

# Open Spaces Strategy & Action Plan

14<sup>th</sup> January 2025

MD2 Consulting Ltd



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- I Report of consultation
- II Audit detail and action plan - a spreadsheet
- III Mapping
- IV Guidance for developer contributions

Front cover image: Melton Country Park, Melton Mowbray.

# Introduction

## 1.1 Melton local plan

Melton Borough Council adopted the new Melton Local Plan in October 2018. The plan covers the whole Borough and sets out the development strategy, policies and proposals including site allocations which will guide land use and development up to 2036. The plan has been prepared in accordance with legal requirements set out in the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and accords with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## 1.2 Policies in the local plan

Policy EN7 of the adopted Melton Local Plan requires the provision of open space to meet identified deficiencies and to sustain quantity standards as the population grows. Policy EN3 of the local plan defines and supports the enhancement of the Melton Green Infrastructure Network. Together, these policies require a strategic, design-led approach to open space provision that focusses on enhancing and providing green infrastructure in the areas identified in the plan. This was a marked change from the previous approach which was to provide new open space on a pro-rata basis, which sometimes resulted in small open spaces that did not really serve their intended purpose. However, the data and distribution of forecast development from which the deficiencies set out in Policy EN7 were calculated dated from 2015 and did not reflect the final housing allocations in the local plan.

## 1.3 Previous open space strategy and action plan

In 2020 the Council published the Melton Mowbray Open Space Strategy and Action Plan, prepared by MD2 Consulting Ltd. This updated and analysed housing and open space information, considered best practice and made recommendations for the town of Melton Mowbray urban area, including the allocated development sites known as the North and South Sustainable Neighbourhoods. A key recommendation was that a Borough-wide Open Space Strategy and Action plan should be prepared, using the same methodology, to ensure a consistent approach to delivery across the Melton borough.

## 1.4 Local planning regulations

Section 17 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Regulation 10A of the Local Planning Regulations require that councils carry out a review of their local plans within five years of the plans' adoption. The review should focus on deciding whether the policies remain relevant and effective in addressing local needs. Where policies are no longer effective or relevant the plan should be revised in whole or part. The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) emphasises the need to maintain an up-to-date Local Plan and refers to this legal requirement.

## 1.5 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure (GI) is not simply an alternative name for open space. It is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, both urban and rural. GI can deliver a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. Furthermore, green infrastructure provides an opportunity to link with Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Nature Recovery Network, and Natural Capital.

The distribution, standard and quality of open space is important to the green infrastructure network. For that reason, the Council has commissioned a Borough Wide Green Infrastructure Strategy and Action Plan which takes account of and references relevant aspects of the Melton Borough Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.

## 1.6 Open Space study objectives

- a. Review changes to open space and other relevant matters in Melton Mowbray since the 2020 Melton Mowbray Open space strategy and audit report.
- b. Review changes to national policy and guidance (including the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance), the Council's corporate objectives and any other relevant policies, and assessment of any implications.
- c. Define a formula-based approach seeking developer contributions for the provision, enhancement, maintenance and management of open spaces for the long term in line with quantity and quality standards and accompanied by a user-friendly calculator applying the formula for publication on the Council's website.
- d. Review the potential role of Parish Councils and other local organisations in open space provision, enhancement, maintenance and management.
- e. Consider the role of open space in mitigating and adapting to climate change and delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and implications for their scale, location and design and potential for tree planting.

## 1.7 Melton Corporate Strategy 2024 - 2036

The Melton Corporate Strategy is based around an eight-point vision - Vision '36'<sup>1</sup>. Accompanying the vision is a four-year plan for the period 2024-2028. Open Space is linked to Vision 36 key points in the following ways (Table 1). It also contributes to the focus area theme 1 on healthy communities and neighbourhoods on sustainable growth and infrastructure, theme three tourism and town centre regeneration and vitality and theme for sustainable gross and infrastructure in the accompanying four-year plan for the period 2024 to 2028.

A new, single, custom-built leisure centre and swimming pool fit for the next generation, supported by wider recreation and physical activity facilities across the borough.	Open space can increase recreation and physical activity across the Borough.
Greater access to healthcare services, increasing the availability of primary care, and to meet the needs of a growing population and encourage activities to improve people's health.	Open spaces provide low-cost access for exercise which has been shown to bring health improvements in the areas of mental health, some cancers and healthy ageing.
More sustainable homes, that meet the needs of our communities, supported by the right infrastructure and facilities, including the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) and adequate school places.	Close to nature living and access to local open space enhances property values and reduces the time that rental properties are in vacancy. Additionally, sustainable homes need access to local open spaces for play and recreation.
High quality homes, across all tenures, supported by accountable and enabling landlord services.	High quality homes are normally situated in verdant neighbourhoods.
A bustling, vibrant and regenerated town centre, recognised as a regional destination, and supported by a thriving tourism sector.	In combination with town centre efforts, the Melton Country Park an important open space in Melton Mowbray is a tourist draw.
Cherish and celebrate our villages and rural heritage, delivering on the Rural Capital of Food and maximising investment in our waterways, canals, walkways and green infrastructure.	As stated in this key point, green infrastructure is an opportunity to secure a new investment for waterways, canals and walkways. Open Spaces are important individual components of the Boroughs green infrastructure network
Harnessed new technologies, diversifying our business base, and securing more high skilled, higher paying jobs, creating a brighter future for young people.	Open space management is a field of employment opportunities notably in relation to sustainable design such as landscape management
Be recognised as clean, green, and attractive; well on our way to becoming a net zero borough.	Open space contributes to climate change adaptation and building of resilience. Soils, water bodies and trees are carbon sinks.

Table 1: Open Space can contribute to all aspects of the Melton Borough Council corporate strategy 2024 to 2036.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.melton.gov.uk/your-council/corporate-strategy/>

## 1.8 Study Outputs

The Melton Borough Open Space Strategy and Action Plan outputs are:

1. A strategy report (this document) which includes the:
  - a. Study methodology
  - b. Planning context
  - c. Open space typology
  - d. Overview of open space provision
  - e. Open space standards
  - f. Quantity and access standards
  - g. Summary of the findings of the open space audit
  - h. The open space strategy
  
2. Annexes which are:
  - a. Report of consultation
  - b. Audit detail and action plan - a spreadsheet
  - c. Mapping
  - d. Guidance for developer contributions
  
3. Workshop for Melton Borough Council on applying the open space strategy



Image 1: Open space is important to the quality of life in communities – Belvoir Road, Knipton.



# Study Methodology

## 2.1 Desk study

A desk study has been undertaken of the local policy context as well as current national policy including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - December 2023) and Planning Practice Guidance (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government – 2014). This policy framework was synthesised and the outcome of this study is reflected in this strategy report.

## 2.2 Multi-method data collection

An analysis was undertaken by the Consultants to consider the following:

1. The existing published evidence of Open Space within the urban settlement of Melton Mowbray (MD2 Consulting Ltd 2020) and KKP (2015), including the locations of the new sustainable neighbourhoods in Melton Mowbray and the proposed new highway infrastructure intended to serve them
2. The need for a properly informed, consistent and robust evidence base
3. The existing and planned open space provision in settlements that closely relate to the town of Melton Mowbray
4. The need to support the Borough's climate change goals

## 2.3 Consultation

A stakeholder consultation with respect to the open space strategy and action plan was held between January and March 2024. This was preceded by a presentation to Melton Borough Council Members. Recognising the potential of digital exclusion, paper-based responses were able to be made to public buildings. A report of consultation is an annex to this strategy report.

## 2.4 Quality audit

Fieldwork was undertaken by two experienced surveyors between December 2023 and April 2024, for the purposes of a quality audit of sites that were considered as publicly accessible open space. This work used previous records, GIS datasets, field walking and discussions with residents who were 'out and about' whenever possible to identify open spaces that were being used by the public. In November 2023, an email was sent to all Parish Councils inviting them to send information in their possession about open space in the locality. This work revealed that there is significantly more green open space in the Borough of Melton than previously recorded. Given that the site audit for Melton Mowbray town were undertaken comparatively recently (between 2018 and 2019) a full audit of sites within the town was not considered necessary. However, to quality assure the process 21 existing and new sites in Melton Mowbray were

identified in collaboration with the planning department, to quality assure the process. These were re-audited.

## 2.5 Benchmarking

In 2020 MD2 Consulting Ltd used the CIPFA “Nearest Neighbour” algorithm, to compare the Borough of Melton with its 15 statistical nearest neighbours based on nationally accepted comparative criteria. A desk study and web-based ingathering of data from these 15 authorities was done to provide comparative information. These were then tabulated and compared with the results of the survey and GIS mapping. Standards were determined based on this evidence for inclusion in this Open Space Strategy<sup>2</sup>. This was reviewed in 2024 and it was concluded that the benchmarking was still accurate and that no notable changes were required to the open space standards.

## 2.6 Data

New mapping has been undertaken in a format compatible with the Council’s GIS system to provide a resource for MBC as a ‘planning resource’ and to determine areas of surplus and deficit in open space provision.

## 2.7 Action Plan

An Action Plan has been produced and is a separate tab on a spreadsheet and is based on the quality scoring provided by the consultants and is subdivided into typology categories. Where individual recommendations have been noted, these are included.

## 2.8 Guidance

Guidance has been provided on several issues, including a defined formula-based approach seeking developer contributions for the provision, enhancement, maintenance and management of open spaces for the long term in line with the quantity and quality standards contained within the 2024 report including a user-friendly calculator applying the formula for publication on the Council’s website. This is presented as a starting point for developers and agents seeking to improve new or enhanced open spaces as part of new development.

The potential role of Parish Councils and other local organisations in open space provision, enhancement, maintenance and management is included in this Strategy report alongside the

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<sup>2</sup> Melton Mowbray Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Final 27th October 2020 available at [https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/files/ugd/2778e0\\_241aa9062c50490d9c66c9913c9e8645.pdf](https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/files/ugd/2778e0_241aa9062c50490d9c66c9913c9e8645.pdf)

role of open space in mitigating and adapting to climate change and delivering Biodiversity Net Gain and implications for their scale, location and design and potential for tree planting. Training has been provided on the new Open Space Strategy and Action Plan for Council Officers.



Image 2: Separating different types of open space use is not always clearcut. This image shows a playing pitch which is dealt with through a playing pitch strategy and an associated playground included in the open space strategy; Salford.

## Open Space typology

### 3.1 Open Space, Green Space and Green Infrastructure

In this Strategy the terms ‘open space’ and ‘green space’ are used interchangeably. However, the term ‘green infrastructure’, also mentioned in this Strategy is different. Melton Borough Council has separate policies for green infrastructure (EN3) and open space (EN7). A green infrastructure strategy and action plan provides evidence for policy EN3. Open space is a key component of Melton’s green infrastructure network so both policies and strategies are closely linked.

### 3.2 Types of open space

Types of open space are classified by different characteristics which is called a typology. The typology of open space in Melton Borough is listed below along with a short description (see Table 2).

Typology name	Notes
<b>Allotments and community growing spaces</b>	Includes recognisable allotment gardens along with community growing spaces. No distinction is made on ownership
<b>Amenity green space</b>	Planned or incidental open space often (but not only) grass – amenity use, and visual appearance are key considerations
<b>Churchyard and cemeteries</b>	These are considered only when they are publicly accessible areas and have a significant green space component
<b>Non-pitch sport facility</b>	These are sites that may be missed in a Sport England compliant Playing Pitch Strategy which focuses on a small number of key sports. Examples that may be missed include Timed jogging routes, Nordic walking, Trim trails, Park Run, Gymkhana.
<b>Parks and gardens</b>	Accessible parks and gardens, normally a formal landscape
<b>Provision for children and young people, e.g. play areas</b>	Also referred to as playgrounds and play spaces. Includes Local areas for play (LAPs), Locally equipped areas for play (LEAPs), Neighbourhood equipped areas for play (NEAPs) and Multi use games areas (MUGAs).
<b>Accessible semi-natural green space</b>	Wide ranging description for space that is for people and nature. An increasingly important component of green infrastructure and necessary to adapt to climate change.
<b>SuDS or Sustainable Urban Drainage</b>	These are areas created principally for the management of surface water but feature open space types, including those listed above. In the strategy, a distinction is made between non-accessible SuDS, and accessible SuDS

Table 2 | Types of open space (referred to as a typology)



Image 3: Allotments and community gardens are an important type of open space. Unlike other types of open space, the type of land-use in an allotment can limit access. Mill Lane Allotments, Somerby.



Image 4: there is growing interest in community growing spaces which are valuable for wildlife such as hedgehogs and pollinator insects such as bees. Memorial Garden, Knossington Recreation Ground



Image 5: Amenity green space is a wide description for informal green areas. Such areas are also locations for war memorials, bus stops and occasional gatherings. In some cases, amenity green spaces have the possibility of being converted into other typologies such as community growing spaces or semi-natural green space. Old Dalby Village Green.



Image 6: Churchyards and cemeteries have historic connections to localities and provide space for nature. St John the Baptist Churchyard, Cold Overton.



Image 7: Churchyard and cemeteries contain some of our most important trees. St Deny's Churchyard, Goadby Marwood.



Image 8: a local area for play at Redmile. Play areas are categorised as local areas for play (LAP), locally equipped area for play (LEAP), neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP) and a multi-use games area (MUGA) – see section 3.4.





Image 9: the Borough of Melton is below standard for accessible semi natural green space. These areas make an important contribution to biodiversity and climate mitigation. Holwell Nature Reserve.



Image 10: Sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) is now a common technique for dealing with surface water on new development. Where public access is provided (noting that some of a site may be fenced off for health and safety) these areas can help to provide accessible green space for new communities. SuDS at Bailey Crescent, Melton Mowbray.

### 3.3 Accessibility

Most 'green' open spaces contribute towards the green infrastructure network to varying degrees, but only those sites that are publicly accessible are counted in the open space strategy. An exception is made for allotments, where normally, due to the nature of the activity, a degree of security is required, which limits public access.

### 3.4 Provision for children and young people

Fields in Trust is a national charity that has issued national guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play (Beyond the Six Acre Standard). This was updated in 2015 to reflect policy changes including the National Planning Policy Framework and includes recommendations on the provision of

amenity and natural green space. In line with 'Fields in Trust' guidance four types of play space are identified (see table 3)

Typology	Sub-type	Size in hectares (ha)	Minimum dimensions	Buffer zone	Notes
<b>Equipped - designated play areas</b>	Local area for play (LAP)	0.01ha	10 x 10 metres (minimum activity zone of 100sqm)	5m min separation between activity zone and nearest property containing a dwelling	
	Locally equipped area for play (LEAP)	0.04ha	20 x 20 metres (minimum activity zone of 400sqm)	20m min separation between activity zone and the habitable room façade of dwellings	
	Neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP)	0.1ha	31.6 x 31.6 metres (minimum activity zone of 1,000sqm comprising an area for play equipment and structures & a hard surfaced area of at least 465sqm (the minimum needed to play five-a-side football))	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling	
<b>Other outdoor provision, including multi use games areas and skateboard parks</b>	Multi use games area (MUGA)	0.1ha	40 x 20 metres	30m min separation between activity zone and the boundary of the nearest property containing a dwelling	In practice MUGAs are often referred to by other names such as recreation grounds. The term is also used for artificial surfaces

Table 3 | Types of play space based on Fields in Trust (FiT) guidelines.

### 3.5 SuDS sustainable urban drainage

The British Geological Survey<sup>3</sup> state that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) are drainage solutions that provide an alternative to the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses and that by mimicking natural drainage regimes, SuDS aims to reduce surface water flooding, improve water quality and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the environment. SuDS achieve this by lowering flow rates, increasing water storage capacity and reducing the transport of pollution to the water environment. Provision for SuDS and the national standards required for their design, construction, maintenance and operation is included in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

In recent years SuDS has become the prominent method for disposing of surface water from development and these are appearing in significant numbers in the Melton borough. There are many types of SuDS, and the principal types are described as source control, site control, and regional control. SuDS is now extensively used in almost all new development to manage surface water and in the context of open space 'site control' is of the most relevance. There is guidance available on SuDS at Susdrain<sup>4</sup>.

The Local Government Association, identify eight benefits of SuDS<sup>5</sup> of which four are relevant to the provision of open space in Melton and elsewhere:

- a. **Improving amenity and biodiversity:** the integration of open space and green infrastructure with SuDS solutions can help to create habitat, recreational and biodiversity areas.
- b. **Community benefits:** attractive, well designed public open space that incorporate SuDS can help to create better communities through social cohesion and quality of life improvements.
- c. **Recreation:** multi-purpose SuDS components can not only manage surface water, but also act as sports/play areas.
- d. **Education:** SuDS in schools provide a fantastic learning opportunity whilst also providing additional recreational space.

### 3.6 Non-accessible SuDS schemes

SuDS are deemed to constitute engineering works, although they may form part of either larger semi-natural or amenity green spaces. For reasons of public safety, these sites are sometimes entirely or substantially fenced<sup>6</sup> off, and anyone accessing fenced off areas do so at their own

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/geology-projects/suds/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.susdrain.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/severe-weather/flooding/sustainable-drainage-systems>

<sup>6</sup> Fenced off describes any boundary treatment intended to restrict public access.

risk. They have been recorded on the Melton open space action plan, but do not count towards open space standards.

### 3.7 Accessible SuDS

There are also accessible SuDS schemes, which give access to the public with only a proportion of the site (e.g. a swale or soak away area, which may be a pond or marsh) fenced off for safety reasons. Accessible SuDS schemes can be counted towards open space standards and be recorded against the relevant land typology. Typically, this might include amenity green space, accessible natural green space and potentially provision for children and young people. Developers, when designing SuDS with accessibility in mind, should do so in liaison with the planning authority and using up-to-date guidance from ciria<sup>7</sup>. In circumstances where normally accessible SuDS are being designed paths, seating and a ‘welcome’ sign are a minimum requirement. An accessible SuDS can still have areas fenced off for safety reasons, but this should be the minimum needed and will need to be agreed by the planning authority, see table 4.

Type	Non accessible SuDS	Accessible SuDS
<b>Description</b>	Fenced off or substantially so - SuDS area is substantially not accessible to public	Public access welcomed, normally some amenity provided a part of the site can be fenced off with no public access on the proviso that this is for safety purposes the extent of which will need to be agreed with the local planning authority
<b>Is it Open Space?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Does it count towards open space standards in the Borough of Melton?</b>	No	Yes
<b>Is it recorded on the Councils open space register?</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>How is it recorded on the Council's open space register<sup>8</sup>?</b>	According to its typology	According to its typology
<b>Is there a separate category for SuDS to distinguish it from the typology used in the open space strategy?</b>	No	No
<b>Planning advice.</b>	Developers' decision based on their engineering requirements, but will still need to meet planning requirements	Developed and planned in collaboration with the local planning authority.
<b>Can it count towards open space contributions?</b>	No	Yes

Table 4 | Non-accessible SuDS vs. Accessible SuDS

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C753F&Category=FREEPUBS>

# Overview of open space provision in The Borough of Melton

## 4.1 Local context

Melton Borough is an attractive rural area in the north-east part of Leicestershire and at the heart of the East Midlands. It has an area of 48,138 hectares and is one of the 50 most sparsely populated districts in the UK. The main activities of the Borough are centered on the market town of Melton Mowbray, which has a population of about 25,000. There are some 70 small villages within the surrounding rural area. Bottesford and Asfordby are the two largest villages each with a population of about 3,000. The other villages range in size from small hamlets with 20 persons to villages where up to 700 people live. The tourist specialist GoLeicestershire describes Melton Mowbray as a “quintessential English market town”. Despite urban growth over the last century, the town can take pride in its long historical narrative and success in retaining its ‘market town’ identity. In the open space strategy and action plan, when it comes to the application of open space standards, Melton Mowbray, Bottesford and Asfordby have been classified in the urban category and all other areas in the rural category.

## 4.2 Quantity, quality and distribution of open space

The audit of open space which took place between December 2023 and April 2024 has shown that there is significantly more accessible open space in the Borough of Melton than previously recorded. A total of 488 sites have been recorded. Many small open space sites occur in the town of Melton Mowbray and throughout the rest of the Borough. The largest typology in terms of number of sites is amenity green space (207 sites) followed by semi natural green space (61 sites). However, when considered as the total area in hectares, the largest area is for parks and gardens at 100 ha and semi natural green space at 92 ha. The average size of an individual open space is 0.7 ha.

## 4.3 Use, appreciation and accessibility of open space

The open consultation for stakeholders and all members of the public took place between 22 January and 4 March 2024. The consultation showed the use and appreciation of open space in the Borough of Melton. The responses demonstrate that open space across the Borough is widely appreciated and intensively used, both by residents and visitors. Open space is especially used to improve mental and physical health and wellbeing, to enjoy and appreciate nature and for community and social interaction. If given the option, respondents would like to see an increase in accessible natural green space, parks and public gardens. Provisions for amenity green space, sports, games and play follow as a second priority.

In terms of accessibility of open space, there are multiple concerns about previously accessible open spaces becoming inaccessible to the public. Respondents note areas of concern, where

there is not enough publicly accessible open space available. Areas with insufficiently accessible open space include particular locations in the Borough, but respondents also note larger areas with insufficiently accessible open space. Multiple respondents mention “a general increase of accessible open space is needed”, and particularly in and around new housing estates.

The community is actively involved and wants to keep being involved. Respondents note in detail the issues with particular open spaces and share their concerns on accessibility and free access, neglect and anti-social behaviour and their concerns for nature conservation and the environment. Melton Borough Council has a clear mandate from respondents and is expected to actively initiate open space provision and creation, enhancement and improvement, maintenance and management. Residents expect to be involved in this process, and to actively contribute to the protection and care for existing open spaces, and for the establishment of new open spaces.

Where particular concerns have been raised these have been added to the audit detail and action plan.

## 4.4 Melton Mowbray

The town of Melton Mowbray is by far the largest urban settlement in the Borough. There is a lack of connectivity between open space sites in Melton Mowbray meaning that their role as urban green infrastructure is poor. There are two exceptions to this: (i) Melton Country Park and (ii) the complex of closely connected parks including Egerton Park, New Park and Wilton Park managed by Melton Mowbray Town Estates. Both areas provide access to the countryside and other open spaces via the Public Rights of Way network. The absence of a large publicly accessible open recreational space to the south of the town is notable and the importance of the River Eye and the track bed of the former Midland Counties Railway significant as a green corridor. Distribution of open space is widespread with a tendency for the north east and the south west of the town to be best served.

## 4.5 Ownership and management of open space

Across the Borough of Melton, the ownership and management of open space fits into the following broad categories:

- a. Land held and managed by Melton Borough Council
- b. Land held and managed by Melton Mowbray Town Estate
- c. Land managed by Parish Councils
- d. Land held or managed by private sector developers and/or their contractors
- e. Land managed by utility providers or highway authority
- f. Land held or managed by institutional landowners which for the most part is not publicly accessible and outside the scope of this Strategy (e.g. school grounds)
- g. Land held by private individuals, small companies and/or agricultural land, which for the most part is not publicly accessible

- h. People volunteering informally to undertake site management without the knowledge of the Council or the landowner

## 4.6 Melton Mowbray Town Estate

Whilst not unique, it is nevertheless uncommon for there to be a historic 'Trust' responsible for a significant proportion of the Town's open spaces. The Melton Mowbray Town Estate states that it "contributes some £200,000 per year in the maintenance of the public parks and recreational grounds that it owns on the Townspeople's behalf and is the custodian of the town centre parkland ensuring the perpetual availability of this unique facility for the enjoyment of all".

## 4.7 Green flag award

The Green Flag Award®<sup>9</sup> scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. The purpose & aims of the award are:

- a. To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live
- b. To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve
- c. To establish standards of good management
- d. To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector
- e. To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers

The green flag award standard, even when it is not intended to apply for the award is advocated as an international mark of quality. In the 2024 audit of open space undertaken for the preparation of the strategy and included in the accompanying action plan sites that scored 80% higher were regarded as being of green flag award standard.

## 4.8 Melton Country Park

Melton Country Park is one of the largest single areas of open space in the Borough of Melton and much used. A 'friends of group' is active in promoting the Country Park and there is a strong sense of identity and pride in the site. The Country Park contains a wide variety of land use types including amenity grassland, play facilities, visitor facilities, meadows, hedgerows, woodland, open water and allotments amongst others. For the study metrics a decision was made to count the whole site as a 'park' rather than a semi-natural green space since amenity type grassland is the largest single land management unit within the site. Greater subdivision was considered but this would have impacted park provision across the whole town and

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.greenflagaward.org/>



potentially drawn the narrative away from other strategic arguments. However, the Country Park is illustrative of how various land management types can be wholly integrated on a site of this size and this is a template for elsewhere, notably in respect of new provision south of the town. What is clear is that sites of the extent and diversity of Melton Country Park are invaluable both to the community and nature.

## 4.9 Trees and Woodland

Whilst trees can be considered individually there are notable benefits when they are considered collectively. Taking the Borough of Melton as a whole, the amount of broadleaved woodland is low with a small number of ancient and semi-natural woodland. Whilst trees and woodland is not a separate typology there are veteran and landmark trees found in parks and other types of open space (such as accessible semi-natural green space and amenity green space) that are of great importance in the landscape. In new development existing trees should be protected whenever possible including during the construction phase and measures for this should feature in development briefs. Where permission is given to remove a mature tree to facilitate development, there needs to be a robust replacement policy, recognising the significant loss of ecosystem services. Trees and woodlands are considered in the Melton Green infrastructure strategy where an urban tree standard is proposed.

# Open space quality audit results

## 5.1 Methodology

The audit of open space took place between December 2023 and April 2024. Two experienced surveyors undertook the field audit to ensure consistency. Information was recorded on site and any anomalies resolved in the office or by comparison with remote sources. The information collected was added to a spreadsheet as the basis for the action plan and mapped using a geographical information system (GIS). It should be noted that for an amenity open/green space to be recorded, it needs to be publicly accessible and normally free to enter (car parking charges, on-site facilities can be fee paying). Temporary closure (for example, for a Bonfire in November) or occasional paid for entry (e.g. Village fete) is also acceptable.

## 5.2 Headline findings

Four headline findings are recorded here:

- a. A total of 488 sites have been recorded. This is a considerable increase (151%) since the audit undertaken for the Melton Open Space Assessment Report, (2014). This is a result of improved access to remotely available information (GIS), satellite mapping and a thorough field audit.
- b. The quality of green open space management is very high throughout the Borough, which is a credit to all those involved in the municipality, parishes, other stakeholders and communities
- c. The results of the consultation make it clear that the Melton Borough Council has a clear mandate from respondents to actively initiate (i) open space provision and creation, (ii) enhancement and improvement, (iii) maintenance and management.
- d. That sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) needs to be considered within the framework of the open space audit and that this strategy includes guidance for both developers and planning officers.

## 5.3 Site size

For the open space strategy and action plan clear decisions have been made about what is and is not included as a publicly accessible open green space. This should ensure that any future updates by other consultants understand the methodology used in this assessment.

Three locations were considered as urban for the purposes of the open green space audit (NOTE: this does not imply that this should be reflected in other strategies unrelated to open space); namely Melton Mowbray, Bottesford and Asfordby. In these settlements there is no firmly established minimum site size. In practice this does not imply that every possible site has been recorded as professional auditors are instructed to use their background experience to decide whether a small location justifies inclusion or not.

Hence there is no lower limit area for open green space in Melton Mowbray, Bottesford and Asfordby however with respect to the typology 'Amenity Green space' there are exceptions. To qualify as 'amenity green space' the site should include at least two of the following:

- a. Boundary treatment (fence, hedge etc)
- b. Seating that is purposeful
- c. Paths/hardstanding
- d. Art works
- e. Interpretation (e.g. includes panels or other media explaining about local heritage and nature – interpretation has both educational and awareness raising function)
- f. Facilities such as dog bins
- g. On-site evidence of regular community recreational use (for example, dog exercise)
- h. Amenity green space which includes a memorial.

The rest of the Borough is classed as rural here sites less than 100 m<sup>2</sup> (100 x 100 metres [0.01 hectares]) are not recorded if they are classified in the typology as 'amenity green space' unless there is a substantial landscape connectivity of amenity open space between proximate smaller sites which justifies to a lay person being treated as a whole and that the total combined area exceeds 100 m<sup>2</sup> and includes two of the following:

- a. Boundary treatment (fence, hedge etc)
- b. Seating that is purposeful
- c. Paths/hardstanding
- d. Art works
- i. Interpretation (e.g. includes panels or other media explaining about local heritage and nature – interpretation has both educational and awareness raising function)
- e. Facilities such as dog bins
- f. On-site evidence of regular community recreational use (for example, dog, exercise)
- g. Amenity green space less than 100 m<sup>2</sup>, which includes a memorial.

Amenity green space less than 100 m<sup>2</sup> which is being used as a non-pitch sports facility is recorded and a note made in the audit and action plan that it is being used as a kickabout area, recreation ground and is normally classified as a multi-use games areas (MUGA).

## 5.4 Audit results by typology

Typology	No. of Sites	Total Area (Ha)
Allotments	47	21.31
Amenity Green space (including SuDS)	207	49.45
Churchyards and Cemeteries	74	30.29
Parks & Gardens	10	100.86
Provision for Children & Young people	81	42.42
Semi Natural Green space	61	92.15
Non-Pitch Sports Facility	8	16.34
	<b>488</b>	<b>352.8</b>

Table 5: The number of sites in total area in hectares included in the audit of open space in 2024.

## 5.5 Audit results by quality

Band	Scoring	Total No. of Sites	% of Audited Sites	No. of sites per typology						
				Allotment Total = 47	Amenity Green space Total = 207	Churchyards and Cemeteries (Total = 74)	Non pitch Sports Facility Total = 8	Park & Gardens Total = 10	Provision for Children & Young People Total = 81	Semi Natural Green space Total = 61
A	Scores > 80%	62	13	2 (5%)	17 (8%)	10 (13%)	2 (25%)	7 (70%)	18 (22%)	7 (11%)
B	Scores 70 - 79%	250	51	11(23%)	103 (50%)	48(64%)	5 (63%)	2 (20%)	52 (64%)	30 (49%)
C	Scores 60 - 69%	166	34	31 (66%)	85 (41%)	16 (22%)	1 (12%)	1 (10%)	11 (14%)	20 (33%)
D	Scores 50 - 59 %	10	2	3 (6%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)
E	Scores < 50%	0	0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	488	100	47	207	74	8	10	81	61

Table 6: Audit results by quality. The quality of sites in the Borough of Melton is good to outstanding and no sites were found in the poor category (E).

## 5.6 Commentary on the quality audit

The results of the quality audit are good to outstanding. This is an excellent basis for moving forward with the management of open space in the Borough of Melton in the years ahead.

Strategic component	Band	Statement
Quality	Band A; 80% plus	<b>Outstanding</b> equivalent to 'green flag' or 'green pennant' standard
	Band B; 70 – 80%	<b>Very good</b> with small deficiencies. Normally small investments and management changes can raise the site to the 'outstanding' category.
	Band C; 60 –70%	<b>Good</b> with a few more notable deficiencies. Sometimes these sites may be 'aged' and require refreshing.
	Band D; 50 – 60%	<b>Average</b> with notable deficiencies and requiring more notable interventions.
	Band E: <50%	<b>Poor</b> , there are presently none in this category in Melton. Sites in this category require detailed site investigation, planning which can lead to proposals to rejuvenate or dispose of the site.

Table 7: Commentary on the audit of quality the statement gives a brief description of management actions and the need for interventions. Further details are provided in the accompanying action plan.

# Quantity Standards

## 6.1 Sources

The evidence base for the open space quantity and access standards are drawn from the following major sources:

- a. Benchmarking with national guidance: sources consulted to identify recommended standards. Notable in this regard are 'Fields in Trust' Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard guidelines.
- b. Benchmarking with other local authorities using the CIFPA database to comparative local authorities.
- c. Reflecting existing provision and quality assessment derived from the audit of sites
- d. Amended through consultation; and
- e. A review of existing relevant documents in Melton

The evidence base reflects an estimated population of 51,800 for the Borough of Melton a population density of 108/Km<sup>2</sup> and a population projection for 2039 of 57,829<sup>10</sup>.

The source of the quantity standard data is shown in Table 8 below

Site identification number on action plan	Source	TOTAL with survey numbers	TOTAL in 2024 MD2 Survey or re-surveyed 2023/24	
10001 to 10131	Survey and audit of sites undertaken for Melton Mowbray between 2019 & 2020.	131	131	21
10132 to 10324	2015 Open Space strategy	194	153	153
10325 to 10534	New and re-numbered sites added 2023/2024	205	205	205
			<b>488</b>	<b>378</b>

Table 8: All sites have been reclassified in the database and action plan. A total of 378 sites were audited between December 2023 and April 2024.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.melton.gov.uk/media/aqcbxanj/2024-state-of-melton-online.pdf>

## 6.2 Assumptions

When having to translate national standards expressed on a per household basis reference published rates have been used<sup>11</sup>.

## 6.3 Fields in Trust (FiT) Guidelines

A key source for open space standards is the [Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard](#). Using this current guidance helps ensure that the provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; is in an accessible location and near dwellings; and is of a quality that maintains longevity and to encourage its continued use.

Beyond the Six Acre Standard recommends that Equipped/Designated Play Spaces be promoted in the form of<sup>12</sup>:

- a. Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children.
- b. Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently; and
- c. Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) aimed at older children.

These are complemented by other facilities including Multiuse Games Areas (MUGAs) and skateboard parks etc. FiT benchmark guidelines for open space and equipped play areas and recommendations for informal recreation reflect the findings of the survey of local standards for open space applied by local planning authorities. FiT accessibility guidelines are provided as walking distance from dwellings. Indicative walking distances are determined from the accessibility guidelines and are set out below.

- a. 250m = 2 – 3 minutes' walk
- b. 400m = 5 minutes' walk
- c. 800m = 10 minutes' walk
- d. 1,200m = 15 minutes' walk
- e. 1,600m = 20 minutes' walk

It should be recognised that when applying these benchmarks, local features and obstacles to pedestrian and cycle movement should be considered. In doing so, accessible and sustainable play and sport facilities will be maximised.

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<sup>11</sup> For allotments the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' national average of 2.2 persons per household

<sup>12</sup> For more information: <https://fieldsintrust.org/insights/policy-hub/guidance-for-outdoor-sport-play>

## 6.4 Overview of existing quantity and access standards

The April 2015 quantity and access standards covering green space types for the Borough of Melton are summarised in Table 9 below.

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	Quantity standard (Hectares per 1,000 population unless indicated otherwise)	Access standard (measured in straight line)	
Amenity Green space	0.63	10 minutes or 800 metres	
Parks and gardens	2.08	15-minute walk or 1,200 metres	10-minute drive in rural areas
Allotments	0.26	15-minute walk or 1,200m	15-minute drive in rural areas
Provision for children and young people.	0.13	10-minute walk or 800m	10-minute drive in rural areas
Natural and semi-natural green space	0.29	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute drive in rural areas
TOTAL open space (sum of above)	3.39	Not applicable	Not applicable

Table 9: Quantity and access standard as set in 2015 which has now been replaced with a higher and more robust standard to meet increasing demand especially in respect of climate change, Biodiversity loss and new sustainable communities.

Examination of the access standards undertaken for the 2020 Open Space strategy and audit for Melton Mowbray of the Melton Borough Council's statistical 'Nearest Neighbours' and those of Fields in Trust (FiT) revealed a strong argument that quantity and access standards in Melton should be enhanced. Some areas stand out for improvement with respect of the response to climate change too, for instance the minute-drive standard is considered inappropriate as it directs users to drive to sites. An alternative is to set a 'cycle time' although it should be noted that this has implications for future cycle infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. However, the advent of electrically assisted bicycles has greatly enhanced the ability of people in rural areas and villages to travel to open space locations.

Considering the parallel policy on green infrastructure the standard for natural/semi natural space set in 2015 is low. This type of open space is essential to climate adaptation and a significant opportunity exists for the creation of sites within sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) locations when new development is proposed. It is therefore recommended that this category receives significant enhancement which implies the creation of new 'semi-natural green space.' If implemented in association with connectivity and multifunctionality considerations, it will also enhance the Green Infrastructure network.

When applying standards for walking distance (a linear measure), the calculation should consider approved pedestrian crossing points. Hence, a site that is within a distance boundary but nevertheless requires a walk that is much greater is not fully compliant hence each site needs to be considered on an individual basis. Thus, the application of access standards is

nuanced and, in most cases, where development is involved, this will involve a discussion with the local planning authority to agree on access routes.

## 6.5 Quantity and access standards 2024 and beyond

The proposed access standards for the Borough of Melton Local Plan are set out below. These take account of good practice, national guidance, results of consultation, the 2015 strategy and the 2020 updated strategy for the town of Melton Mowbray. Table 10 below replaces all previous quantity and access standards.

Open space typology	Quantity standard 2020 (hectares per 1,000 population)	Access standard 2020 (measured in straight line)		Recommended quantity standard 2024 (hectares per 1,000 population unless indicated otherwise)	Recommended access standard 2024 (taking into account safe crossing points)	
Allotments and community growing spaces	0.30	15-minute drive in rural areas		0.30	In urban areas 15-minute walk or 1,200 metres	15-minute drive in rural areas
Amenity Green space	0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres		0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres	
Parks and gardens	2.08	10-minute walk or 800 metres	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas	2.08	In urban areas 10-minute walk or 800 metres	In rural area 15-minute cycle ride in or 5,000 metres
Provision for children and young people.	0.25	10-minute walk or 800m	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas	0.25	In urban areas 10-minute walk or 800m	In rural areas 15-minute cycle ride or 5,000 metres
Semi-natural green space	1.80	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute cycle ride in rural areas	1.80	In urban areas 10-minute walk or 800 metres	In rural areas 20-minute cycle ride or 6,500 metres
Total open space (sum of above)	5.03	Not applicable	Not applicable	5.03	Not applicable	

Table 10: Quantity and access standards for 2024 to 2039.

## 6.6 Application of access standards 2024 to 2039 based on population.

Table 11 shows the application of access standards based on existing and prospective population growth in the Borough of Melton up until 2039.



1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Typology	No. of sites	Area (Ha)	2024 Provision (total ha) per 1000 Head of population based on a population of 51,800	2039 Provision (total ha) Assume open space stays static at 2020 level based on anticipated population of 57,829	Policy EN7 Open Space Quantity Standard - 2020	2020 Access Standard	2024 Open Space Quantity Standard	2024 Open Space Access Standard
2	Allotments and community growing space	47	21.31	0.41	0.37	0.30	15 min walk/1200m or 15 min drive (rural)	0.30	15-minute walk or 1,200m in urban areas 15-minute drive in rural areas
3	Amenity Green Space	207	49.45	0.95	0.86	0.60	10 min walk or 800m	0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres
4	Cemeteries / Churchyards	74	30.29	0.58	0.52	No standard	No standard	No standard	No standard
5	Non pitch sports facility	8	16.34	0.32	0.28	No standard	No standard	No standard	No standard
6	Parks & Gardens	10	100.86	1.95	1.74	2.08	15 min walk/1,200m/10 min drive (rural)	2.08	10-minute walk or 800m 15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
7	Provision for Children & Young People	81	42.42	0.82	0.73	0.25	10 min walk or 800m, 10 min drive (rural)	0.25	10-minute walk or 800m 15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
8	Semi-natural Green space	61	92.15	1.78	1.59	1.80	10 min walk/800m/20 min drive (rural)	1.80	10-minute walk or 800m 20-minute cycle ride in rural areas
9	Playing Pitches (refer to PPS)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
10	Football pitches (refer to PPS)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.41	n/a	n/a	n/a
11	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>352.80</b>					<b>5.03</b>	

Table 11: In this table, the access standards have been applied to the results of the audit and quantity provision. See section 6.7 for further guidance on interpreting this table.

## 6.7 Interpreting the access standards table

Colour coding as follow; Red is below standard, Grey there is no standard set, Green is above standard, Blue is the updated standard (updated from 2015).

- A1 to A8 are the typologies used in the Melton Mowbray 2024 Strategy.
- A9 – A11 are from the 2015 Open Space Strategy are no longer counted in open space strategies and are referred to the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

- c. Column B is the number of sites identified in the 2024 audit.
- d. Column C is the area in hectares identified in the 2024 open space audit.
- e. Column D is the ratio of population to typology area for 2024 based on the 2021 census population of 51,800.
- f. Column E is based on no increase in open space between 2024 and 2039 based on the estimated population of Melton in 2039 as 57,829.
- g. Colours in Columns D & E indicate where the provision is below recommended minimum level (red) or ahead of the recommended minimum level (green).
- h. Column F are the quantity standards applied in policy EN7 which are derived from the 2020 Open Space Strategy.
- i. Column G gives the access standards derived from the 2020 Open Space Strategy.
- j. Column H gives the 2024 Open Space quantity standards recommended for the next policy EN7 update.
- k. Column I gives the 2024 Open Space access standards recommended for the next policy EN7 update.
- l. Note that red text is for the urban area of Melton Mowbray, Asfordby and Bottesford and green text for rural areas.
- m. B11 is the total number of sites in the 2024 audit.
- n. C11 is the total area of open space in the 2024 audit.
- o. H11 is the total open space quantity recommended for Melton.
- p. G8 Note that the Provision for children and young people standard is shown for NEAP's. For LAP's the figure is 100m and LEAP's 400m.

## 6.8 Implications of the access standard for quantity provision

For the categories of (i) allotments and community growing space and (ii) amenity green space the current provision is ahead of standard until 2039 based on population projections. However local deficiencies can exist and should be considered by the Council in making local planning decisions. This can be mapped using the authorities GIS system, based on the location data provided by this audit.

The provision of parks and gardens is already below standard, and this will be exacerbated by population growth. The demand will be focused on growth hubs, such as new sustainable communities, where new provision will be needed.

Care is needed in interpreting the provision for Children & Young People. Based on the NEAPs categorisation (play areas for larger children) the Borough is well catered for under the population projections, however with regards to Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children and Locally equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently it is inevitable that local deficits will exist due to the access distances. The demand will be focused on growth hubs, hence new provision will be needed and is likely to be targeted.

The deficit in semi natural green space is a factor in the distribution of green infrastructure and the Council's climate change priorities. It is thought that an opportunity exists to increase this typology based on the sustainable urban drainage schemes (SuDS) in new development. In terms of design, consideration should be given to how new provision is linked to other green corridors both on-site and offsite as identified in the green infrastructure strategy and green infrastructure action plan.

# Open space strategy

## 7.1 Vision statement 2024 - 2039

Over the next 25 years, the aim is to ensure that accessible, green and open spaces in the Borough of Melton deliver the most benefits to residents and visitors whilst simultaneously contributing to the Borough's green infrastructure network, especially to benefit nature and help the Borough address the challenges of climate change.

## 7.2 What is an open space strategy

The definition of a strategy "is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim". Hence the aim of this strategy is to outline the actions necessary to achieve a stated open space aim. That aim is to maintain and whenever possible enhance open space quality. This strategy is focused on 'accessible' open space.

## 7.3 Quality strategy

Quality is the main determinant of user satisfaction in open space. Since a key focus of open space is amenity and recreation then 'quality' should be regarded as the first priority ahead of quantity and access where funding and management choices are required.

The audit of existing open space undertaken in the preparation of this strategy has been banded in categories from A (outstanding) to E (poor). At the time of the 2023/2024 audit there were no sites in the poor category (E) and a strong positive trend from good to outstanding. This is an excellent basis for moving forward but also challenging to ensure that there is no backward drift.

To ensure that quality is maintained it is recommended that the Council undertakes an audit of its open space every five to seven years.

Since the quality of sites in Melton are good to outstanding, this is a strong foundation for maintaining quality. There are good reasons to maintain high quality:

- a. Site usage, as measured by the number of visits and repeat visits, is higher when the site is of a good quality, this brings wider benefits in respect of community health and wellbeing.
- b. A greater mix of people use sites of good quality, hence there is less social exclusion.
- c. It is a lower cost to maintain a site in a good condition than to let it decline and then invest a large amount of money to return it to a good quality.
- d. Good quality sites are more likely to secure the interest and involvement of community volunteers in its maintenance and in running events.
- e. Larger good quality sites are a tourism asset and contribute to the visitor economy and

- f. Quality allows the Council and its partners to seek recognition in the form of awards and grants and which, in turn, builds 'pride-in-place' in the community.

'Fields in Trust' have issued quality guidelines and these are recommended as the principles of quality management in the Borough of Melton. The list below is an embellished version of these guidelines:

- a. Parks should be of 'Green Flag' status or equivalent. This should include not only premium parks but all formal parks and gardens. This can be considered as a litmus-test of the Council's resolve to place quality about quantity. The checklist for 'Green Flag' is recommended as an ongoing tool for quality assurance even when the award is not being sought:-
- A welcoming place.
  - Healthy, safe and secure.
  - Clean and well maintained.
  - Sustainable.
  - Conservation and heritage.
  - Community involvement.
  - Marketing; and
  - Management.
- b. Open space should be appropriately landscaped for example by appropriate use of trees and shrubs (the 'right tree in the right place') and in pursuit of the Council's green infrastructure strategy and climate policies.
- c. Multifunctionality and connectivity of open spaces should be pursued as these bring the most benefit to the Borough wide green infrastructure network.
- d. Consideration should be given to minimise hard surfaces and open space soils should be carefully managed for porosity and other ecosystem service benefits. For example, when undertaking works on green open spaces, heavy machinery should not be used without ground protection to spread weight loads.
- e. There should be positive (as opposed to reactive) management in place for all sites and regular reviews. A review implies a discussion about how to maximise the benefits of each site.
- f. Open space sites should include the provision of paths with access to all as an objective. Ideally these should be linked to the public rights of way network (PRoW). Leicestershire County Council keeps a record of public rights of way.
- g. Fear of crime or harm should be designed out, wherever practicably possible.

The current situation in the Borough of Melton is the result of management decisions, investments and regular maintenance over many years. Notwithstanding existing skill sets, Table 12 and 13 give recommendations on maintaining quality.

Audits	A quality audit should be undertaken of all open space on a regular basis to check that quality is being maintained. It is suggested that an independent quality audit is undertaken every five to seven years. This	Commission financial year 2029/2029 (or 2030/2031 or 2031/2032)
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	<p>does not imply a full strategy review. Site reviews should take place regularly to consider how to maximize the benefits each site can provide. To manage and forget is not a good strategy as needs and opportunities change with time.</p>	
Celebrating success	<p>Using open space for civic pride also drives up quality. Aspiring for awards and recognition is not limited to the largest sites. Key sites above the 80% threshold should be considered for the Green Flag or Green Flag Community award. The Borough Council could consider setting up its own community award scheme targeted at local groups.</p>	<p>It is recommended that owners of key sites (i.e. larger and most prominent sites) that are above the 80% quality score in the audit seek 'Green Flag' status and for smaller sites 'Green Flag Community Award' where there is notable community participation.</p>
Community engagement	<p>There are many reasons beyond simple maintenance of quality, why community engagement is beneficial. Volunteering does for example, lead to more social connectivity in neighbourhoods which can help reduce personal isolation. In addition, physical exercise out of doors can improve health and well-being.</p> <p>Volunteers should not be exploited or given tasks beyond their means, nor should they be asked to simply undertake repeated mundane tasks, such as litter-picks (although these may be part of it), especially when their skill sets can achieve more added value.</p> <p>'Friends of' groups where they exist, should be supported by the Council and where there are none present, the Council could consider supporting the creation of new groups. Small grants can help local groups (for example to purchase hand tools).</p> <p>The Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV) offers an insurance scheme for local groups that become members. Melton in Bloom are keen to involve the community more through projects to maintain open space.</p>	<p>It is recommended that Melton Borough Council seeks to increase the number of community volunteers involved in open space site care including supporting these groups with 'small grants' and providing access to technical knowledge, hand tools, safety training, skills training and group insurance.</p>
Contractors and 'own workforce'	<p>The use of contractors to meet specialist needs (such as high-level tree pruning) is desirable if such activities can be programmed in advance. Contractors should hold all necessary certificates for works and commissioners should ensure that the contractor operates good employment policies and has health and safety policies in place.</p>	<p>It is recommended that Melton Borough Council have a procedure in place for annual quality review of sites in its ownership which inter alia links to an annual programme of quality improvements.</p> <p>With respect to the quality bands (B - E <i>there are presently none in E</i>) as shown in the audit spreadsheet the aim is to seek to increase quality within five (5) years.</p>
Equipment	<p>Playground equipment should be replaced regularly before deterioration starts to impact on site usage. There is no 'hard and fast' rule on replacing equipment and assessment of sites should take place on an ongoing basis. However, play equipment typically has a life of 15 years, although this varies with the type</p>	<p>It is recommended that open space providers should seek to replace equipment (i.e. play equipment, signage etc) prior to them becoming visibly deteriorated or excessively weathered.</p>

	of equipment, quality of construction, levels of use and exposure to weathering.	
Events and activities	Open space is already used for events and activities which can create a sense of ownership in sites as well as a desire to see quality maintained. Furthermore, it can be argued that events and activities are in themselves an inherent element of site quality.	These are to be encouraged as they can provide for community cohesion and raise money for good causes. Some events such as music festivals can be used to generate monies to invest back into management of sites.
Inhouse open space services	Having an in-house service for the management of open space is of notable value to the Melton Borough Council. It allows for quick reaction time when problems are reported as well as the acquisition of 'deep knowledge' over time. The high quality of open space found in this audit bears witness to this approach. Accordingly, the Council is strongly advised to maintain an in-house service.	It is recommended that the management of new sites provided through development should be vested in the Melton Borough Council with finance to meet management costs provided in line with the Developers Contributions SPD. This removes variability from development to development and brings with it democratic oversight.
Multifunctionality	Open space often does much more than providing access to residents. Placing a value on open space can be complicated, but some of the less apparent services (sometimes referred to as ecosystem services) can be highly beneficial in justifying investment in site quality. For example, soils on open space sites offer significant benefits to local areas during periods of localised flooding as soak away areas. Multifunctionality of all sites can be improved often by marginal changes and at very little cost.	Those involved in the planning and management of open space should receive training in the concept and management of green infrastructure networks. The importance of connectivity, multifunctionality and ecosystem services are important concepts for open space professionals to understand.
New sites linked to development	The Borough of Melton will see urban growth in the next 15 years resulting from the creation of new sustainable neighbourhoods. Within these neighbourhoods, there will be new open space created. Management of open spaces should be considered not only in the short term (1 – 10 years) but beyond. If the management is to be undertaken by contractors, developers need to be held to account for the quality of the management. This is a duty of inspection that will fall on Melton Borough Council. If the open space is to be transferred to the Council in the short term or long term, adequate financial provision should be made through developer contributions to meet the Council's future management costs.	It is recommended that open space schemes associated with new development should be quality assured by the Melton Borough Council through regular development control visits. It may be necessary for development control officers at Melton Borough Council to be given training in open space assessment. Failure by developers to meet quality obligations should either be penalised when legally possible or their company's poor practice named and revealed.

Table 12: Strategic recommendations to maintain quality. Quality is the highest priority in terms of accessible open green space.

Strategic component	Band	Statement	Proposal and trajectory
Quality	Band A; 80% plus	<u>Outstanding</u> equivalent to 'green flag' or 'green pennant' standard	Maintain standard
	Band B; 70 – 80%	<u>Very good</u> with small deficiencies. Normally small investments and management changes can raise the site to the 'outstanding' category.	Plan and invest to move up to Band A within 5 to 7 years
	Band C; 60 – 70%	<u>Good</u> with a few more notable deficiencies. Sometimes these sites may be 'aged' and require refreshing.	Plan and invest to move up to Band B within 5 to 7 years
	Band D; 50 – 60%	<u>Average</u> with notable deficiencies and requiring more notable interventions.	Investigation required leading to plans to move up to band C, B or A.
	Band E; <50%	<u>Poor</u> , there are presently none in this category in Melton. Sites in this category require detailed site investigation, planning which can lead to proposals to rejuvenate or dispose of the site.	Detailed Investigation – investment to move up to band C, B or A or disposal and re-invest elsewhere.

Table 13: Strategic recommendations on lifting quality over a five-year period. Whilst the trajectory is towards Band A - realistically having all sites between bands A and C is a good achievement. Hence band D sites are a priority to investigate for improvement.

## 7.4 Quantity strategy

New standards have been set for the quantity of open space in the Borough of Melton based on a benchmarking exercise. The new standards are not intended to be sector leading as this is considered spatially and financially unrealistic. Nevertheless, the quantity standards, which should be considered as a minimum rather than a maximum, present challenges to meet and deliver. It is anticipated that some of the quantity standards can be fulfilled by reclassification of sites. Potential 'candidate sites' for reclassification will however require further investigation and community consultation. Other new sites will need to be delivered through development schemes and/or attracting private sector investment, new public expenditure by the Melton Borough Council or by attracting lottery funds or via some combination of all of these delivery mechanisms.

Priority has been given to 'quality of open space' in this Open Space Strategy. Therefore, any new open space created to meet the quantity standards should be able to be properly managed, not just in the short term, but the longer term too. This is especially important when it comes to schemes delivered through development of the new sustainable neighbourhoods, where the Melton Borough Council clearly has a lead role to ensure that where open space is provided, delivery can be through, for example, S106 funding, so that the open space created is not only suitable for community use, but is multifunctional, achieved through approved designs and is also affordable to manage over the long term.

Developers should also be strongly encouraged to provide new open space connected to the Borough's fragmented green infrastructure network as well as new include functional green



infrastructure in site design. These measures are normally referred to as ‘Nature Based Solutions’ (NbS) of which sustainable urban drainage is the best known.

It would be undesirable, for the Borough of Melton to fall below the quantity standard for a given type of open space, especially if the consequence of an increase in quantity was to reduce quality overall.

There are two key findings related to the quantity of open space. The first is the need for a significant new provision of parkland/semi-natural green space in the town of Melton Mowbray for the following reasons: (i) to balance spatial distribution in Melton; (ii) the proposed location of sustainable neighbourhoods; (iii) the route of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) and (iv) because of the wider benefits that green infrastructure can deliver. Once the opportunity to acquire a large area of new land may be prohibitive an investigation of a linear ‘necklace park’ concept could be explored<sup>13</sup>.

The second key finding is that the distribution of open space is fragmentary from a green infrastructure policy perspective (EN3). Green infrastructure has become a major theme in planning and is seen as a way of tackling some notable challenges in both urban and rural areas. The key recommendation in terms of open space is to link these together as much as possible. Consequently, in both planning and design new open space should be used to link existing open space locations together. Where there is a choice, the most connected open space should be preferred. Table 14 shows strategic interventions and policy points for quantity.

<b>Strategic Intervention</b>	<b>Policy points</b>	<b>Opportunity/approach</b>
Meeting standards	It is recommended that Melton Borough Council use the Open Space Action Plan to guide the redesign and reclassification of selected sites to meet existing deficiencies in quantity in other typologies. Although ahead of standard it is NOT recommended that provision for children and young people is included in this exercise since standards are considered as a target minimum and the good provision for children and young people is considered a key requirement.	This opportunity exists only in the category of 'amenity green space', to reclassify to either (i) allotments & community growing spaces and (ii) semi-natural green space. If these options are pursued a re-design brief for each location will be required and must be consulted on with residents before a final scheme is progressed.
Green infrastructure and the link to Open Space	It is recommended that the Melton Borough Council put in place plans to increase the multifunctionality of sites in its ownership as a response to Green Infrastructure policy EN3 and the declaration of the climate emergency. The	Where new sites are delivered either through development or by other means a high priority should be given to the creation of sites that offer the most multifunctionality and connectivity so as to assist in the delivery of policy EN3 and well as EN7 and second priority to meeting deficiencies in typology or location.

<sup>13</sup> For an international example see <https://www.emeraldnecklace.org/park-overview/>

	first target for treatment being amenity green space sites.	
Parks and gardens	In the town of Melton Mowbray, it is recommended that a new urban park or several smaller urban parks are created within the timeframe of the Local Plan totalling circa 10 hectares.	A minimum size of 2 hectares is considered necessary if new parks are to act differently to amenity green space. Parks can be considered as excursion destinations whereas amenity green space is essentially local amenity for neighbourhoods.
Melton Mowbray sustainable communities south	It is recommended that Melton Borough Council commit to the creation of a new urban fringe open space site on the southern outskirts of the town	A land search and a further consulting commission is required. The ideal location would be accessible on foot or bicycle from the new sustainable neighbourhoods. The character of the site to be semi-natural green space and parkland with an opportunity to locate facilities including play areas. Consideration to be given to the creation of a necklace park.
Developer contributions	It is recommended that developer contributions beyond those required for maintaining quality are focused on (i) meeting deficiencies in open space typologies that are below the quantity standard and with a preference for sites that provide green space connectivity, (ii) LAPs and LEAPs within sustainable neighbourhoods, noting however that NEAPs can be co-located with new urban parks and (iii) pooled wherever possible.	Developer contributions should be linked to development policies in Local Plan. It is recommended that developers should seek to use nature-based solutions (NbS) in their developments which could be used as open space beyond normal developer contributions, but would not apply to the quantity formula. This would be evidence of developers taking the term 'sustainable neighbourhoods' seriously. There are many proven turn-key NbS technologies available.

Table 14 Strategic interventions and policy points for maintaining and increasing quantity.

## 7.5 Access strategy

Access to open space is vital because the benefits that can accrue to individuals and communities include health and well-being, sensory experiences and being close to nature.

Access to open spaces frequently require users to cross main roads. The situation precipitates pedestrian safety issues, with extended journeys to traverse roads at formal, safe crossing points. This should be accounted for when calculating the distance from a residential area to an open space.

To reduce car use as the only option to access open spaces - cycling distance is now being used as an access standard. This is becoming even more so as the Melton Borough Council is considering how best to respond to climate change. In practical terms the increasing use of electric bicycles is allowing for greater distances and also increased mobility for persons who may have moved beyond pedal cycling. Realistically however, it should be assumed for planning proposes that many users will continue to access larger open space sites by car. Consequently, adequate on-site parking will be needed at key sites, including new sites, otherwise feeder roads will become heavily congested and resident complaints are likely to rise.

Facilities such a cycle hire and car/cycle electric recharging stations could also be positioned at larger open spaces.

Regarding provision for children and young people, the distance standard for LAPs and LEAPs will precipitate a need for new accessible provision within sustainable neighbourhoods, even though the quantity standard suggests that provision overall in the existing urban area is good. The situation with NEAPs is however different and such sites should be focused into honeypot locations, such as larger urban parks run by the Borough Council/Town Council/Parish Council. Table 15 shows strategic interventions and policy points for access.

<b>Strategic Intervention</b>	<b>Policy points</b>	<b>Opportunity/approach</b>
Adopting access standards	It is recommended that Melton Borough Council adopts the new access standards in this strategy.	To be applied in new sustainable neighbourhoods and wider development across the Borough.
Localised access deficits	It is recommended that in decision making on the locations of new urban parks and semi natural green space, that localised deficits are considered in the location planning process for these.	Link to Council priorities and investment opportunities.
Access for children and young people	New LAPs and LEAPs should be in the sustainable neighbourhoods but that NEAPs are focused on key larger locations including urban parks	Link to Council priorities, development briefs and investment opportunities.

Table 15: Strategic interventions and policy points for access.

## 7.6 Finance strategy

Open space functions are mostly non-statutory and across England there is evidence to suggest that they are vulnerable to spending cuts. However, investment in Open Space is generally modest in comparison with other infrastructure and the return in terms of health, wellbeing and community benefits are very significant. Furthermore, investments are normally popular with residents. Income generation can help offset some costs especially when it comes to capital expenditure but is unlikely to wholly bridge funding gaps; in short, the Melton Borough Council, Town and Parish Councils (and in Melton Mowbray the Town Estate too), will remain the main source of revenue expenditure for the foreseeable future. Where capital funding is required development contributions are a key source and for restoration and refurbishment the Heritage Fund. There will also be opportunities for the Borough of Melton to apply for challenge funding, although success rates vary considerably.

A degree of commercialisation can generate ‘offset funds’ and bring increased activities to larger open spaces. There are numerous ways to achieve this and some of the most popular are already present in the Borough such as cafes. Across England there are innumerable other fee-generating examples including sport and recreation, minor retail outlets, high ropes courses,

outdoor markets such as street food, flea markets, art markets, music and theatre including promenade events and festivals.

Sponsorship of open space by companies can sometimes be an option when they are eager to promote their marketing information at key visual points. Open space is also a resource for corporate events ranging from entertaining business guests through to staff development.

The Borough Council should be entrepreneurial in meeting future challenges with respect to its own open space management service. This is generally characterised by increasing its role as an enabler, facilitator and commissioner of services, being adept at partnership working especially with private operators, strong on marketing and communications and focused on attracting grants and funds from outside the area, which are normally secured through competitive processes.

Capital reinvestment in facilities is needed to maintain quality. In respect of play equipment, signage and seating, it is recommended that these are normally replaced after 15 years. The Council should also practice full cost recovery when offering services both internally and externally. The full cost of an activity or output or project is the direct costs of the activity and the appropriate portion of all other costs of that service. There will always be exceptions to this so a discretionary approach maybe needed. See table 16 for strategic interventions and policy points for finance.

<b>Strategic Intervention</b>	<b>Policy points</b>	<b>Opportunity/approach</b>
Being entrepreneurial	It is recommended that there is an increase in commercial activity in open spaces but only to a level which does not compromise free access or devalue a sites attractiveness.	The Council should maintain a good understanding of total cost and practice 'full cost recovery' in delivering services and site usage and ensure that its internal processes are entrepreneurial in their approach.
Avoiding irreversible decisions	Melton Borough Council should avoid irreversible decisions that dispose of open space that has not been fully evaluated and considered as an asset.	Whereas the principle to transfer land management of municipal open space to alternative providers is conceivable (it has happened in other local authorities) the Melton Borough Council should unerringly retain the ownership of sites under its control. Neither is this transfer of management responsibility recommended as a way forward.
Time expired equipment	It is recommended that a plan for replacement of 'time expired' play and other equipment on Council owned or operated sites is maintained and funded by the Council. The Council should actively seek external funding for capital projects.	Link to Council priorities, development briefs and investment opportunities.
Role of Parish and Town Councils	Parish and Town Councils are already playing a key role in the management and upkeep of open	There is an opportunity for multi-organisation funding bids to be made to external providers, when capital reinvestments are needed (e.g. play equipment).

	space in the Borough of Melton. This is to be celebrated and continued.	
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Table 16: Strategic interventions and policy points for finance.

## 7.7 Events strategy

Open space such as urban parks, allotments and natural sites (i.e. semi-natural green space) are highly suited as event venues. Events in open spaces can perform a wide range of functions; the most important of which include:

- Introducing new users to sites, to encourage repeat visits. There is some research evidence that this approach can lead to increased participation by hard-to-reach groups.
- Support educational and training activities, especially in raising understanding of the facilities available in each open space.
- Foster environmental education (e.g. forest schools).
- Host family and ‘fun’ events, which deliver social cohesion.
- Promote demonstration events like handicrafts and the work of local micro-businesses.
- Encourage introductory sessions for new activities that people can participate in, such as growing and nurturing plants and saplings and learning about basic horticulture.
- Provide venues for skills training, especially manual dexterity, horticulture and urban forestry.
- Host festivals, theatre, music and arts performances, which attract large regional audiences, and which support the visitor economy.
- Precipitate greater awareness of local authority services and support local studies.
- Increase community pride.
- Attract visitors from outside of the locality by providing a ‘showcasing’ opportunity with associated economic benefits through visitor spending.
- Providing a social function for children and families in particular, whose economic means do not normally allow them to holiday away from home.

<b>Strategic Intervention</b>	<b>Policy points</b>	<b>Opportunity/approach</b>
Encourage events	It is recommended that events are encouraged as a key feature of municipal and other open space. Since events organisation and provision directly by the Council and through third parties will be an ongoing activity, creative thinking will continue to be needed throughout the life of the Strategy.	Events that might become a nuisance to residents should be subject to careful planning and mitigation. However, for events that might attract a significant number of day visitors from outside of the town any restrictions should not be so extreme as to force organisers of events to look elsewhere as the Borough may then lose the economic benefits of visitor spend.

Table 17: Strategic interventions and policy points for events.

## 7.8 Design strategy

Design has a role in open space as much as in any other urban/rural design. Good design can help to promote the use of open space and make it more attractive to the community.

Good design helps foster a lasting bond between people and an open space as well as developing civic pride. Design can be used to recall former land uses of a site, memorable events and activities that took place there and be a location for artists and artisans to create memorable features. Design is also a cultural instrument helping to create spaces that are unique and help differentiate sites from each other.

Research has shown that good design can also help in health and well-being promoting more use of open space, creating more social contact and improving mental health. Design can be applied to almost all open space features ranging from earth moulding, creating noise and visual barriers, planting design, woodland design to wildlife watching facilities and vehicle parking. Neither should it be overlooked that open spaces can include built facilities and that good design of these is also important.

In respect of design, consideration should also be given to everyday issues such as the type and location of litter and dog poo bins, lighting which should for the most part be low energy and low level to preserve 'dark skies' (noting that there are opportunities for Lumiere festival events), and general maintenance issues including weeding and aftercare.

Given the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss design should also include the principles of nature-based solutions in preference to hard/grey engineering where possible.

Strategic Intervention	Policy points	Opportunity/approach
Design	<p>Design of open space should be included in the Council's design SPD<sup>14</sup> and that a design guide is considered for preparation before the creation of any new major open space infrastructure.</p> <p>Design should be celebratory but also deal with routine management and location issues.</p> <p>Building on the principles of the National Design Guide and Natural England's Planning and Design Guide as part of the green infrastructure framework is recommended.</p>	<p>An ecosystem-based approach should be used in design including the incorporation of nature-based solutions as part of the design, planning and management of open space sites.</p>

Table 18: Strategic interventions and policy points for design

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.meltonplan.co.uk/design-spd>

## 7.9 Developer contributions strategy

Developer contributions should be sought to provide a key funding source to meet the needs of new residents and for the delivery of this Open Space Strategy.

This not only applies to new open space required by the Council but also resources needed to maintain and manage open spaces. In particular, the Council's Development Management function must ensure that new open space provision should be integral to a development and not just be provided by developers as an afterthought, or to use up left over areas of land.

Credence must also be given to the potential connectivity between new open spaces, existing open spaces and the wider green infrastructure network.

A key aspect of new provision will be to meet typology deficits as shown in this report. However, some analysis of this approach is required in relation to developer contributions.

The two notable areas of deficit relative to the standards are 'semi-natural green space' and 'parks and gardens'. With regards to the provision of semi-natural green space, that unless there is an on-site opportunity to provide connectivity to other green infrastructure, then it is better for contributions to be 'pooled' and applied to a larger semi-natural green space that is off site but still in general proximity. A relatively new option is that with the advent of widespread SuDS these can be designed as semi-natural green space with public access to all areas whilst minimising areas that need to be fenced off for health and safety reasons.

It is normally better to pool contributions for parks and gardens to ensure that these are substantial enough and in areas which are easy for a large section of the public to travel to at low cost and without a car. Reference is sometimes made to pocket parks which can be useful in local neighbourhoods, or when a large park is impractical. A pocket park uses design to improve what might otherwise be classified as an amenity green space by providing multiple functions.

With respect to provision for children and young people, Fields in Trust guidance should be used. Normally LAPs, LEAPs and MUGAs should be located within a development, but contributions may be pooled for NEAPs within a larger facility, such as an urban park or larger semi-natural location.

Melton Borough Council has produced a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (September 2021). The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sits alongside the Melton Local Plan. The purpose of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to set out Melton Borough Council's approach to seeking Section 106 planning obligations in the absence of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule within the Borough. Policy IN3 of the Local Plan explains that developer contributions towards local infrastructure are expected in proportion to the scale of its impacts, following an order of priority. Note that the SPD does not repeat the Council's Open Space requirements.

Therefore, applicants and stakeholders should refer to this Open Space Strategy, Action Plan and associated Developer Contributions report alongside the SPD. Melton Borough Council encourages early discussions, including related to developer contributions, as part of any proposed development.

Developers should be aware of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements which is an approach to development, and/or land management, that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Information on BNG is available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Application guidance is available from the Planning Advisory Service. In respect of the Borough of Melton BNG is included within the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Where open spaces feature in the LNRS this will be a key opportunity for individual or pooled BNG contributions.

## 7.10 Open Space strategy other opportunities and needs

Changes in management and typology reclassification can go some way to maintaining open space standards especially where local deficiencies occur.

### **Opportunity: Reclassification**

There are opportunities for the Council to redesign some amenity green space to create new allotment(s) and especially community growing spaces. When redesigning these areas, the needs of less able persons should be considered such as the creation of raised beds. Nationally, there is evidence that the demand for shared 'community growing' space is increasing, and it can be linked to health and wellbeing agendas and food sustainability, from seed to compost.

The process of converting amenity green space to semi-natural green space has strong links to the Council's decisions on climate change along with assisting in the delivery of policy EN3 (Green Infrastructure). Renaturing includes, for example, changing from a grass sward to wildflower meadows which encourages pollinators (insects and birds). Roadside verges are also suitable for planting with meadow plants. A further consideration is to ensure that semi-natural green spaces are not seen as unmanaged. A commonly adopted technique to avoid this is to mow pathways through meadow grasslands during the growing season.

### **Needs: Cemeteries, Parks and Gardens**

There is no standard for cemeteries but the municipal site at Thorpe Road is nearing capacity and eventually an extension or new provision will be required. There is growing interest in green burials which presents an opportunity for new semi-natural green space.

The town of Melton Mowbray would benefit from a new urban park or several pocket parks totalling circa 10 hectares. Furthermore, the area to the south of town where new sustainable



communities are planned will increase the demand for accessible green space. The creation of a counterpoint Country Park to that in the north of the town has previously been discussed although land supply is likely to be a significant obstacle. One option is to look at a linear/hybrid greenway or 'necklace park' making use of existing green corridors, pooling land available through new development including highway infrastructure. It is suggested that this is the subject of a master planning exercise.

## Acronyms and other terms used in this document

This is a list of acronyms included in this strategy or that you may encounter in the appendices or your further reading.

Action Plan	A freestanding appendix to the Open Space Strategy.
Biodiverse/biodiversity:	The variety of natural life.
BNG:	Initials for Biodiversity Net Gain which is a way of creating and improving biodiversity by requiring development to have a positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity. In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021).
CIPFA:	The Chartered Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy.
DCLG, MHCLG	Ministry for housing, communities and local government
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FiT:	Fields in Trust.
GIS:	Geographical Information Systems (Mapping Tool)
Green Flag/Green Pennant:	Nationally recognised quality awards.
Green Infrastructure	Green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls.
Ha or HA:	Hectare.
LAPs:	Local Areas for Play
LEAPs:	Locally Equipped Areas for Play
NEAPs:	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play
LNRS:	Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Locally, this is being developed by Leicestershire County Council on behalf of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland local authorities.
Local Plan	Statutory document which sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area.
MUGA:	Multi Use Games Area
Natural Capital	Natural capital includes certain stocks of the elements of nature that have value to society, such as forests, fisheries, rivers, biodiversity, land and minerals. Natural capital includes both the living and non-living aspects of ecosystems.
Nature based solutions (NbS)	Nature-based Solutions involve working with nature, as part of nature, to address societal challenges, supporting human well-being and biodiversity locally.
Nature Recovery Network	The Nature Recovery Network is a growing national network of wildlife-rich places, stretching from our cities to countryside, mountains to coast. It is supported by green and blue spaces that buffer and connect these wildlife-rich sites.
NPPF:	National Planning Policy Framework – Central Government document which is update periodically. This is a shoe to buy the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
NN:	City and Local Authority Nearest Neighbour Comparator Exercise
NSALG:	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
PPG:	Planning Practice Guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Replaces planning policy guidance notably PPG 17
PRoW	Public right of way

S106:	Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
SPD:	Supplementary Planning Document
TCV	Trust for Conservation Volunteers

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