



Open Space Strategy
For Lewisham
2005 - 2010



Section 2 of the Open Space Strategy

2. REVIEW

Aims and objectives

The Guidance sets out 3 essential tasks in defining the strategy Aims and Objectives:

- Review national, regional and local policy context
- Identify key characteristics of borough on an area basis (including identification of regeneration initiatives and major development opportunities)
- Summarise information collected

National Context

2.1 There has been considerable national research and policy development into open spaces in the past 2 years. Four major documents particularly relevant to this strategy are detailed below:

- Green Spaces, Better Places, DTLR 2002 – final report on the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce
- Living Places Cleaner, Safer, Greener, ODPM 2002 – which includes the Governments responses to the Recommendations in the above report
- Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces DTLR 2002
- Planning Policy Guidance PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation , ODPM 2002

Green Spaces, Better Places: The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce

2.2 Following the Urban White Paper of 2000, the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce was established to develop a programme for national and local government to work in partnership with the local community to revitalise parks and green spaces. The report sets out 52 recommendations to both national and local Government.

- 2.3 It emphasises the importance and popularity of urban parks and green spaces, *“there is increasing public awareness and appreciation of the value of good quality parks, play areas and green spaces in regenerating towns and cities, improving health and wellbeing of local people, and providing educational opportunities for children and communities”*.
- 2.4 However the report recognises the worrying decline in the quality of our parks, the results of accumulative disinvestment, loss of facilities and the loss of a skilled work base and declining status of parks staff.
- 2.5 It identifies the need for a strategic policy framework in which all decision makers operate. The report recommends the requirement for integrated local strategies which can develop urban green spaces including better co-ordination with the planning mechanisms, design reviews to enhance and revive the locality, management plans for green spaces, performance indicators and appropriate quality standards for parks and green spaces.
- 2.6 The report recognises the need for additional Capital investment for parks and green spaces, for a new national agency for urban green spaces, for modern apprenticeship schemes and better skilled staff, for more partnership working and improvements to the planning policy process putting green space planning at the heart of urban regeneration.
- 2.7 Recommendation R37, specifically states that *“local authorities develop and implement a green space strategy, which integrates with neighbourhood renewal, regeneration, planning and housing development, community development, local health improvements, and culture, children's play and sports strategies”*. This recommendation will become the key theme of the Lewisham strategy for open spaces.

Living Places Cleaner, Safer, Greener, ODPM 2002

- 2.8 This report sets out the Government's vision for public space in response to the Urban Taskforce report. The Government has recognised that improving the state of urban parks, squares, and streets is vital to delivering an urban renaissance and restoring pride in town centres and neighbourhoods. Section three of the report specifically addresses Urban Parks and Green Spaces. The Government's response to the 52 recommendations is set out in annex 2 of the report.
- 2.9 The most significant and welcome announcement is that The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) is to act as the nation's champion for urban space, with particular focus on green spaces. CABE Space is to head a strategic partnership that includes the Institute of Leisure and Amenity management (ILAM), the Landscape Institute, Green Space (formerly the Urban Parks Forum), Green Flag Award Scheme, Groundwork and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA).

- 2.10 Other key areas to be addressed include a more supportive information base, strategic planning for high quality urban green spaces, raising standards, promoting partnerships and local involvement and developing good practice networks.

Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces DTLR 2002

- 2.11 The report sets out the findings of research carried out to inform the work of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce as set out in paragraph (2.2). The DTLR commissioned the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield to carry out the work. Lewisham Council was one of fifteen case study authorities, selected to cover a range of both regional locations and types and size of authority. A case study of Lewisham's ten-year parks management contract with private contractor Glendale was highlighted as innovative and wide reaching.

Planning Policy Guidance PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, ODPM 2002

- 2.12 In July 2002 the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published a revised Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 17) on Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. The guidance recognises that open spaces underpin people's quality of life and policies should support urban renaissance, promote social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and promote a more sustainable development.
- 2.13 PPG 17 states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their community for open spaces, sports and recreational facilities.
- 2.14 They should undertake audits of existing open space and should consider both the quantitative and qualitative elements of open space. The guidance states that audits of quality are particularly important as they allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.
- 2.15 It states that when setting standards these are best set locally and should include; quantitative elements, a qualitative component and accessibility (including distance thresholds).
- 2.16 PPG 17 suggests maintaining an adequate supply of open spaces and gives guidance on the protection of existing open space. This should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space to be surplus to requirements, having considered all the functions that open space can perform.

- 2.17 Open spaces 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.
- 2.18 PPG 17 also gives guidance for planning for new open spaces and sports and recreational facilities.
- 2.19 It also offers advice on planning obligations, suggesting that they be used as a means to remedy local deficiencies in the quantity or quality of open space provision. It reiterates the need for local authorities to have undertaken detailed assessments of needs and audits of existing facilities, and set appropriate local standards in order to justify planning obligations.

Regional Context

The London Plan

- 2.20 The Mayor for London is responsible for the strategic planning in London. His duties include producing a 'Spatial Development Strategy' for London – called the London Plan. After it is published, borough's local plans must be in 'general conformity' with the plan. Currently Lewisham and the other London Borough's prepare Unitary Development Plans (UDP).
- 2.21 The London Plan 2004 recognises *"the current and potential value of open space to communities, and to protect the many benefits of open space including those associated with sport and recreation, regeneration, the economy, health, culture, biodiversity, and the environment"*.
- 2.22 Policy 3D.7 *Improving open space provision* states that *"London Borough's should produce open space strategies to protect, create and enhance open space associated with health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, culture, in accordance with the **GLA Guide to Open Spaces Strategies**"*. This strategy is based on the GLA Guide.
- 2.23 Policy 3D.11 *Borough's should in consultation with local communities, the Mayor and other partners, produce open space strategies to protect, create, and enhance all types of open space in their areas.*
- 2.24 Other policies include Policy 3D.8 *Green Belt*, 3D.9 *Metropolitan Open Land*, 3D.10 *open space provision in UDP's* and 3D.12 *Biodiversity and nature conservation*.

Thames Gateway – Developing a Green Grid Network

- 2.25 The Thames Gateway is the name given to the area of the southeast that extends from Lewisham and Tower Hamlets, in inner London, east to Tilbury in Essex and the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. The Thames Gateway has been identified, in the London Plan, as capable of providing space for 142,000 new homes, 52,000 of which will be situated in the brownfield sites along the Thames.
- 2.26 Much of the environmental quality could benefit from strategic enhancements and linkages and it is imperative that enhancements to the environmental quality are made ahead of any new development.
- 2.27 Main action points that need to be addressed include:
- To identify strategic green and open spaces for environmental enhancement
 - To identify demand led green routeways that link the strategic green spaces together and to town centres, schools, high density housing areas (including future developments) etc
 - To identify rivers that could be de-culverted to provide additional flood storage capacity and/or green routeway access to town centres
 - To identify opportunities to locate hospitals/schools/old people's homes near green spaces
 - To identify partners and funding opportunities
 - To develop a prioritised action plan
 - To identify instruments and planning policies for delivering the network
 - To identify areas deficient in green spaces and look at opportunities for creating new green spaces in such areas where possible...
 - ..or alternatively promoting and facilitating access to proximal green spaces in deficient areas
 - To identify opportunities for creating wildlife corridors
 - To identify situations where environmental management policies can be improved/disseminated as best practice
- 2.28 The network will provide the strategic linkage between the Borough open space strategies and be able to respond to strategic issues such as prioritising the Action Plan and targeting external funding.

South East London Green Chain

- 2.29 In 1977 some 300 open spaces in South East London were designated as a Green Chain of spaces to give extra protection against inappropriate development in the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham. The open spaces all have strategic value as they are connected to form a 16 mile long swathe of land through South East London. Within the Green Chain open spaces can be found ancient woodlands, historic parks and landscapes, commons, heath, farmland and recreation grounds. This continues as a collaborative initiative between the boroughs.
- 2.30 In the early 1980's the strategic significance of these open spaces was further reinforced with the introduction of a network of sign-posted footpaths. More than 40 miles of footpaths link many of the open spaces and create a resource of regional significance.
- 2.31 The Green Chain is managed by a Working Party comprised of Council officers from planning, highways and leisure services departments of the 4 funding boroughs. The actions of the Working Party are monitored by the Councillor level Joint committee. In 1993 a Project Officer was employed to implement many long standing proposals and develop new initiatives to further enhance the project.

Local Context

Lewisham Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

- 2.32 The UDP provides town-planning guidance for the development and use of land and buildings throughout the Borough. It seeks to promote Lewisham's economic health and protect what is best in our built and open environment.
- 2.33 Chapter three of the UDP is given to Open Space and its policies are separated into 4 categories;
- Those concerned with the largest and most significant pieces of open space, which have a value felt beyond Lewisham's boundaries, and as a result are designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)
 - Those for open spaces which together form a green corridor or green chain, which in some cases also attracts the protection of MOL designation;

- Those for 'other' pieces of open space, in this sense 'other' meaning non-MOL, including areas of open space deficiency and temporary open space
- Policies which specifically protect pieces of open space because of the use to which the land is put (sport and recreation) or some additional quality of the land (its value for nature conservation).

2.34 There are three key part 1 policies for open space as follows

- To protect all open spaces in the Borough from inappropriate built development
- To seek to provide additional open space in the Borough, particularly in areas identified as deficient in accessible provision
- To protect and wherever possible enhance nature conservation, ecology and biodiversity in the Borough.

2.35 Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) designation is given to strategically important pieces of open space within an urban environment. The UDP states that planning permission will be granted only for appropriate development or change of use where this preserves the open nature of the land. The following uses of land may be appropriate within MOL in Lewisham;

- Public and private open space, playing fields and golf courses
- Agriculture, woodlands (including the creation of new native woodland) and orchards
- Rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes and other open water
- Allotments and nursery gardens
- Cemeteries and associated crematorium
- Nature Conservation

2.36 The Council will be supportive of proposals that enhance these uses and will only permit the limited extension of buildings within MOL where this would not result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. Improved public access to appropriate land uses in MOL will be acceptable where it does not conflict with other environmental objectives.

2.37 'Other' open space is defined in planning terms to areas of open space that are not designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). These spaces are designated as Public Open Space (POS) or Urban Green Space (UGS). The UDP designation, MOL, can be applied to both POS and UGS. POS comprises all open spaces that have unrestricted public access and which meet recreation and non-recreational needs within an urban area. UGS is open space to which the public is restricted or not formally established but which meets or is capable of meeting recreational or non-recreational needs within an urban area.

- 2.38 The Council will resist inappropriate development on the areas of POS and UGS. Inappropriate development includes;
- development that would result in loss of or damage to POS and UGS
 - development that adversely affects the amenity, open character or appearance of POS and UGS through inappropriate scale
 - development that would result in loss of or damage to sites that have not been designated as either POS or UGS but are nonetheless valuable locally will also be resisted as inappropriate
- 2.39 As an exception to the above some development on POS and UGS may be permitted if it comprises;
- small and unobtrusive development that is ancillary to the open space and enjoyment of the land; or
 - development that facilitates or enhances public access to UGS; or
 - development that makes provision nearby for replacement open space of equal or better quality and size.

Community Strategy 2003 – 2013 and relating Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy

2.40 The Lewisham Community Strategy is intended to act as an overarching framework to improve community well-being, within which other local plans can link together and sets out a long-term vision for the borough. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy sets out the strategy direction for improving poor neighbourhoods and aligns closely with the Community Strategy.

2.41 The Community Strategy identifies ten priorities to be tackled in partnership to meet the aspirations of Lewisham residents. These are grouped under three main themes:

Improving the well-being of people in Lewisham

- Reduce crime and make Lewisham a safer place
- Improve the health of local people
- Raise educational attainment, skill levels and employability
- Foster enterprise and business growth including the creative industries
- Develop cultural vitality – building on Lewisham's distinctive cultures and diversity
- Secure sustainable regeneration of Lewisham as a place – its housing, transport and environment
- Reduce welfare dependency, promote independence and increase the life chances of vulnerable members of the community

Developing local communities

- Help local communities to develop their own capacity for mutual support and independent action and ensure the centrality of community

Improving public sector performance and delivery

- Ensure equity in service delivery: design diversity into local institutions and design out discrimination
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local public services: optimise investment in infrastructure; and improve the stewardship of assets

2.42 The Action Plan point 6: Secure the sustainable regeneration of Lewisham as a place – Its housing, transport and environment sets out:

2.43 *Improve and protect open space provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility as well as ensuring that open spaces meet the needs of all local people.*

2.44 *The key target for parks is to increase the public satisfaction with the visual appearance of the borough and open spaces.*

Corporate Priorities

2.45 The council's corporate priorities have been identified to meet community aspirations and individual strategies should underpin the priorities where appropriate.

- **Community leadership and empowerment** – developing opportunities for the active participation and engagement of people in the life of the community.
- **Young people's achievement and involvement** – raising educational attainment and improving facilities for young people through partnership working.
- **Clean, green and liveable** – improving environmental management, the cleanliness and care for roads and pavements, and promoting a sustainable environment.
- **Safety, security and a visible presence** - partnership working with the police and others to further reduce crime levels, and using Council powers to combat anti-social behaviour.
- **Strengthening the local economy** – gaining resources to regenerate key localities, strengthen employment skills, and promote public transport

- **Decent homes for all** - investment in social and affordable housing to achieve the decent homes standard, tackle homelessness and supply key worker housing.
- **Protection of children** – better safeguarding and joined up services for children at risk.
- **Caring for adults and the elderly** - working with health services to support elderly people and adults in need of care.
- **Active, healthy citizens** – leisure, sporting, learning, and creative activities for everyone.
- **Inspiring efficiency, effectiveness and equity**– ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and equity in the delivery of excellent services to meet the needs of the community.

Other Local Strategies

2.46 The local context for this strategy is also set out in the following documents

- Creative Lewisham
- Lewisham Local Cultural Strategy (draft)
- Lewisham Sports and Active Recreation Strategy
- Lewisham Biodiversity Action Plan (draft)
- Lewisham Environmental Policy and Statement 2003/4
- Lewisham Crime Reduction Plan 2002-2005
- Best Value Review – Making Lewisham a Cleaner, Greener place
- Lewisham Council Vision and Policy Priorities
- Regeneration Service Strategy 2003 –2006