

Draft Parks Development Strategy Summary

Our Park Development strategy consists of eight separate and distinct sections, in which we describe how we will deliver our vision of making our major parks and green spaces places where people can exercise, relax and enjoy nature, build communities and support biodiversity.

Our first section comprises an introduction from our elected Members. As well as providing an overview of the strategy, it highlights our primary aim to protect, maintain and enhance our parks and green spaces so they continue to meet the current and future needs of our communities, whilst also supporting us deliver our wider aspirations, as described in our (West Northamptonshire Council's) Corporate Plan.

Section two provides some context to our Parks Development strategy. In addition to providing an overview as to the scale and type of parks and green spaces that currently exist across West Northamptonshire, the strategy outlines how they can positively impact on the health, wellbeing and sense of local/civic pride. It also states what our aspirations for this strategy are, specifically:

1. To set out our vision for parks and green spaces, including describing the actions we would take to realise it.
2. To support the delivery of the shared, multi-agency, "live your best life" ambitions and our corporate plan.
3. To explore increasingly sustainable ways of managing and funding our parks and green spaces.
4. To ensure parks and green spaces continue to evolve and meet the needs of our residents and communities, and positively contribute to making West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work and visit.

Section three provides additional context to our parks and green spaces. In addition to introducing our teams and key partners and other stakeholders, it describes each of our major parks, and any site- specific features they host.

The fourth section of our strategy outlines our vision for our major parks and green spaces over its lifetime and various aligned internal plans, strategies and policies; multi-agency strategies and; national and internal plans and initiatives. Our vision comprises three aspirations for our parks and green spaces, specifically:

1. Places for people of all backgrounds to thrive through exercise and relaxation in the open air, enjoying nature and heritage.
2. Places for people of all backgrounds to thrive through building communities.
3. Places to support/help biodiversity to thrive.

Underpinning our vision are six priorities. These are intended to ensure that any changes we make to our major parks and green spaces are appropriate, affordable and sustainable and; by developing them as a series of "destinations" help deliver our strategic aspirations. These objectives are:

1. Provide a network of safe and accessible parks serving the whole of West Northamptonshire.
2. Create spaces for health and wellbeing to flourish.

3. Preserve and develop the biodiversity, heritage, and landscape values of all sites.
4. Encourage engagement and participation of communities and partners to develop a sense of pride and community cohesion.
5. Secure investment in our parks.
6. Make good use of public money and assets.

Section five of our strategy focuses on the various actions we are looking to take to deliver our vision. These actions fall within three broad themes: overarching actions; new and renewed parks and enhancing our existing parks.

Our “overarching actions” theme focuses on the actions we are planning to take to ensure we adopt good land management practices including how we can support local nature recovery and biodiversity; ensure our parks and greenspaces are safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces for all and a range of initiatives that we would like to introduce to enhance the richness of our offer, should the conditions exist to do so.

By contrast, our “new and renewed parks” theme recognises that there are currently gaps in our coverage and, it seeks to identify opportunities to create new park and green space “destinations” in under-represented localities which reflect potential locality/site context, environment and heritage.

The focus of our last theme is on the actions we are looking to take to enhance the social value associated with our current, established parks and green spaces. These proposals are aiming to capitalise on site-specific opportunities to increase the depth and breadth of park/green space-specific offers whilst retaining their individual charm and character.

Section six recognises that as part of local government reorganisation we were created from four predecessor councils, three of which had responsibilities for locality-specific parks and green spaces. Each of our predecessor organisations took a different approach as to how they wanted to manage and develop these spaces. In developing what is our first Parks Development strategy for West Northamptonshire, we recognise where we have come from and have identified the key actions our predecessors were committed to delivering on behalf of their localities, summarising the progress made. These actions represent part of the foundations from which our strategy emerges.

The seventh section describes the financial backdrop against which West Northamptonshire Council currently operates and this strategy will be delivered. As we identified in section three of this strategy, we have a goal of making our parks and country parks service self-sufficient, through reducing its reliance on public money and maximising opportunities to generate income. This section identifies the parameters in which we intend to deliver this strategy, they include maximising the return on our existing resources; actively seeking private sector investment, where appropriate to do so; utilising existing legislation, predominantly the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, to leverage funding to support our plans for these community assets.

The final section of our strategy represents the detailed action plan. It currently identifies 83 actions which we would consider progressing to support the delivery of this strategy. Many of these actions represent feasibility studies which will develop an evidence-based assessment as to a specific proposals viability or; commitments to explore opportunities to work ever closer with internal and external colleagues and

partners to deliver shared outcomes. The overarching goal of the actions identified is to ensure our parks and green spaces are accessible to all, and that they represent "destinations" people want to visit and spend quality time at, places which in reflecting locality/site-specific context, environment and heritage, retain individual charm and character whilst also providing something different, and appealing.