Parks and Open Spaces
Our Strategy for Barnet 2016-26
Appendixes to Strategy Document - Appendix C
Appendix C

The value of parks and open spaces

The report of the Urban Taskforce (Towards and Urban Renaissance – 1999) prepared by Lord Rogers report on the future of the UK’s cities and the subsequent report of the Greenspaces Task Force (Green Spaces, Better Places, 2002), contributed significantly to current urban policy and the creation of CABE Space in 2003. A subsequent considerable capital investment in public open space and public realm by the Heritage Lottery Fund and other public sector funders has demonstrated the importance of parks and green spaces and the wider public realm at the centre of a discussion around urban place making, development and regeneration.

The emergence of ‘world cities’ has brought this thinking into sharper focus; world cities such as London are competing for resources in skilled and talented workers, capital investment and in the economy of international tourism. The quality of the environment is considered a key element in determining the competitiveness of one city against another. London regularly asserts its credentials as a ‘green city’ and parks figure significantly in this assertion. Within London, different boroughs (including Barnet) promote the qualities of their environment and the extent of their green spaces as contributing factors to their economic success and their attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit.

The park in the 21st century is no longer seen as an isolated green space within an urban context but part of an integrated and mixed-use economic, social and environmental structure that binds a city together, making individual places distinctive and supporting the future sustainability of urban life.

A considerable amount of research has been undertaken over the past decade into the value of parks and greenspaces and the contribution that they make to the success of cities, suburbs, urban environments and the quality of life for communities. This section of the strategy will consider how good quality parks and open spaces can contribute actual value to cities and how this value can be measured across a number of different indicators. In subsequent sections of this strategy, these indicators will be used to assess the value of Barnet’s parks and open spaces, providing a rationale for future management and funding.

C.1 The economic value of greenspace

Whilst parks and green spaces are often highly valued by local communities in terms of a calculation of their formal asset value, public parks have been largely assessed as having negligible
value, principally because planning designations rule out the possibility of the use of park land for development. A designated greenspace cannot be built upon and the added value of developable land cannot thus be attributed to the park. As a consequence, the provision of parks services are characterised as a negative budget activity with no identifiable cost benefits.

While this approach has been challenged (CABE: Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets, CABE Space - 2009) it remains the approach of most local authorities, including Barnet. This ignores the value that parks contribute to urban economies, the city communities and to city environments. This section of the strategy considers an approach to value based on two sets of value characteristics:

- **Tangible value** – the land, topsoil, trees, ecology and bio-diversity, hard landscape infrastructure and buildings
- **Intangible value** – the benefits accruing to users across a range of indicators including economic, health-related, social, educational and cultural criteria.

All of these benefits have cash value but hitherto have not been assessed in the context of the balance a sheet for parks. Section 4.3 discusses new ways of assessing the value of parks in the context of green infrastructure.

Research in the UK and elsewhere has demonstrated conclusively that a number of economic benefits can be derived from good quality urban parks.

**C.1.1 Property values**

Parks have a positive impact on land and property value. Proximity to a good quality public park will add up to 20% to the value of property, depending on proximity and accessibility. Research has shown that this uplift will apply to properties located 100-1000 metres from a park and uplift is maximised where the parks is perceived to be of high quality.

Commercial property values are similarly positively impacted upon by good quality parks and greenspace. Rental values are sustained at higher values where good quality greenspace is either immediately available or integral to the working environment. Good quality environments support companies in the competitive recruitment and retention of skilled and productive workers. The contribution that parks make to local and city wide economies in turn supports the tax yield accruing to authorities with this yield supporting the delivery of local services.

**C.1.2 Tourist economy**

Global cities are important destinations for visitors and the tourist economy is a vital part of London’s economy, contributing £15.9 billion annually. Most world cities (including London) have signature public open spaces that are key elements in that city’s tourist economy. New York's Highline is situated in a hitherto relatively isolated mid-town area of Manhattan but is now one of the top five tourist attractions in the city, with over 5 million visitors since it opened in 2009. As a consequence, the number of construction projects in the area has doubled with some thirty large projects progressing with a value of over $2 billion. While London's Royal Parks are the centrepiece of the capital's greenspace offer, both inner and outer London boroughs are developing distinctive parks. Thames Barrier Park and Queen Elizabeth II Olympic Park are seen as significant contributors to their visitor and tourist economy.

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6 Neill Dunse. (2007). Urban parks, open space and residential property values, RICS
7 Gensler Institute and Urban Land Institute (2011)
C.1.3 Park economies

These signature parks and the neighbourhoods around them are economic entities in their own right, supporting a range of commercial activities including park cafes, events, galleries and active lifestyle businesses. Parks and the businesses around them contribute directly to the number of local jobs and employment levels. Over 10,000 people are directly employed in parks across the UK and tens of thousands more in ancillary businesses attached to or in the vicinity of parks. This direct employment is complemented by the activity of a large number of volunteers in parks, who contribute and estimated £17-35 million of value to open space across the UK every year.

C.2 Social and community value

A considerable focus for research over the past decade has evidenced many positive benefits for individuals and communities as a consequence of access to good quality parks and open spaces. These benefits can translate into direct positive monetary impacts on the cost of service provision (especially in terms of personal and public health). Some of these benefits cannot be directly monetised but are nevertheless, understood to have value in the broadest sense.

C.2.1 Health

Britain's cities are principally Victorian creations and the provision of city parks was significantly influenced by a perceived need to offer a counter-balance to the negative impact of city life on personal health. Today, many of our urban communities are facing similar significant health issues, largely as a consequence of an ageing population and the adoption of a more sedentary lifestyle.

DEFRA has calculated that the NHS could save £2.1 billion per annum if parks and open space infrastructure encouraged people into more active lifestyles. Good quality parks and open spaces can have a significant impact on some of the most prevalent disease groups – coronary heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and mental health. Barnet’s emerging Sport and Physical Activity and Health and Wellbeing Strategies identify parks as providing a primary opportunity for people to adopt and sustain a healthier lifestyle. Current and future parks investment (through ‘green gym provision’ and targeted participatory management) should seek to maximise these benefits.

These initiatives are supported by empirical research. Public health studies in Holland have suggested that the greening of the environment can reduce annual healthcare costs across the Netherlands by over €100 million. This is achieved in part through a 15% reduction in obesity (contributing €8 million) a 10% reduction in the use of anti-depressants (contributing €2 million and a 10% reduction in the use of drugs to control ADHD in children.

The overall capacity of parks to support health outcomes will reinforce outcomes that are delivered through conventional clinical approaches. This Open Spaces Strategy will demonstrate how parks can develop as places where physical activity can be promoted through the principles of ‘active design’ and by the creation of local partnerships to deliver specific health outcomes. This approach will support the delivery of health outcomes developed in the Sports and Physical Activity and Health and Wellbeing strategies.

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12 DEFRA (2010)
13 BADE et al (2010)
C.2.2 Food growing

There has been a considerable growth in urban food growing over the past decade. The Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Security identifies three urban agricultural systems, defined by the level of economic activity that is carried out:14

- non-commercial urban agriculture
  – allotments, micro farming and institutional gardens
- market-orientated urban agriculture – small scale commercial arable, horticultural and livestock farming in an urban context, specialised urban agriculture
- multi-functional urban agriculture – food growing plus education, tourism, agri-tourism.

Urban parks can support a variety of urban agricultural activities.

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C.2.3 Education

UK children are spending less and less time outdoors. The likelihood of children visiting any green space at all has halved in a generation, and much of this now happens only under adult supervision. Similarly, use of the open spaces around their homes which they know has fallen by 90% in 20 years.15

Parks and open spaces are proving less attractive for children and young people when compared with other age groups. Young people aged between 16 and 24 report lower quality across all indicators analysed for the study: 15% thought their local parks and open spaces were the aspect of their areas that needed most improvement, compared with 8 per cent of 55-74 year olds.16

By contrast, the benefits accruing to children from regular use of open spaces and interaction with nature are well-established. Children’s cognitive and social-emotional skill development also benefit from regular and varied access to nature. Safe and familiar open spaces close to home contribute to personal development, allow children to explore and to test motor skills and support the development of interpretive sensory skills. There is considerable evidence that children living in socio-economically deprived area have better levels of concentration when they regularly enjoy the use of greenspace and these enhanced concentration levels translate into higher levels of educational attainment and support the development of self-esteeem.17

Children suffering from Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) benefit from activity in public spaces, especially green spaces. When parents of children with ADD were asked to nominate the activities that they had found made their children more manageable, 85% of green-space activities (such as fishing and soccer) were said to improve the children’s behaviour, while only 43% of non-green activities (such as video games and watching television) were regarded as beneficial. Indeed, 57% of non-green activities were said to result in worse behaviour.18

C.2.4 Place and neighbourhood

Numerous studies have identified the capacity of parks to reinforce a sense of place and residents’ affinity with neighbourhood. People will identify strongly with their local park as part of the fabric of their neighbourhood. Where a park is of high quality, this will foster a sense of pride in the places where people live and work. These feelings are particularly strongly expressed when parks have direct heritage value or contain cultural assets or activities of significance, providing opportunities

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14 RUAF (2011); Cities and Agriculture – developing resilient urban food systems
16 CABE Space. (2010). Urban Green Nation
Figure C.1 - Local Green Infrastructure options and impacts. Source: Landscape Institute (2001): Local Green Infrastructure

Key to illustration

A. **Main green spine**
   - Trees, green spaces, river valleys and waterways, pedestrian and cycle routes connecting places, reflecting local character, enabling wildlife to flourish, offering sustainable transport routes and reducing the impact of climate change.

B. **Urban areas**
   - Boulevards, plazas, green roofs and walls making attractive settings for shopping and leisure, improving the vibrancy of local economy. Street trees and green space making our settlements more liveable, providing cooling, shade and cleaner air, giving us spaces for relaxation and healthy living, creating distinctive places and delivering multiple economic benefits.

C. **Business park**
   - Attractive settings encouraging inward investment, incorporating sustainable transport, sustainable urban drainage, rainwater collection and waste water cleansing. Creating attractive and distinctive workplaces, contributing to a vibrant local economy and economic benefits, reducing flood risk and climate change impacts and creating space for nature.

D. **Suburban housing**
   - Spaces for relaxation and healthy living, encouraging social interaction, neighbourhood events and food growing, building community cohesion, making the settlement comfortable and liveable. Improving property values and reducing effects of climate change through natural drainage, renewable energy use and building orientation which maximise solar gain and daylight.

E. **Community centre**
   - Sustainable building with green roof, geothermal heating and cooling and rainwater collection helping reduce climate change impacts and acting as a neighbourhood hub. Associated green space caters for healthy living activities including sports and opportunities for learning through connecting with nature and food growing, and employment in green space management.

F. **Coastal zones**
   - Managed coastal realignment reducing risk of flooding, providing potential sites for renewable energy and creating connected habitats for wildlife. Coastal areas provide opportunities for learning and leisure and deliver economic benefits through the creation of distinctive places for tourism.

G. **Country park**
   - Range of accessible habitats and green spaces managed for wildlife to flourish and people to enjoy, also giving spaces for relaxation and active recreation. Learning and employment opportunities via interpretation and events and jobs as rangers, green space managers and education outreach.

H. **Allotments, smallholdings and orchards**
   - Providing space to restore locally sourced and distinctive food production and to connect urban populations with the rural economy. Opportunities to learn about and gain apprenticeships in gardening, vegetable and fruit growing, bee-keeping and horticulture, as well as providing for outdoor places and activities that help bring communities together and provide an active lifestyle.
for learning and cultural enrichment. Conversely, a poor quality or neglected park can have a negative impact on perceptions of neighbourhood quality. Parks are by their very nature diverse, encouraging people of all ages, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to meet and interact.

This is particularly the case where communities participate in the planning and management of public spaces or where they contribute to cultural and sporting activities.

This complex interaction of economic, environmental and social influences represents the significant contribution good quality parks and open spaces can make to the development of sustainable communities and to community cohesion. In turn a large number of social and economic benefits can flow from these.

C.3 Green infrastructure

Parks form part of a green infrastructure that underpins the functioning of urban environment and forms an important part of city-wide infrastructure planning. The green infrastructure approach proposes that each piece of land can provide a variety of ecosystem services and that operate at a variety of scales including neighbourhoods, districts, cities and regions. This dynamic approach contrasts with a more traditional mono-functional approach to land and this improves the ability of places to address issues of climate change resilience, pollution, flood risk and ecological degradation.

Climate change is likely to affect all of the world’s cities over the next 50 years and beyond and this will particularly the case where emission levels produce localised greenhouse effects. Parks make significant contribution to mitigate against the impact of climate change on Barnet.

Climate change is expected to increase flood risk with increased rainfall and more extreme weather patterns. Urban environments are often poorly equipped to cope with intense periods of rainfall that can result in economically and socially costly flood events. Parks and greenspaces can absorb up to 25% of precipitation directly into the soil and ground water, alleviating pressure on built
drainage systems. Parks and green spaces can also make a positive contribution to this problem by absorbing and retaining large volumes of precipitation and releasing this more slowly into drainage systems and networks.

Urban warming is a direct consequence of both climate change and localised greenhouse effects. These temperature rises can have a direct effect on public health. Open spaces (and particularly trees) have a significant moderating effect on temperatures. Research suggests that a 10% increase in tree volume can reduce ambient temperature rises by 30-50% on hot summer days. Where greenspace occupies more than 50% of land surface area, temperatures are approximately 7° centigrade lower than elsewhere in a neighbourhood. This cooling effect can be experienced up to 100m from the park edge.

Green infrastructure is a system that can impact at many different levels to affect environmental management. Figures C.1 and C.2 illustrate how these might impact at local level in Barnet.

3.3.1 Bio-diversity

Urban parks are often more diverse than surrounding areas of countryside and often have the potential to support significant numbers of species. Further opportunities to develop the habitat and bio-diversity potential of parks can be supported within green blue corridors along which animal and plant communities can migrate and where genetic exchange can take place. Further opportunities exist along the urban rural fringe which are often the most diverse habitats in terms of species.

C.3.2 Re-defining the city/countryside relationship

As an outer London borough, Barnet has the opportunity to re-define the artificial separation of city and countryside. The borough’s geography and ecology (including areas of Green Belt, patterns of river valleys and areas of woodland) provide an important, distinctive and environmentally rich edge to Greater London. The recreational use of parks and greenspaces can be further encouraged by providing better connections between urban parks and open spaces and more natural landscapes on the edge of the city.

C.3.3 Green infrastructure and value

New methodologies are being developed to assess and calculate the multiple benefits that green infrastructure can deliver for urban environments. These in turn can achieve a number of positive outcomes across a range of indicators.

The Total Impact Measurement Methodology (TIMM), developed by Price Waterhouse Cooper takes a holistic view of the social, environmental fiscal and economic dimensions of green infrastructure to quantify and monetise these impacts, helping to evaluate options and to optimise trade-offs to support improved decision making.

Corporate Natural Capital Accounting (CNCA) developed by the Natural Capital Committee is an accounting methodology designed to help the owners of capital assets make more informed decisions around the management of their assets. The methodology establishes a financially expressed causality between capital assets and the benefits that they deliver to people, to communities and to businesses.


Both of these methodologies could be used to assess the monetary value of the positive can provide for urban environments. These in turn can achieve a number of economic social and environmental indicators to construct a rationale for new approaches to funding parks (See Appendix I).

C.4 Barnet indicators

Based on the range of outcome indicators set out in the first part of this section, the Open Spaces Strategy proposes a set of value indicators to drive the assessment of individual parks and open spaces and further decisions around investment, funding and governance discussed in subsequent sections.

C.4.1 Barnet indicators – provision

Appendix A.J identifies those Wards which have levels of parks provision below the borough average:

- Brunswick Park, Burnt Oak, Childs Hill,
- Colindale, East Finchley, Edgware, Golders Green, Hale, Hendon, Oakleigh, West Finchley, West Hendon and Woodhouse

Parks within these Wards are of significant value to local residents because of a lack of overall
provision or a lack of alternative forms of provision in the context of the London Parks Hierarchy.

C.4.1 Barnet indicators - deprivation

The most deprived neighbourhoods have difficulty in accessing life chances relative to less deprived areas. The research detailed above suggests that parks and open spaces can offer opportunities to improve physical and mental health and to enhance educational outcomes and offer more extensive facilities for active and passive recreation and social interaction.

Given this, a particular focus should fall on those areas of the borough that fall within the 30% most deprived nationally. In 2007, Barnet had 44 Lower Super Output Areas (the government-defined measure socio-economic characteristics of neighbourhoods) that fell within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally, an increase from 2004 (31 LSOAs). Of those 44, six were among the 10% most deprived nationally, compared to none in 2004. 23

The 2010 figures broadly represent a return to 2004 levels of deprivation, with 30 LSOAs among the 30% most deprived nationally, with Barnet containing no LSOAs within the 10% most deprived nationally. 24

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23 Barnet Insight Unit (2012): Deprivation in Barnet
24 Ibid
The 30 LSOA’s in Barnet are concentrated in Colindale, Burnt Oak and West Hendon with outlying pockets of deprivation in East Finchley, Edgware and Underhill.

Figure C.3 shows those areas of Barnet with the most deprived neighbourhoods in 2012.  

C.4.2 Barnet indicators - environment

C.4.2.1 Flood risk

As discussed, parks and green spaces have the capacity to absorb surface water and alleviate flood risk as part of sustainable urban drainage systems. Surface water flood risk in Barnet is identified principally with the valleys of the Silk Stream, Dollis Brook, Pymmes Brook and River Brent. Several parks and open spaces are located within these river valleys and can make a significant contribution to managing flood risk. This benefit will become increasingly important in the future as the impacts of climate change become more apparent.

Figure J.9 in Appendix J. shows currently assessed flood risk areas across Barnet.

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25 Ibid
C.4.2.2 Air quality

Poor air quality in Barnet is concentrated on the borough’s main arterial roads, where there are high concentrations of Nitrous dioxide (NO2) which are above the recommended limits for human health.

Figure C.4 illustrates that poorer air quality is to be found in the south and west of the borough and that this improves as you move northwards. This is likely to reflect in part the lower density of major roads and the high proportion of parks and green spaces in the north.

Overall, air quality improves from south to north across the borough.

C.4.2.3 Urban heating

Urban heating, particularly during summer months, can have a significant effect upon human health and especially young children and older people. This effect can be reduced by the cooling effect of parks and green spaces. Figure C.5 illustrates that the southern and western sections of the borough record higher average temperatures in mid-summer. Significantly these are also areas that have a lower density of parks and green spaces.

C.4.3 Barnet indicators - resident satisfaction analysis

The overall level of resident satisfaction with parks in Barnet is generally high (70%), but levels of satisfaction vary across the borough. Resident satisfaction with parks is lowest on the western side of the borough.

However, overall satisfaction figures mask individual satisfaction issues in different parts of the borough.

C.4.4 Barnet indicators - customer segment analysis

Customer Segments are the council’s tool for insight and are based on national Callcredit data applied to Barnet. The statistics are drawn from a range of individual level datasets including census data for 223,000 output areas, 45 million council tax band records, 7 million consumer credit records, 7.5 million income records, 11 million shareholder registers, and 12 million transactional and lifestyle records (Capita Insight).

This allows the population of the borough to be divided up into different segments and for key characteristics to be identified that represent the majority of those that fall into a given segment. There are 17 customer segments in total, and 7 of these are identified as financially disadvantaged.

Figure C.6 shows how these sectors are distributed across the borough’s population.

The uptake of parks services varies across Barnet’s community segments. Customer segment analysis also suggests that groups who do not engage in park activities tend to be concentrated in specific Wards. Figure C.7 shows Wards where specific
Customer segments demonstrate low uptake of parks services. ‘Poundstretching Twosomes,’ ‘Constrained Solos,’ and ‘Proud Parents Coping Alone’ are concentrated in Burnt Oak, Childs Hill, Colindale, Underhill, West Hendon, Edgware, and Hale.

The Sport and Physical Activity Needs Assessment (2012) notes that parks provide an affordable alternative to leisure facilities. It is therefore increasingly important that the benefits of parks are promoted amongst these financially constrained customer segments.

The Leisure Services Survey (2013) identified that better safety and security and a better range of amenities emerged as factors that would encourage a greater use of parks and open spaces.
C.4.5 Volunteering

The parks sector across the UK has a strong tradition of volunteering.

There are approximately 4,000 community groups with an average membership of 134 involved with urban green space. Total membership thus approaches 500,000 across the UK. 26

The annual economic value of the work of community groups in parks and green spaces across the UK ranges somewhere between £17 million and £35 million. 27

It is now commonly accepted that volunteers can play an increasing role in the management of parks and open spaces and that direct benefits will accrue from this involvement. Volunteering empowers local people to take more control of their environment and gives them an opportunity to become more active in their communities.

In 2014 Barnet Council’s Customer and support group undertook an assessment of the Barnet customer segments that are most likely to volunteer. The study also assessed the areas of the borough where it would be most likely that volunteering would take place, the sorts of volunteering activities that might be most readily encouraged and the parks that would be most likely to support volunteering activity.

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Figure C.8 shows that ‘contemporary elders’, ‘contented greys’ and ‘family feelgoods’ would be the most likely segments to volunteer. In numerical terms, ‘contemporary elders’ and ‘family feelgoods’ are the largest of these customer segments and could generate the largest number of volunteers. In general terms, the study found that residents were less likely to volunteer to manage a council asset or deliver a council service as opposed to an alternative volunteering activity.

When analysing areas of the borough where people are most likely to volunteer, the study identified High Barnet and Garden Suburb as the two areas of the borough showing greatest potential for generating volunteering activity.

Conversely, the study found that Underhill and Burnt Oak/Colindale/West Hendon were the areas of the borough where volunteering is least likely to occur. There is strong correlation between areas that are unlikely to support volunteering and Lower Super Output Areas which fall within the 30% most deprived nationally.
The study identified that the number of facilities in a park is a determining factor influencing the development of volunteering activity. People in Barnet are more likely to volunteer if they live close to parks with more facilities. In general terms, larger parks offer more facilities and are thus more likely to attract volunteers. This complexity of offer makes larger parks the most complex spaces to manage.

The study goes on to assess the likelihood that volunteering activity will occur in a number of parks across the borough (Old Courthouse Recreation Ground, Friary Park, Victoria Park, Lyttleton Playing Fields, Copthall Playing fields and Watling Park). Potential participation rates varied between 30% (Old Courthouse Recreation ground) to 4% (Watling Park). The study suggests, potential volunteering activity was closely linked to the size of the park and the affluence of the area in which it was situated.
C.4.6 Volunteers participation in the management of parks and open spaces

As the Customer Support Group study suggests, the potential for Barnet residents to volunteer in parks and open spaces varies considerably across the borough. The study does not assess the degree to which volunteering activity can evolve into direct participation by volunteers in the management of parks and open spaces.

Appendix I of this strategy considers the strengths and weaknesses of an approach to management emerging from volunteering in the context of social enterprise management models. Most significantly, it suggests that the establishment of a social enterprise requires a very long gestation period that requires extensive consultation and the participation of a variety of partners. This gestation period usually requires the investment of resources. Barnet does not have a well-developed social enterprise sector and the borough does not currently invest significantly in this sector either as a whole or specifically in the parks sector.

Given the findings of the Customer and Support Group into volunteering and the level of support for volunteering currently provided by the borough, it does not seem likely that volunteering will be a viable option in terms of the future management of parks and open spaces.

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**Figure C.10 - Facilities in parks influencing likelihood of volunteering**

Source: Customer and Support group (2014): Greenspaces Community Engagement
For more information please visit: http://engage.barnet.gov.uk.

If you would like to request this consultation in an alternative format please e-mail @barnet.gov.uk or phone 020 8359