labour” initiatives (Probation Services, NACRO, Youth Offending Service, HM Prison Service, Inside Out Trust).

Clearly there is a real need to re-classify land within the town that will enable the following:-

- Improved management regimes, specific to the typology of use and local expectations. Links to management plans;
- Improved maintenance regimes, specific to the typology and local expectations;
- Clarification of standards of provision, for client, contractor and customers;
- Priorities for development, based on quality audits; and
- Community needs and aspirations.

4.18.2 FORMER INVESTIGATION INTO THE GREEN BUDGET 2001

- Current resources do not adequately maintain the existing green infrastructure.
- Key recommendations were:-
 1. Creation of a Single Green Budget;
 2. Landscape Design Standards should be developed for Middlesbrough;
 3. Street furniture design standards should be introduced;
 4. Further consideration should be given to the level of funding within the Green Budget.

4.18.3 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S GREEN BUDGET 2005

Again, in April 2005, the Green Budget was subject to a review as a result of Housing Stock Transfer. These are summarised below:-

Summary of Recommendations

- Implementation of a three year rolling programme;
- For the Environment Service to produce a deliverable Strategy that identifies the environmental maintenance problems in Middlesbrough. This plan should provide the procedure for, and benefits of rectifying these problems, and the budget required for this. One example is that there does not appear to be any flexible working within the Service Area and that staff should embrace cross-boundary working;
- For the Authority to agree that this strategy is beneficial to Middlesbrough and provides the budget for it in its next budget setting process;
- For Streetscene to be consulted in the planning stages of any new developments within Middlesbrough and to negotiate any applicable sums for the sustainable maintenance of such developments;
- Updating of street furniture and corporate identity logos;
- For the authority's procurement policy for grounds maintenance, be dependent upon quality and not price and therefore reintroduce the 1989 grounds maintenance specification and that the Green Budget reflects this;
- That funding should be made available for the creation of an appropriate horticulture apprenticeship scheme.

The profile of the “Parks” service has been one of a lesser profile for many years and has been subject to budget pressures at all levels as has been stated. As this strategy shows, a higher profile nationally has been welcomed with recognition of the benefits of good quality green space can make to the lives of residents.

This Strategy makes the following conclusion with regards to Green Space Service delivery in Middlesbrough, based on national recognised best practice and research carried out in relation to this strategy:-

It is proposed to integrate further the areas working in policy, development, management and maintenance in green space delivery with improved co-ordination and agreed priorities and actions.

Core Work Areas within Streetscene Services/ Parks and Countryside

This would cover those areas of the “Public Realm” that are maintained by the Council as public open space and would include:

1. **Strategic “Visual” greenspace:** public buildings, Transport Corridors, Residential areas, Screening of unsightly development, temporary landscaping;
2. **Parks and Gardens programme:** Conservation, restoration and redevelopment of parks and gardens as centres of community life;
3. **Countryside Strategic work:** the development of the urban countryside: biodiversity, wildlife corridors, wildlife conservation and habitat creation, country parks and picnic areas, informal recreation, information and interpretation;
4. **Facilities for sport and play:** formal and informal fitness and safe / creative / adventure play;
5. **Woodland strategic Work:** Urban Forestry, street tree planting, management and care. Woodland creation, development and management, promotion, information and interpretation, in partnership with the Tees Forest;
6. **Biodiversity:** Action plans for key habitats and species. Wildlife refuges and corridors, habitat creation;
7. **Sustainability and Agenda 21:** Low technology solutions, wind shelter, recycling and composting, allotments, sustain and maintain; and
8. **Accessibility :** Transport Links, footpath / cycleway / bridleway networks, disabled access, freedom from fear of crime.

Core Activities within Streetscene Services/ Parks and Countryside

- Strategic and local planning of the green space network;
- Community Consultation;
- Design of new greenspace projects;
- Review and modification of existing green space;
- Preparation of management plans and strategies;
- Landscape construction and planting;
- Routine maintenance, hard and soft areas;
- Inspections;
- Facilities management;
- Cost monitoring; and
- Promotion and interpretation.

It could be beneficial to benchmark and make proper “informed comparison” with other authorities such as Newcastle City Council, Oldham MBC and Sheffield City Council who are regarded as good examples of best practice in their delivery of green space services.

Many publications and organisations such as GreenSpace, and CABI Space have built towards a philosophy and working practice that is the product of national assessment and comparison research.

4.19 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

In order to support the Council’s vision for Middlesbrough as a clean, green and safe town that welcomes investment to support economic regeneration, it is important that the authority maintains and sustains its physical infrastructure. For many years, new investments, due to a lack of consideration for its maintenance and sustainability requirements, have declined into a poor condition to be subsequently replaced again in later years. During the intervening years of decline, the image and liveability of Middlesbrough becomes reduced, causing poor public perceptions of the area. The Council is now moving towards a “Sustain and Maintain “ Policy and is developing mechanisms where this is taken into account in all capital projects and planning decisions. This is a key role that will be developed by the Council within Streetscene Services.

4.20 CRIME AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN GREEN SPACES

The consultation undertaken has highlighted issues related to crime, safety and the fear of anti social behaviour in parks and green spaces. This may take the form of vandalism, graffiti, under age drinking, to the fear of violence. Often it is the perceived fear of crime that is the real worry as in most cases, actual criminal activity in parks and open spaces is very rare. Middlesbrough Council now operates a system for acquiring intelligence on criminal activity “hotspots”, working with Street Wardens, Community Support Officers and Cleveland Police, called AIM (Active Intelligence Mapping). It has been very successful in reducing crime on the streets, but in some cases, anti social behaviour has increased in parks and open spaces with their activities displaced to these areas.



The manned parks have Park Rangers based within them and they work closely with Street Wardens and Community Support Officers as well as Cleveland Police. These are not however the old park keepers. Their role is primarily focused on community liaison and education. However, many of the other areas have no staff and security. Middlesbrough does not have a Park Warden Service that covers the whole Borough, and in consultation, there is a clear strong demand to “bring back the parkie”. There are clear gaps in provision. Litter picking, or the failure to keep parks swept and tidy, is an obvious example, as is the vandalism and graffiti everywhere. A recent article in “Green Places” (June 2005), makes reference to:-

“recent surveys of park usage reflect common public concerns: despair over burnt out buildings; vandalised play equipment; dirty and disused toilets; poor lighting; dog faeces; dark corners; noisy and belligerent gangs of teenagers (and drug addicts). The public is in no doubt it would like to see park keepers back.”

A specific action plan will be to look at the possibility of implementing a warden service for parks and open spaces.

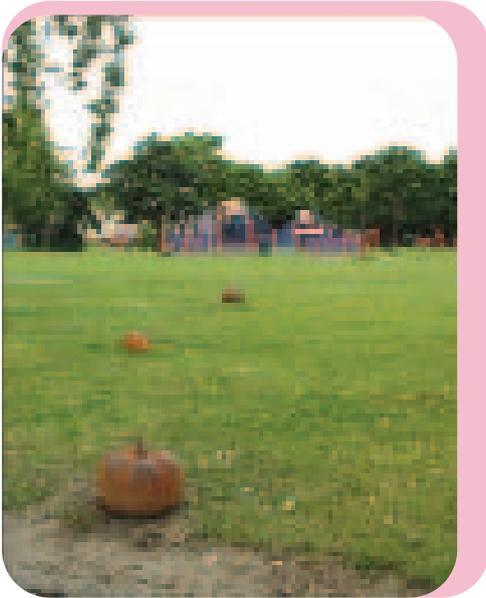
4.20.1 Increasing Safety

Lighting and CCTV are important issues for some users of open spaces. Most of Middlesbrough’s parks and open spaces are not normally used during the hours of darkness as most of them are not lit. Those that are lit are usually used by dog walkers late at night and are often short cuts to other facilities. Lighting can also attract more potential offenders to open spaces! CCTV has also been used in many Parks and Open Spaces such as Pallister Park, Albert Park and on some recently refurbished play areas, linked to existing manned facilities like Leisure Centres or Community Centres. The costs are expensive and their overall effectiveness is questionable. 75% of total spending on crime prevention has been on CCTV, with only a 5% reduction in crime due to CCTV whereas when lighting was introduced, a parallel reduction in crime of 20% was found. Any park restoration scheme will consider the merits of lighting, CCTV or the implementation of a mobile CCTV Service in any future development proposals.

4.20.2 Youth Zones and Youth shelters

In recent years there has been much interest in the idea of youth shelters, small architectural spaces in parks, on housing amenity land, or located at other key meeting points, where young people can congregate, sit and talk, “hang out” and shelter in bad weather. Siting and consultation are the key elements leading to success or failure. The problem arises when most people agree they are needed, but not on their doorstep. Simply erecting shelters on marginal pieces of land away from everybody else solves no problems; it may only increase young people’s sense that they are still unwanted and better out of sight. Youth shelters seem to work better where there is significant local surveillance by passers by and local residents, but not close enough to residential areas to cause problems. Middlesbrough has located shelters in traditional parks such as Albert Park, Ayresome Gardens as well as linked to youth facilities like Skate parks, multi use games areas and adjacent to play areas.

There is a clear need to develop teenage facilities across the town as PPG17 audits have shown considerable deficiencies, particularly in Linthorpe, Acklam, Saltersgill, Brookfield and Coulby Newham.



4.20.3 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities to consider crime and disorder reduction in the exercise of all their duties, activities and decision making. This means that all policies, strategies and service plans need to consider the likely impact on crime and disorder. In order to meet the terms of Section 17 business or service plans should highlight activities which contribute towards:-

- Reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder;
- Preventing increases in crime or a single crime from occurring; and
- Offering a diversion to prevent involvement in crime.

Middlesbrough Council will take into account Section 17 in any work it carries out in relation to green space and public space management, development and maintenance and will investigate further the approach adopted by CABI Space discussed below.

4.20.4 Anti Social Behaviour

CABI Space, November 2004, published an important Policy Note on "Preventing Anti-Social Behaviour in Public Spaces". Research commissioned by CABI Space reveals that community groups estimate that 31% of parks suffer from unacceptably high levels of vandalism and behaviour related problems. Around 60% of local authorities are seen by these groups to have achieved very limited or practically no success in tackling the problem.

Solutions – CABI Space has seen two approaches emerge to the problem of anti-social behaviour in public spaces.

- "Target hardening" – the redesign of facilities and equipment to make them near indestructible, and less susceptible to theft, vandalism and abuse; and
- "Place making" – investing in good design, attractive new facilities and good maintenance to create public spaces that the community will want to use and enjoy.

The evidence for place making – The CABE Space study showed that well designed, well maintained public spaces can contribute to reducing the incidence of vandalism and anti social behaviour, and result in long term cost savings.

Approaches that work –

- Responding rapidly to problems such as vandalism, sending a clear message that abuse will not be tolerated;
- Reinstating park keepers and park wardens to reassure visitors while discouraging anti-social behaviour;
- Reasserting the clarity of design with open vistas and clear sight lines; and
- Fully engaging the community – including groups creating problems – in the process of reclaiming the park.

So the benefits of investing in public space can be three – fold:

- Successfully tackling problems of anti-social behaviour;
- Achieving long term cost savings; and
- Creating the neighbourhoods in which we want to live.

CABE Space recommends that:-

- We should invest in the good design, staffing and maintenance of public spaces to tackle problems of anti social behaviour, or to prevent the start of a downward spiral; and
- Security measures and target hardening should not be used as the only response to problems of anti-social behaviour in public space, but should be employed selectively where they will be effective, and as part of a co-ordinated approach.



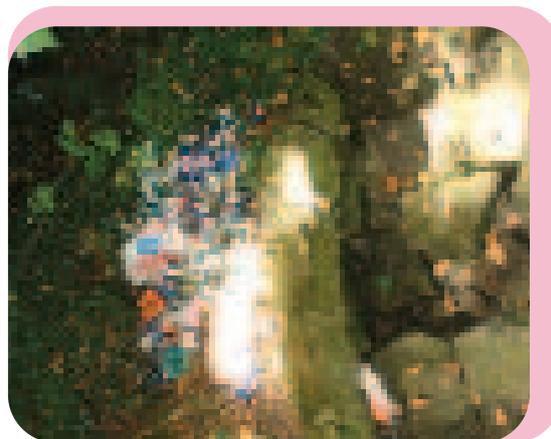
Park Rangers in Albert Park

4.20.5 Dog Fouling, Litter and Fly tipping

In Middlesbrough, one of the main barriers to use of public open space is dog fouling, along with litter. The 1996 Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act has now given local authorities the power to prosecute irresponsible dog owners who do not clean up after their pets, now strengthened with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Most dog fouling occurs in open space yet one of the most prolific users of parks and open spaces are dog walkers, as shown by surveys in many of our parks and open spaces.

Litter is now the single most negative aspect of many of most of our open spaces, especially in wooded areas like the Beck Valleys and some of the unmanned parks. Complaints range from lack of litter bins to rubbish dumped to it simply not been picked up. Broken glass caused by drinking and anti social behaviour is a huge problem on our play areas and ballcourts. Middlesbrough Council needs to look at the following:-

- Inspection / maintenance regimes;
- Provision of litter bins;
- Education;
- Improvements in co-ordination of service areas;
- Development of volunteer services / groups;
- Litter reduction strategy in development plans; and
- Increased use of legislation and fines.



4.21 EVENTS/FACILITIES /ACTIVITIES IN PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Many of our larger green spaces have facilities situated within them and are related to activity and events within them. These may include changing rooms, visitor centres, cafes, fitness centres, toilets, community facilities and in the case of Stewart Park, the Captain Cook Birthplace Museum. Activities include bowling greens, football pitches, skate parks, ballcourts, tennis, croquet, boating, roller skating and golf. They are enormously successful and are generally of good quality, well managed and maintained to a high standard. They are generally found in the manned parks which currently have Green Flag status. They attract many visitors and are well used. Maintaining these standards is crucial to green space management in Middlesbrough.

However, there is some demand to provide facilities and activity in other open spaces. These need to be carefully considered with regards to vulnerability and ongoing sustainability. Despite public need and consultation demanding such facilities, the maintenance of such facilities in the manned parks is deemed as the current priority.

4.21.1 Newham Grange Leisure Farm / Stewart Park Pets Corner

Middlesbrough is very much an urban location with limited countryside within its boundary. Despite good access to the countryside and proximity to the North York Moors National Park, many children and young people are not able to access these areas. Therefore the facilities at Newham Grange Leisure Farm and Stewart Park are very important, giving people the chance of contact with animals. The integration of the Leisure Farm into the Parks Service is also seen as a priority as well as improved marketing of the facility.



4.21.2 Lingfield Countryside Centre and South Middlesbrough Country Park

Middlesbrough has developed a Countryside Centre to the south of the town in Coulby Newham, the gateway to the Tees Forest, with funding from ERDF and the Countryside Agency. Catering for school groups and youth groups as well as the local community, it is a popular facility for both South Middlesbrough as well as the whole town. Recent work within the Service has indicated the need for a “focus” for the centre as a key attraction for the town. Whilst providing excellent community and educational facilities, it has been highlighted that a physical attraction or focus is needed to attract increased visitor numbers, usage and use from outside the area. Suggestions have included:

- Overnight accommodation;
- Extended school facilities;
- Eco Centre;
- Wind Power facility; and
- Country Park Development.

The Centre is close to large areas of land that Middlesbrough Council owns between Hemlington Grange and Brass Castle Lane as well as having a number of redundant buildings adjacent to the centre.



A development brief is to be worked up for Phase 2 works based around the Centre's redundant buildings and immediate environment. Major proposals are also proposed for a South Middlesbrough Country park scheme on existing land in partnership with the Tees Forest. The scheme could include:-

- Informal recreational facilities;
- Major Woodland Planting;
- Managed grassland systems / wildflower meadows;
- Public access;
- Sculpture trails;
- Car Parking; and
- Countryside interpretation.

Middlesbrough has little countryside compared to many other areas but values what it has. The concept of 'doorstep to countryside' is an essential part of this development with links to:-

- Lingfield Countryside Centre;
- Newham Grange Leisure Farm;
- Poole Hospital Development;
- Marton West Beck / Fairy Dell / Gunnergate wetlands; and
- Timberland Trail to Albert Park.

The partnership with the Tees Forest and delivery of its aims and strategic priorities is seen as a major aspect of the delivery of the South Middlesbrough Country Park.

The exact location of the country park has yet to be determined, but proximity to Lingfield Countryside Centre is important.

4.21.3 The Middlesbrough "Green Lung"

From the East of Middlesbrough (Prissick Base) to the West (Acklam Base), is a large area of open space which consists of:-

- Allotments;
- Playing Pitches;
- Middlesbrough Municipal Golf Course;
- Acklam Cemetery;
- School Playing Fields; and
- Beck Valley.

The area has been assessed under PPG17 guidelines on quality and value and consists of many areas that are both high in value and quality but also includes some areas that are low in quality and value. See Map 4 overleaf

Map 4 Middlesbrough Green Lung – Quality / Value



There are many diverse ranges of land use and the quantity of open space required by local residents is well exceeded. However, many of the playing fields are well used but lacking in quality. The area is very busy at weekends, but when looked at as a complete entity, the area is fragmented, in places, inaccessible and lacks any real focus. There is potential to:-

- Improve accessibility and permeability;
- Protect existing land use;
- Remove or reduce local deficiencies;
- Improve and enhance the quality of existing deficiencies;
- Where appropriate rationalise and dispose of surplus land; and
- Develop for other purposes.

It is proposed to carry out a detailed study on this specific green space, or series of spaces and to develop a series of detailed options based on work carried out to date as part of this Green Spaces Strategy. This is discussed further in Section 6.

Protecting

5.1 SALE OF LAND

Middlesbrough Council currently gets many requests to purchase public green space next to their properties, often to extend a house, garden or build onto it. Planning permission is usually required.

Currently the system in place involves the Estates and Valuations team, Planning, and Open Spaces Management. All 3 service areas usually have to agree to the sale, but issues do arise where conflicts of interest become apparent. It is often tempting to sell off bits of land to help with reducing maintenance budgets. However, a checklist needs to be developed that will determine whether such sales go ahead and should include the following:-

- Benefits to wildlife;
- Is it part of a landscape / open space corridor?
- Does the local community have a benefit from the land?
- Are there any crime issues that may arise from the sale or retention of the land?

A detailed schedule and process is to be determined as an Action Plan to this strategy.

5.2 DESIGN GUIDANCE / CODES

Middlesbrough is often successful in obtaining capital funding for many Area Based Initiatives and as a consequence often has many different clients, agencies and developers working in different parts of the town. Middlesbrough is also a town that has grown considerably in recent years with many housing developers carrying from small to large scale developments. As a consequence, design has become ad hoc and random with many different standards of hard and soft landscape. There is little guidance in the design of landscape details such as:-

- Tree planting species;
- Shrub planting;
- Bollards;
- Signage;
- Pedestrian barriers; and
- Street furniture.

We have already started to discuss the issues in relation to common problems in relation to design guidance and maintenance. A group has been set up within Environment and the Streetscene Services area looking initially at bollards and tree planting policy. A general design code is to be implemented that will be promoted and demanded from all developers and agencies but still taking into account local character, townscape and heritage. The Town Centre Company are starting to address these issues and introduce a style of quality street furniture that is consistent.

5.3 THE VALUE OF GOOD OPEN SPACE

As part of the audit worked carried out on open spaces, we have looked not just at the quality of the open space but the value of them. What benefits do they provide to local people or those further a-field? Some may give us a poor return on any investment.

Local consultation is needed and further work, using an initiative developed called “Placecheck”, by the Urban Design Alliance who have developed criteria for measuring the quality and value of public realm areas, details available on www.udal.org.uk. Placecheck is a method of assessing the qualities of a place, developed by UDAL with the support of English Partnerships and the ODPM. Placecheck shows what improvements are needed in an area and focuses people on working together to achieve them. It is a unique and effective way to empower local residents to make a difference to their local environment. Likewise, Middlesbrough Council has now started work with an organisation called “Living Streets” who are champions of streets and public places for people on foot. Details available on www.livingstreets.org.uk.

This work along with the PPG17 quality and value assessments will help identify sites that are not meeting Middlesbrough’s needs.

5.4 PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 17, AND PLANNING CONTEXT

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Sport and Recreation (PPG17) is an important advice note from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. It was revised and strengthened in 2002 to give all public open spaces greater protection from development and urging local authorities to use “planning obligations” (legal agreements often referred to as “section 106 agreements”) to secure improvements in the quality and/or quality of public open spaces.

Planning policies are essential in protecting green spaces and in the process of securing best value from the development control process. They set out the standards and quality expected of developers and they spell out what forms of development will be permitted, where and why. Every built development will accommodate people, whether they are visiting, receiving a service, working, studying, or living in the building and each person will have open space needs. Developers can and should be helping us to improve our green and public spaces. Most are happy to do so as quality spaces enhance our overall vitality and the value of any development.

Middlesbrough has had mixed success in applying policies and drawing more funding from the development process to improve green spaces. This strategy sets out new defined standards, but at the same time advocating improving what we have and not demanding more as well as a strategy of retaining the quality of our best but improving the links to them. Clearly:-

- Planning policies need to be clearly understood so that local people and developers can see exactly what is required;
- Standards of provision are essential BUT there is the risk that over reliance on standards restricts new ideas; and
- Our standards need to be clear, easily understood, flexible and designed to meet the needs of all Middlesbrough’s communities, different neighbourhoods, different house types and different local character. One standard does not suit all.

More information about planning standards and policy will be provided as a background paper.

5.5 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Supplementary Planning Documents can be used to expand on policies and to provide more details on their implementation. The Council currently has supplementary planning guidance on planning obligations, including open space provision. The need to develop this guidance into a more detailed Supplementary Planning Document will be considered.

5.6 ADOPTION AND COMMUTED SUMS

New development or redevelopment often includes new or remodelled green spaces. Often, though not always, the developer gives these public areas to the Council who then “adopt” and maintain them for the public good. Each new green space adds to the workload and will increase the total maintenance cost. This is recognised and at handover, the developer will usually provide a “commuted sum” calculated on the costs of maintaining the new scheme for a period of years lasting through its establishment phase. After that period of time has elapsed the Council has to fund the maintenance from its own revenue.

Like many other local authorities, Middlesbrough is finding its overall maintenance budget does not stretch to cover all its responsibilities. One area that needs considerable investigation is the arrangement Middlesbrough has for working out and leveraging in funds through commuted sums. Many authorities are now looking at 15 years. Middlesbrough is now looking at new guidance based on the PPG17 quality audits, the cost of maintenance, standards set for Public Open Space provision. Based on work carried out by Consultants, new Supplementary Planning Guidance will be developed to inform the requirement in any new development, that will determine:-

- New public open space as part of any new development and cost of provision to be met by developer;
- Off site contribution for public space improvements nearby and cost to be met by developer;
- Costs of maintenance for 15 years; and
- Facilities required eg play area, playing pitches, changing rooms.

This will be considered as part of the preparation of the LDF. However as stated in section 5.4, a model will be developed for the calculation of section 106 contributions.

Already discussed are issues relating to sustainable development and long term maintenance. The development of this will run in parallel with the integration and development of commuted sums.



Fairy Dell

Issues and Options

6.0 KEY ISSUES

A number of key issues for the future of open space, sport and recreation provision in Middlesbrough have been identified.

- North – south divide: standards of quality lower in the northern half of the town than the southern half;
- Level of provision (spatial) – especially the shortage of facilities in the north; and
- Uneven distribution of provision (typological) – especially the town wide shortage of youth facilities.

Opportunities –

- Provision of a five a side centre and artificial turf pitch (ATP);
- Tree Cover;
- The Beck Valleys;
- The Three River Parks;
- Acklam Hall;
- Partnership working with schools and education authorities;
- Green space management and maintenance;
- The Green Lung and Prissick Base; and
- Funding.

6.1 LEVEL OF PROVISION: SPATIAL AND TYPOLOGICAL ISSUES

6.1.1 The North / South Divide in Quality and Value Ratings

Quality and value inequalities exist that are of a spatial nature. For example, if the town were to be divided in to two sections with a north / south divide across the physical middle, most of the highest quality / value sites tend to be in the southern “half” while most of the lowest quality / value sites are in the northern “half”.

- In the southern community area there are general provision deficiencies of facilities, but not green spaces;
- In the redevelopment area in the north (north of the railway line), the lack of facilities should be addressed through the master planning process;
- There is insufficient youth facilities across the town; and
- For all other typologies, low quality is more of an issue than additional provision.

In the southern “half” of the town, there is a need to focus on increasing provision as detailed in the appendices report by Kit Campbell Associates – allotments, play areas, youth facilities, sports facilities etc.

6.1.3 Opportunities

The quality of sites in the north and east could be improved by simple improvements to planting, facilities, signage and altering management and maintenance regimes.

The development of the skate park at Prissick will go some way to addressing the deficiency in youth provision.

6.1.4 Recommendations

- To focus on improving the quality of sites in the northern half of Middlesbrough, which would also improve the value of some of the sites; and
- To address the needs of young people and sports facilities that will provide new economic drivers for the town and should be at the centre of the master planning for the area in and around the northern part of the town.

6.2 YOUTH PROVISION

6.2.1 Issues

As a result of the lack of youth provision, teenagers tend to colonise play facilities intended for younger children and their quality suffers as a result. In the surveys we conducted, local people identified increasing youth provision as a priority.

6.2.2 Needs

Although it can be difficult to find suitable sites in built up areas, each community area should have a reasonable choice for youth provision.

6.2.3 Opportunities

There are opportunities to increase youth provision in the land around the Becks, in the larger parks and in the central “green lung” between Acklam Sports Centre and Saltersgill / Easterside. Other potential sites have been identified.

6.2.4 Recommendations

To seek to ensure that there is a network of youth facilities that comply with the quantity, quality and accessibility provision standards. However, before progressing any specific project, it should consult local teenagers and youth groups to ensure that provision will meet their needs.

6.3 OPPORTUNITIES

6.3.1 Issue

Middlesbrough has sufficient green spaces overall but there is a conflict between the strongly expressed desire for better management and maintenance and what the Council can afford.



6.3.2 Opportunities

There are opportunities to rationalise provision and possibly convert some spaces to other uses or dispose of some sites which offer little to local communities. The Audit information identifies those spaces that are of the least value to community or wildlife.

Disposal of some of these sites means the present revenue budget for management and maintenance is spread further. However there is the expectation that there will be genuine opposition to any disposal of green spaces. However, the argument is that there is a genuine need for better management and more quality provision.

6.3.3 Recommendations

To review those spaces that have been classed as being of genuinely low value in the light of wider planning policies, taking account of accessibility, quality and value of alternative provision in the area and the resources available to the Council. Those that it will review are as follows:-

CENTRAL AREA

- Lambton Road.

EAST AREA

- Berwick Hills Allotments;
- Charlbury Road Play Area and open space;
- Land close to Crossfell Road Play Area;
- Longlands Road;
- Margaret Street;
- Netherfields Sports Pitches;
- Ormesby Road / Penrith Road; and
- Town Farm Allotments.

NORTH AREA

- Marlborough Gardens;
- Land between River, railway and travellers site;
- Land around Stockton Street;
- Land around Tower Green; and
- Ironmasters Park.

WEST AREA

- Acklam Gardens; and
- Land between Acklam Base and Beechwood.

SOUTH AREA

- Newham Way;
- Bolton Court;
- Kilton Court;
- Bishopton Road; and
- Hollowfield.

6.4 5 ASIDE FOOTBALL CENTRE AND ARTIFICIAL TURF PITCH

6.4.1 Issue

Football is the most popular sport in Middlesbrough and encouraging the development of the game is a key priority for the Council. Pallister Park, Southlands Leisure Centre and Newport all have good quality pitches, but their carrying capacity is low and changing pavilions are limited.

Community use is unsecured at most primary schools. While most schools do not lease pitches formally, some special local arrangements have been made.

6.4.2 Needs

There is a clear need for further junior and mini soccer pitches as well as increased five a side provision and another Artificial Turf Pitch (ATP) in Middlesbrough.

6.4.3 Opportunity

Ideally ATP's should be on school sites where they can also support school PE programmes and the development of after school clubs.

This approach will probably have a comparable overall capital cost to grass pitches, but require much less land and fewer changing pavilions. This approach may also have additional financial benefits:-

- The Council may be able to fund part of its share of the capital cost from the sale of one or two pitch sites, subject to wider planning policy and a suitable development use; and
- The revenue cost of maintaining an ATP is roughly similar to the cost of maintaining a grass pitch. However, as the number of ATPs required will be much less than the number of grass pitches, the total cost will be much less. In addition, ATP owners can set higher charges than the owners of grass pitches.

A good location for a five a side centre and ATP would be close to the "green heart" of the town, which is physically in the centre of Middlesbrough. There is sufficient land to develop a 5 a side centre and further ATP close to Acklam Sports Centre or within the Saltersgill / Easterside area.

Primary school sites represent an opportunity for the provision of more junior and mini pitches. At present many pitches have unsecured community use and a partnership between different departments could work towards increased provision and secured community use, particularly in areas where there are shortages.

6.4.4 Recommendations

To investigate the possibility of providing a 5 a side football centre at the following locations:-

- Saltersgill / Easterside;
- Whinney Banks; and
- Ormesby;
- To look into working with Middlesbrough FC "Football in the Community"

6.5 TREE COVER

6.5.1 Issue

In Middlesbrough the low level of tree cover is very noticeable and significantly reduces local amenity.

6.5.2 Needs

Middlesbrough needs more trees to provide environmental benefits for people and wildlife and to improve the town's amenity. Their benefits have been discussed previously.

6.5.3 Opportunities

New development provides the opportunity to increase the number of trees in the town at no real cost to the Council.

6.5.4 Recommendations

To include within the Local Development Framework, a mechanism whereby appropriate developments either provide or contribute to new trees.

6.6 THE BECK VALLEYS

6.6.1 Issue

The Beck Valleys are the cornerstone of the strategic provision of green space in Middlesbrough. Raising their quality is important because they form most of the natural and semi-natural green spaces for the northern half of Middlesbrough and major travel routes across the town, from north to south.

Local people identified a strong desire for more good quality paths and more access into semi-natural green spaces. Currently, the quality of the Becks and their footpaths is too low in many places to address these requirements.

6.6.2 Needs

In order to meet the needs of local people for good access to semi-natural green spaces and wildlife and for attractive green corridors, there should be increases to tree and shrub planting, more and better facilities, improved paths and more activity encouraged around the Beck Valleys.

6.6.3 Opportunities

The greatest opportunities for improving the quality of the Beck Valleys are in the east at Spencerbeck and Middlebeck, the north-most reaches of Marton West Beck and the southern section of Saffwood Beck.

6.5.4 Recommendations

To prioritise the development of a good network of cycle and footpaths through the town, with the Becks' pathways at its heart. In addition to the pathways, the overall enhancement of the Beck Valleys is of prime importance to the green space network in Middlesbrough. The Council will work in partnership with the Environment Agency in the delivery of this recommendation.

To include within the Local Development Framework, a mechanism whereby appropriate development contributes to the enhancement of the nearest Beck Valley.

6.7 THE THREE RIVER PARKS

6.7.1 Issues

The River Tees forms an important characteristic in the landscape of Middlesbrough and Teesside, sweeping around to the north and west of the town. Most of the riverbank is adjacent to industrial or commercial uses and separated from the central part of the town by the railway. The Teesdale Way, a public footpath along the edge of the river, runs from the Barrage, through Maze Park, through South West Ironmasters Park and around Teessaurus Park.

Although the river is historically and geographically important in Middlesbrough, the Parks along the edge of the river are of poor quality and would not encourage most people to visit the riverfront for legitimate reasons. This situation represents a wasted opportunity for Middlesbrough to use its links with the river in a positive manner. This is currently being developed as part of the Stockton / Middlesbrough Initiative (SMI) with the development of the Green/Blue Heart, with the proposed creation of a high quality urban landscape and new sport, leisure and recreational uses.

Although Maze Park is not in Council control or ownership, it has tremendous potential to add to the town's character, with its undulating character, good length of river frontage and far-reaching views over the barrage, the White Water course and Portrack Marsh Nature Reserve in Stockton.

The Riverside Park Masterplan (2004) makes recommendations for the Ironmasters sites and Teessaurus Parks and these are supported within this strategy and would emphasise the importance of upgrading access to the River and the riverfront walkway, linked to the 8 bridges cycleway.

6.7.2 Needs

The relationship between the town and its river needs to be restored and valued. The quality of the three river parks should be such that people feel safe, welcome and able to enjoy views of the river, with suitable interpretation where necessary, partly developed by the recent construction of the 8 bridges cycleway.

South West Ironmaster Park appears to be the most isolated of the parks, trapped firmly between the river, the railway, the A66 and an industrial area. We support the proposed development of most of the site, provided there is a substantial belt of green space retained to provide the riverside walkway with an attractive landscaped setting at this location, and archeological considerations are catered for.

Maze Park is very popular especially with dog walkers and runners but the site is not especially welcoming.

Clarity is needed at Teessaurus Park as to its theme and focus. It has both the river AND the dinosaurs and is a unique open space both in Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley. A more positive approach needs to be taken to attracting legitimate uses to this site and encouraging more positive activity.

6.7.3 Opportunities

The opportunity exists to renew the relationship between the town and its river by maximising the quality of the three parks along its river front and increasing the interest and attractiveness of the Teesdale Way that runs alongside the riverbank.



The Riverside Park Master Plan (2004) examined some of the possibilities for the future development of the Ironmasters Park and Teessaurus Park. In particular, it recommends an arena / leisure development at Ironmasters Park, developing the site as a landmark location to give a new vibrant “face” to the Riverside and set the standard for further development. This would also form part of the western gateway into Middlesbrough linking Riverside Park within the town framework and also forming a key node point in the Stockton / Middlesbrough City Zone.

The Riverside Park Master Plan identifies Teessaurus Park as the “Tip” at the end of the peninsular, the key strategic point on the hub at the bend in the river. A high quality Park at this location is envisaged as an important attraction, strengthening the appeal of the Riverside Park area to investors and developers.

In landscape terms, the open views from Maze Park provide an important opportunity to link Middlesbrough to the river and its surroundings. The site is already well used on an informal basis but its quality needs to be raised.

6.7.4 Recommendations

- To enhance the quality of Teessaurus Park and encourage the formation of a node of positive activity with good quality raised viewing platforms giving an outlook over the river;
- To enhance Maze Park. It has great potential to be a popular park with a semi natural feel and excellent views over the river. The Council would need to work with Tees Valley Wildlife Trust who currently manage the site; and
- The Ironmasters site should be reviewed for development opportunities, as well as those identified in the Riverside Park Master Plan. It is proposed that a broad green space area is retained alongside the riverside footpath to increase the quality of the riverside walk experience and to provide flexible green space at this location.

6.8 ACKLAM HALL

6.8.1 Issues

Acklam Hall dates from the late 17th century and is Middlesbrough’s only Grade I listed building. The Hall stands at the centre of extensive landscaped grounds, including formal lawns, a pond and an avenue of mature trees, that have an important function as part of a significant area of open space accessible to the public.

The Hall has been in educational use since the 1930s and is now part of Middlesbrough College, which owns the main building along with parts of the grounds. The remainder of the site and some of the ancillary buildings are owned by Middlesbrough Council.

Middlesbrough College is planning to relocate to a new campus at Middlehaven and the site will be vacated by 2008. An appropriate new use must be found for Acklam Hall.

6.8.2 Needs

Middlesbrough Council's primary objective must be to maintain the cultural significance of the site by conserving the Grade 1 listed building within its landscape setting.

There is a need to ensure the future use and any development of the site adheres to a unified plan that allows collective agreement on the strategy and management of both the buildings and the historic landscape.

The grounds are well used by local residents for informal recreation. People throughout the town identify strongly with the site and have expressed the view that it is an important part of their heritage.

6.8.3 Opportunities

The site presents the Council with the opportunity to support the creation of an outstanding parkland area with the historic building at its centre.

As a first step the Council, together with Middlesbrough College, has commissioned a Conservation Plan to establish the significance of the site and provide guiding principles for its future use and development. The need to maintain and improve public access to the landscape, and also the building if feasible, is a key recommendation of the Conservation Plan. The next step is to prepare a Development Brief to guide and secure the long-term future of the building and its historic landscape. Consultants have been commissioned to complete this element of the work and market interest in the site will then be assessed.

6.8.4 Recommendations

Future proposals and management of the Acklam Hall historic landscape should be guided by the management proposals put forward in the Conservation Plan

6.9 PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

6.9.1 Issues

Out of hours access to school facilities varies from one school to another across the town. Many school grounds are now locked and inaccessible due to security issues, with little or no community use.

6.9.2 Needs

As with community indoor sports facilities, there is a growing need to modernise school indoor facilities. At the same time, there is a need to promote better school club – community club links and pathways.

6.9.3 Opportunities

The Council has the opportunity to work more closely with schools to develop artificial turf pitches and community pitch sports clubs. In particular through shared use of sports halls and extended links to external sports facilities.



6.9.4 Recommendations

The Departments of Regeneration, Environment and Children, Families and Learning should be working more closely to achieve shared community goals and maximise the community use of school facilities. This partnership should also encourage the development of mini-soccer on appropriate school sites.

6.10 GREEN SPACE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

6.10.1 Issue

Local people would like to see their green spaces managed and maintained better.

6.10.2 Needs

Improving management and maintenance is not simply a matter of doing things differently, but generally also requires additional resources. This would require either an increase in the grounds maintenance budget for parks and green spaces, without “robbing Peter to pay Paul”, or reducing the numbers of spaces managed and maintained by the Council while retaining its present revenue budget.

6.10.3 Opportunities

Some sites such as the Longlands Doorstep Green benefit from being kept free of litter by a team of volunteers. However, there are obvious limits to the extent to which volunteers can deliver long term management and maintenance. Like wise, while wildflower meadows are welcome and contribute much to the nature conservation value of a site as well as providing maintenance saving, it would not be desirable to restructure all green spaces to wildflower meadows.

6.10.4 Recommendations

- To ensure that the best used spaces and facilities and its basic network are maintained to the highest standards, if necessarily at the expense of some less valued sites. This implies moving to a hierarchy of maintenance rather than a consistent approach across all spaces. This also implies that such decisions ought to be led on a policy / strategic and developmental basis with more influence being made at the outset on management and maintenance – this could be achieved through further integration of the three disciplines;
- To encourage the further development of “Friends” groups who will work in partnership with the Council to promote sites and improve their nature conservation value; and
- To ring fence any capital receipts obtained from the disposal of green spaces and use them in the immediate vicinity of the land sold to enhance existing green spaces or facilities of more value to the local community.

6.11 THE “GREEN LUNG” AND PRISSICK BASE

6.11.1 Issues

As discussed in 4.21.3, the area consists of various open space typologies, ranging from allotments, pitches to beck valley and formal activity. Quality ranges from high to low with variations in value considerable. The area is fragmented, in places inaccessible and lacks any real focus especially when the size of it is considered.

Prissick Base is also one of the largest open spaces within Middlesbrough and currently caters for sport and recreation, with variations in quality available on site. The recent development of the Skate Plaza has shown the potential that exists for this site as a centre for sport and active recreation.

6.11.2 Needs

The “Green Lung” needs a focus creating to improve value of this area to adjacent residents and current users from elsewhere. Prissick Base needs considerable improvement if its to become a centre for excellence for sport and active recreation.

6.11.3 Opportunities

Opportunities exist for improving accessibility and permeability to the “Green Lung”, with potential for reducing local deficiencies eg Artificial Turf Pitch, and also where appropriate, rationalising and disposing of surplus land. There is an excellent opportunity for creating significant woodland areas within this green space that could be linked to existing school sites its as well as the Beck Valleys, with improvements and enhancements to local biodiversity.

Prissick Base has the potential for considerable development in relation to “Extreme” Sports, following on from the development of the plaza with enhancements to existing infrastructure, access and circulation. Also where appropriate, there are potential opportunities for rationalising and disposing of surplus land.

6.11.4 Recommendations

To enhance the quality of open space within the Green Lung and Prissick Base, maximising potential of these large areas and by developing “Masterplans” for both sites as part of a major consultation exercise.



Extreme Sports at Prissick Plaza

6.12 FUNDING

6.12.1 Issues

Over several years, maintenance resources in parks and open spaces have been cut several times and are now inadequate. Restricted resources have forced the Council to adopt a strategy of focusing on a few flagship sites such as Albert Park. This approach of enhancing a few key sites has been successful, with all of the proposed town parks being subject to good quality enhancement and redevelopment programmes. However, the corollary is that the general quality of the rest of the green space network has been declining steadily.

Choices: managing decline or improving proactively?

The three key areas where changes could be implemented are:-

- Increasing the funding / resources available;
- Altering the management and maintenance regimes; and
- Prioritising fewer sites.

Increasing funding / resources available

Lack of funding is the key issue affecting the Council and there is currently little potential for increasing resources from the Council budget. Some increase has been approved to the annual grounds maintenance budget (2005) for woodlands, shrub beds but not for parks and gardens.

Prioritising fewer sites

This option is an extension of the current informal policy of focusing resources on fewer sites rather than spreading them more thinly across all sites. Within this option, there are also choices to be made. Through maintaining less land, priority action still needs to be identified in terms of either:-

- Keeping all sites but downgrading management and maintenance on some or;
- Introducing a planned programme of disposals to sell some sites and re-investing the money in improving the overall quality and accessibility of other spaces.

(see Section 7.6 for proposed enhancements and reviews)

6.12.2 Needs

Given that there is little need for much in the way of new provision and that this should be a lower priority than enhancing existing provision, the main need is for the Council either to increase its revenue funding for green space maintenance or reduce the amount of green space it maintains – or BOTH!!

6.12.3 Opportunities

Potential exists for Developer contributions from the Middlesbrough Older Housing Visioning Study as does the development proposed in the North – they may be however limited.

6.12.4 Recommendations

To move away from requiring developers to make new provision and instead seek to make maximum use of planning agreements and use the contributions to generate enhancements to provision across the town as well as investigate the option of endowment funding for green space management and maintenance.



Strategic Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter brings together our strategic conclusions and recommendations.

7.2 BASIC POLICY ASPIRATION

To improve green space to provide a strategic town-wide network of sufficient high quality, high value accessible parks, sports, recreation grounds and beck valleys, complemented by neighbourhood and local spaces serving specific areas of the town.

Table 19 Town and Neighbourhood Parks

Town Parks

- Albert Park;
- Central Gardens / Middlesbrough Centre Square
- Hemlington Recreation Ground (to be renamed Hemlington Park);
- Pallister Park;
- Stewart Park.

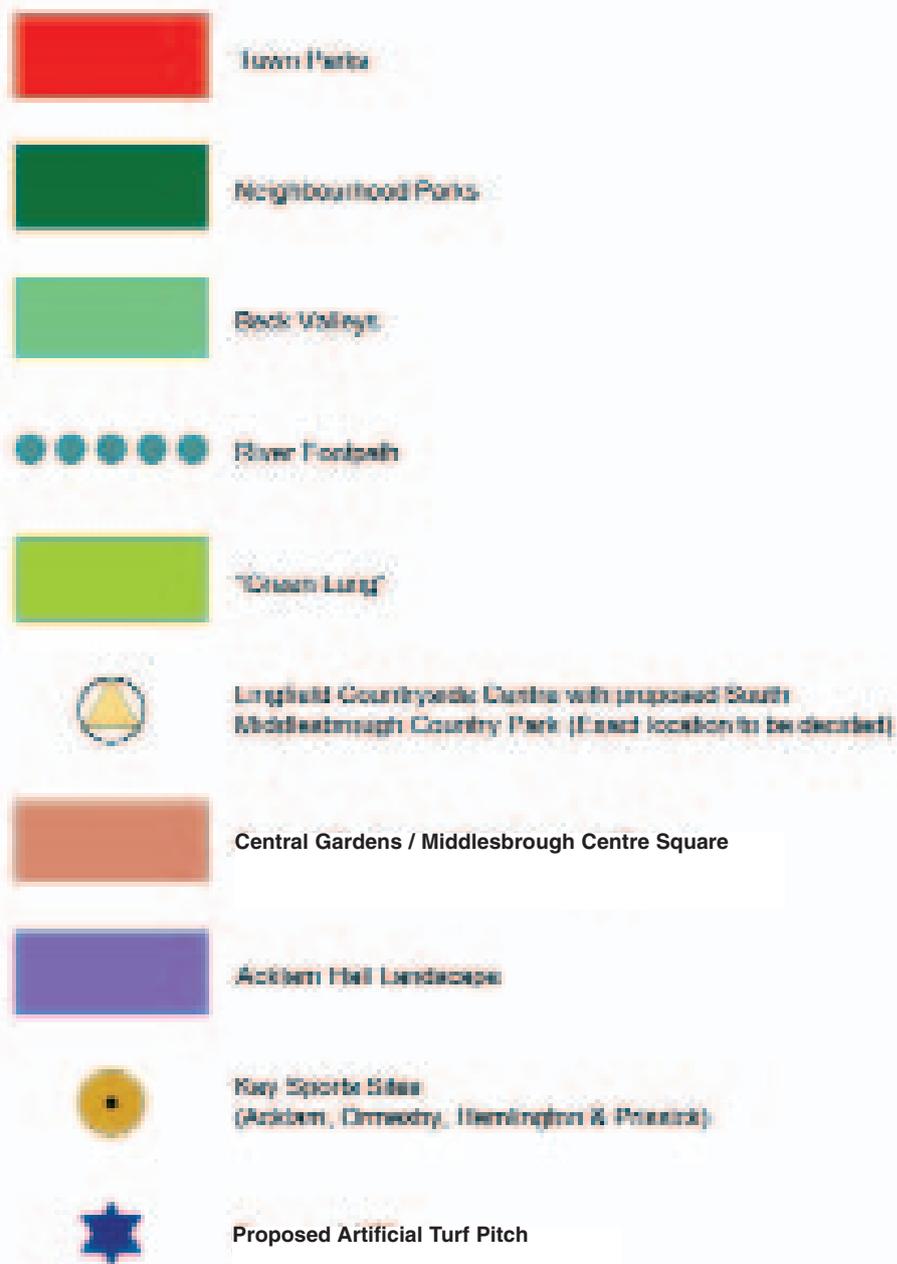
Neighbourhood Parks

The table below gives our suggested neighbourhoods and neighbourhood parks. In some areas, a town park will also function as a neighbourhood one. Where spaces are located just within the boundary of one community area, they will obviously serve residents from other community areas close by. For example, although Laycock Gardens is located within the Central area, it also serves residents in the West community area.

Area	Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood parks
CENTRAL	• Town Centre	• Central Gardens/ Middlesbrough Centre Square
	• Southfield	• Ayresome Gardens
	• Gresham	• Westbourne Park
		• St Barnabas Recreation Ground
		• Laycock Gardens
	• Westbourne	• Albert Park
		• Saltwells Road
	• Linthorpe and Park	• Westbourne Park
		• St Barnabas Recreation Ground
	• Part Grove Hill	• Marton Grove

Area	Neighbourhood	Neighbourhood parks
NORTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Hildas • Riverside • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment proposed - currently Stockton Street • Teessaurus Park • Maze Park
SOUTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemlington • Stainton and Thornton • Newham • Marton • Nunthorpe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemlington Recreation Ground • Brabourn Gardens • Kelgate Green • Fairy Dell • Lingfield Park • Bonnygrove Park • The Avenue • Marton Community Centre • The Avenue
EAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Ormesby • Berwick Hills • Pallister Park • Thorntree • Park End • Beckfield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henry Street Recreation Ground • Pallister Park • Pallister Park • Thorntree Park • Sandringham Road • Thorntree Park • Sandringham Road
WEST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayresome and Linthorpe • Kirby, Brookfield, • Kader and Acklam • Beechwood, Grove Hill and Easterside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carter Park • Whinney Banks • Westbourne Park • Laycock Gardens • Nalgo Field • Acklam Hall lawns • The Avenue • Marton Grove • Longlands Doorstep Green

Map 5 The Strategic Network



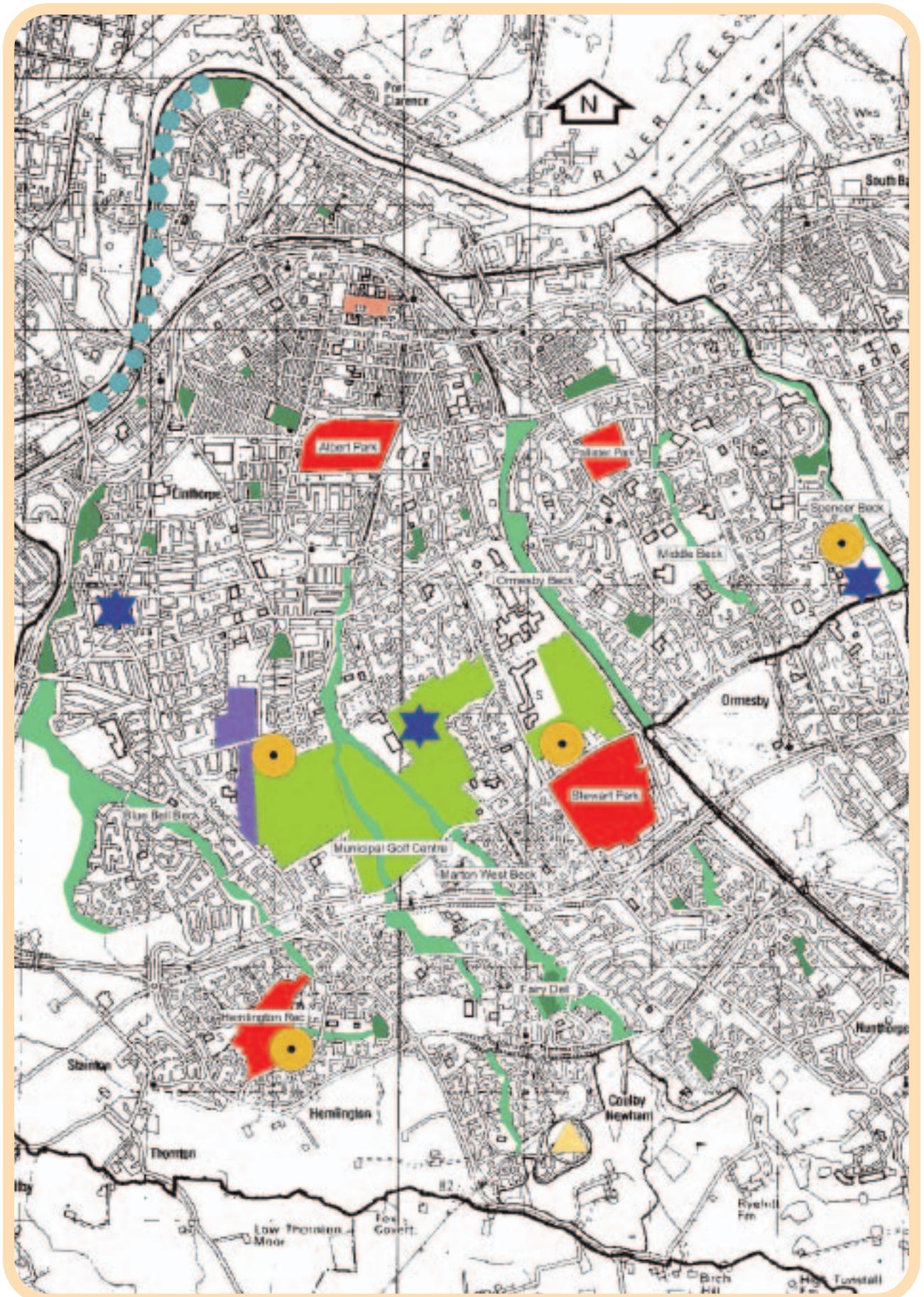
Middlesbrough PPG17 Assessment

Map

Proposals Map - The Strategic Network

Kiri Campbell Associates, Edinburgh

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Middlesbrough Council, L11 9BQ, 2025



7.3 DELIVERING CHANGE

As has been outlined, the Council can choose to continue to manage decline in many areas or to improve open spaces and facilities proactively. The Strategy emphasises the need to improve proactively. Community involvement in the strategic network of open spaces and in improving sites is critical. Although involving the community can require increased resources, these efforts should result in lower maintenance costs through an increase in local pride and less vandalism / abuse through peer pressure.

Delivering this change will be through a series of Action Plans detailed in Part 9 – Action Plans, with short, medium and long term targets, all aspirational but the vision now created and targets set.

7.4 THE STRATEGIC NETWORK LEVEL

The strategic town-wide network is based on:-

- Four Town Parks (Albert Park, Stewart Park, Pallister Park, Hemlington Rec);
- Neighbourhood parks;
- Beck Valleys;
- River Tees walkway and River Parks including Teessaurus Park, Maze Park and a section of Ironmasters Park, and the Green Blue Heart;
- The “green lung” between East and West Middlesbrough;
- The proposed country park in South Middlesbrough;
- Middlesbrough Centre Square and Central Gardens;
- Acklam Hall landscape and its lawns; and
- Acklam Sports Centre, Ormesby Sports Centre and the sports facilities at Hemlington;

The quality of all the strategic network sites should meet the quality standards requirements in all respects.

- The priorities are to enhance the quality of the sites in the strategic network and also those sites that score above 50% for quality and value. They will be relatively cost effective to improve;
- There is a particular need to increase the quality of those sites in the northern “half” of town; and
- It is recommended that development in the northern areas should focus on meeting the needs of young people and providing sports facilities alongside generating economic growth.

7.5 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PROVISION LEVEL

The spaces that the Council proposes to upgrade and enhance to make High Quality / High Value are listed below in Table 20.

7.6 OPPORTUNITIES AND SITES FOR REVIEW

The Council will review those spaces that have been classed as being genuinely low value in the light of wider planning policies. They are listed below in Table 21.

Table 20 Open Spaces to protect and enhance

- Albert Park
- Ayresome Gardens
- Central Gardens / Middlesbrough Centre Square
- Longlands Doorstep Green
- Glebe Park
- Laycock Gardens
- Westbourne Park
- Saltwells Road
- Pallister Park
- Henry Street Recreation Ground
- Millbrook Avenue and Play Area
- Sandringham Road and Play Area
- Thorntree Park
- Whitehouse Allotments
- The Beck Valleys
- Teessaurus Park
- Stockton Street Rec Ground
- Ironmasters Park (part of it)
- Brookfield / Kader Play area
- Carter Park
- Municipal Golf Course
- Letitia Street Allotments
- Linthorpe Cemetery
- Prissick Base
- St. Mary's Churchyard
- Stainsby Wood
- Stainton Quarry / Beck
- Stewart Park
- Acklam Sports Centre
- Broughton Avenue / Easterside Road
- Marton Grove
- Maze Park
- St. Mary's Walk
- Nalgo Field
- St Barnabas Recreation Ground
- The Avenue (Acklam)
- Westbourne Park
- Whinney Banks Pond
- Acklam Hall
- Bonnygrove Park
- Fairy Dell

- Hemlington Recreation Ground
- Newham Grange Leisure Farm
- Lingfield Park
- Thornton Plantation and Pond
- Brabourn Gardens
- The Avenue (Nunthorpe)
- Newham Way Play Area

Table 21 Open Spaces to review

- Lambton Road
- Berwick Hills Allotments
- Charlbury Road and Play Area
- Land close to Crossfell Road and Play Area
- Longlands Road
- Margaret Street
- Netherfields Sports Pitches
- Marlborough Gardens
- Land between River, railway and travellers site
- Land around Stockton Street
- Land around Tower Green
- Ironmasters Park
- Ormesby Road / Penrith Road
- Town Farm Allotments
- Acklam Gardens
- Bolton Court
- Kilton Court
- Bishopton Road
- Hollowfield
- Land between Acklam Base and Beechwood (part of the “green lung”)

7.7 SITE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

All site specific and detailed proposals are listed in the main appendices of the supporting documentation. These include:

- Strategic Network Park Enhancements;
- Strategic Network Becks Enhancements;
- Neighbourhood and Local Provision Minimum Additional provision; and
- Action Plan for Strategic Network Sites that need to be enhanced.

7.8 POLICY PROPOSALS MAP

The effects of the policy proposals are outlined on a key map (Map 5), showing:-

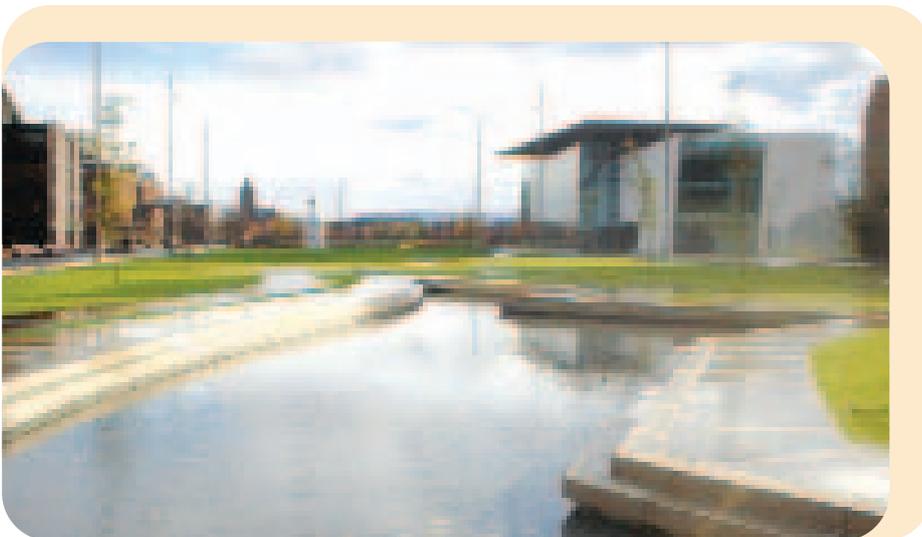
- The network of designated town and neighbourhood parks; and
- The proposed strategic network.

“To improve green space to provide a strategic town-wide network of sufficient high quality, high value accessible parks, sports and recreation grounds and beck valleys complemented by neighbourhood and local spaces serving specific areas of the town.”

This strategic network can be achieved and is the outcome of delivering this green spaces strategy with its recommendations, focused on:-

- Four Town Parks;
- Neighbourhood parks;
- Beck Valleys;
- River Tees walkway and River; and Green Blue Heart;
- The “green lung” proposal;
- The proposed country park in South Middlesbrough.
- Middlesbrough Centre Square and Central Gardens;
- Acklam Hall landscape and its lawns; and
- Acklam Sports Centre, Ormesby Sports Centre and the sports facilities at Hemlington;

Central Gardens are proposed for redevelopment as part of the ongoing development of the cultural quarter, with the extension of Middlesbrough Centre Square. This will include new buildings with a reduction in the quantity of open space but will see an overall improvements to the quality of the open space.



Middlesbrough
Centre Square

Action Plans

8.1 GREEN SPACES PUBLIC PLACES – ACTION PLAN 2006 – 2011

This Action Plan is only a draft for consultation. It is in response to consultation to the “Green Spaces, Public Places Strategic Plan”, the questionnaires to staff, meetings held with community representatives, colleagues who work within green space and others who have been involved, directly and indirectly. It forms a basis of what we as a Council need to do to :-

- Improve the quality of our green space;
- Improve the provision of our green space;
- Protect our green space; and
- Involve people in our green spaces.

This Action Plan will enable Middlesbrough Council to meet green space needs and provide a fair distribution of safe, accessible, clean, attractive green spaces and achieve the strategic network described in Part 7.4. They are based on the 10 fundamental green spaces and public places principles detailed in Part 2.

8.2 STEWARDSHIP

ACTION	WHO	SHORT (S) MEDIUM (M) LONG TERM (L)	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS
1.1 Investigate the provision of wardens, rangers or “parkies” for unmanned parks as well as countryside, based on best practice, looking at security, cleansing, inspection, minor repairs, and engagement.	P&C	M/L	Staff costs, salaries, rent, vehicles, training
1.2 Investigate the current Grounds Maintenance specification, with a view to changes in local standards, levels of specification, actions within the Green Budget scrutiny review, looking at alternative methods of maintenance including involvement of local communities and employment reparation initiatives.	P&C GM EH Area Care	M/L	Staff costs, possible enhancement of grounds maintenance budgets
1.3 Development of local performance measurements and indicators based on agreed standards of quality.	P&C GM	S	Staff costs

1.4	Draw up conservation plans for listed structures / heritage features and historic landscapes, in particular Stewart Park, to feed into Heritage Regeneration Strategy.	PRP P&C	S,M	Staff costs, capital funding required for restoration work. Grant funding required
1.5	Develop a checklist on sales of land.	P&C EH, PRP	S,M,L	Staff costs

8.3 MANAGEMENT

ACTION	WHO	SHORT (S) MEDIUM (M) LONG TERM (L)	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS	
2.1	Define priorities for investment based on quality, needs and condition assessment, and produce annual investment plan.	P&C	S,M,L	Staff costs, grant funding required.
2.2	Develop partnerships with Groundwork, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, Erimus Housing, Middlesbrough Environment City and the Tees Forest in relation to capital projects, strategic direction and management / maintenance issues.	TVWT P&C PRP GM GWK TF MEC EH	S,M,L	Staff costs, grant funding required.
2.3	Development of a major park for West Middlesbrough, based on the former “backlands”.	P&C WMNT PRP	L	Developer contributions WMNT, commuted sums.
2.4	Development of the People’s Parks Forum as a voiceover panel on parks issues, management and maintenance as well as development.	P&C	S	Staff costs
2.5	Survey of all park lodges and houses. Secure funding based on needs assessment or seek alternative uses.	P&C T&D HBS	S,M	Fees, capital costs, revenue costs
2.6	Detail and assess land that is surplus to open space requirements and seek appropriate alternative uses of. Feed into Local Development Framework.	D&C PRP EH	S,M,L	Staff costs
2.7	Staff training and skills development. Development of apprenticeship schemes, training programmes with a view to increasing skills “levels” in Horticulture.	Area Care P&C Lifelong Learning	S, M	Staff costs, revenue costs, grant funding available.

2.8	Integration of Policy, Management, Maintenance and Development. Improved co-ordination between disciplines.	P&C GM	S	Staff costs, restructure/review
2.9	Develop Management Plans for main town parks and neighbourhood parks and Becks / Wildlife sites and associated facilities.	P&C GM EH TVWT, EA	S,M	Staff costs, printing, grounds maintenance implications
2.10	Expand the former REACT initiative, leveraging in funds from ABI's for improvements to open spaces, in particular tree planting	P&C TF, GWK	M	Grant funded, staff costs
2.11	Develop a Local Involvement Programme and Friends Groups on models of best practice. Support existing Friends Groups and develop.	P&C GWK	S,M	Staff costs, printing
2.12	Develop the Section 106 developer agreements process and commuted sums based on PPG17 audits and assessments based on quality and quantity.	P&C PRP	S	Staff costs, purchase of DC model.
2.13	Appointment of a Parks Champion at Member level.	P&C	S	-
2.14	Increased private sector involvement through sponsorship.	P&C GM EH	S,M,L	Grant funded, staff costs.
2.15	Develop a funding strategy / directory with a planned system to apply for funding to improve green spaces.	P&C GWK	S,M	Staff costs
2.16	Development of a young people's forum and improving engagement with children and teenagers based on good practice	P&C GWK, TF Lifelong Learning	S,M	Staff costs support infrastructure

8.4 USE

ACTION		WHO	SHORT (S) MEDIUM (M) LONG TERM (L)	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS
3.1	Encourage greater use of parks and green spaces by ethnic minority groups, especially beck valleys, and countryside areas.	P&C GWK	S,M,L	Staff costs, support infrastructure, workshops, publicity, transport
3.2	Encourage greater use of parks and green spaces for exercise and benefits to health. Develop links with PCT and GP referrals	P&C S&L PCT	S,M,L	Staff costs, publicity, transport
3.3	Development of a play strategy for the town with the aim to rationalise and improve existing play areas based on quality rather than quantity.	P&C CFL	S	Staff costs, capital costs, revenue - maintenance grant funding available
3.4	Develop DDA audits for play areas and town and neighbourhood parks and facilities	P&C	M	Staff costs, consultancy costs signage costs
3.5	Develop a signage and interpretation strategy / policy for town and neighbourhood parks. To include developing a marketing strategy and raising the profile of the Parks Service.	P&C	S,M	Staff costs, printing, publicity, signage costs
3.6	Develop an allotments strategy based on quality and recommendations of Scrutiny Panel Reviews	P&C	S	Staff costs grant funding available
3.7	Develop teenage facilities across the town based on quality and quantity standards	P&C GWK	S, M, L	Capital and Revenue costs
3.8	Initiate Council's policy on Anti Social Behaviour in open space in line with CABE Space recommendations, Section 17 and the AIM process.	P&C CPS	M	Staff costs, publicity, legal costs
3.9	Implementation of Council's litter reduction strategy	P&C CPS	S	Staff costs, publicity
3.10	Development of site names to locally known site names.	P&C	M	Staff costs
3.11	Promote responsible dog ownership to reduce dog fouling, to include enforcement	P&C CPS	S,M,L	Staff costs, publicity

3.12	Feed quantity standards and how far someone should travel to a quality green space or play area into Local Development Framework	P&C PRP	M	Staff costs
3.13	Development of an inspection regime for open spaces. Link to Park Warden/ Security Service.	P&C GM	S,M	Staff costs, revenue implications, insurance costs, legal costs

8.5 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ACTION	WHO	SHORT (S) MEDIUM (M) LONG TERM (L)	RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS	
4.1	Increase % of tree cover in Middlesbrough in line with a new Tree / Woodland Strategy. Incorporate principles adopted by REACT initiative. Development of Country Park in South Middlesbrough to ensure increased coverage.	P&C TVWT TF GWK PRP	M,L	Grant funded, revenue implications, partnership to develop
4.2	Achieve Biodiversity Action Plan Targets.	P&C TVWT TF GWK	S,M,L	Revenue implications, on grounds maintenance
4.3	Development of Country Park to ensure delivery and development of BAP targets	P&C TVWT TF GWK	M,L	Revenue implications, on grounds maintenance
4.4	Development of the sustain and maintain policy group for all new developments.	P&C GM PRP Area Care	S,M,L	Staff costs, revenue savings
4.5	Enter and obtain Green Flag award for Hemlington Lake & Rec, Linthorpe Cemetery, Fairy Dell.	P&C	S,M,L	Application costs, staff costs, changes to grounds maintenance
4.6	Produce quality standards for each typology of open space. Incorporate into Management Plans, Development and design standards and maintenance specifications.	P&C GM	L	Capital and revenue implications 'invest to save'
4.7	Develop design standards for parks and open spaces in line with quality standards and sustain and maintain policy	P&C GM	L	Capital and revenue implications 'invest to save'

4.8	Develop Supplementary Planning Documents where required	P&C PRP	L	Staff costs
4.9	Development of "Placecheck" measuring the quality and value of public realm working with Living Streets	P&C T&D GWK	L	Staff costs, publicity
4.10	Develop EMAS in protecting our open spaces	P&C CPS	S,M,L	Staff costs, long term savings
4.11	Develop and train all managers of Green Space as Green Flag judges, in line with Civic Trust / CABE Space standards	P&C GM	S,M	Training costs, staff costs
4.12	Assess all ancient hedgerows in line with biodiversity guidelines and develop maintenance regimes that are in accordance with hedgerow type	P&C GM TVWT	S,M	Training costs, consultancy costs, maintenance costs, to existing hedgerows. Revenue budget implications
4.13	Re-assess and revise Space for Nature in light of SNCI surveys	P&C GM TVWT TF	M	Staff costs, publicity, printing, revenue budget implications for grounds maintenance

WHO

CFL	-	Children, Families and Learning
CPS	-	Community Protection Service
EA	-	Environment Agency
EH	-	Erimus Housing
GM	-	Grounds Maintenance
GWK	-	Groundwork South Tees
HBS	-	Hyder Business Services
MEC	-	Middlesbrough Environment City
PCT	-	Primary Care Trust
P&C	-	Parks & Countryside
PRP	-	Planning & Regeneration Programmes
S&L	-	Sport and Leisure
T&D	-	Transport and Design
TF	-	Tees Forest

HOW LONG?

Short	-	12/18 months
Medium	-	18 months/3 years
Long	-	Over 3 years

8.6 APPENDICES

The following is available on the Council website:- www.middlesbrough.gov.uk
Follow the link from Environment, Land, Parks
'Leisure and Recreation Needs Assessment - Kit Campbell Associates, August 2005'

For further information, please contact:-

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Braille or large print on request.

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تغيراً عند الطلب.

ہم کو شمل کریں گے کہ اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ دوسری زبانوں میں بھی لکھا جاسکے اور
آپ کی درخواست پر اسے بریل یا بڑے لفظوں میں بھی لکھا جاسکے گا۔



Halcrow

