

Green Spaces Strategy (2007 – 2012)

Foreword

Crawley has an extensive network of green spaces. We are pleased that public satisfaction with these green spaces is very high but we must not become complacent. This strategy sets out Crawley Borough Council's vision for green spaces in the Borough and the goals it wants to achieve. It aspires to build on the excellent green spaces already existing in Crawley and works towards achieving the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)'s vision of rediscovering the value of Greenspace.

The Strategy has been prepared following extensive public consultation and the comments received have been used to formulate the policies and actions in the strategy.

One of the benefits of producing this strategy has been the production of a Green Spaces map, which identifies all green spaces in Crawley, including parks, sports grounds, playing fields, nature conservation areas, allotments and open spaces.

It is important to recognise that Crawley Borough Council and its partners have limited funds and we will need to work together and seek funds from other sources to help deliver the improvements identified in the strategy.

However, we feel that by working with all sections of the community through projects such as the highly successful 'Let's FACE It! campaign, the extensive network of sporting and non sporting organisations, developing existing and the Gatwick Green Space Partnership, Crawley will continue to have green spaces of which it can be proud for the foreseeable future

Cllr Claire Denman (Executive Member for Planning and Economic Development) March 2007

Introduction

The Council's Green Spaces Strategy sets out the Council's vision and approach to all green spaces in the Borough. It sets out how the Council will manage its own land holdings in accordance with the overall strategy. It also provides the basis upon which a separate Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) setting out the planning principles and guidelines for future development within the Town. This SPD will form part of the Council's Local Development Framework.

Green Spaces in Crawley

There are over 5 million square metres of green space in Crawley. Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council are the major landowners. The areas include:

- 32 areas of Open Space including Parks and Nature Conservation areas
- 26 Playing fields
- More than 70 children's play areas
- 19 Allotment sites

Public satisfaction with the Crawley's green spaces is very high and it is essential this is maintained and if possible increased

Actions:

1. A Welcoming Place

The overall impression for anyone approaching and entering the green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are entering.

We will:

- ◆ ensure that appropriate signs and interpretation boards are in place for the parks and open spaces that need them.
- ◆ encourage the installation of public art and the hosting of appropriate events on green spaces, providing they do not damage the infrastructure or habitats
- ◆ continue to improve access to all green spaces
- ◆ design parks and open spaces to make them positive and inviting for users

Action needed to achieve this:

audit of existing signage

and enhance signage, information and interpretation boards at Parks and Open Spaces

public art and events on appropriate green spaces

works identified as part of the accessibility audit

parks and open spaces close to retail and housing, low maintenance shrub beds will be avoided and bird feeding will be discouraged.

2. Healthy, safe and secure

It is essential that the green space is a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use.

We will

- ◆ increase on site supervision of Parks and Open Spaces
- ◆ not tolerate anti-social behaviour on parks and open spaces

- ◆ encourage activities on our parks, playing fields and other open spaces by all members of the community, which improve health, both physical and mental, and general well-being
- ◆ encourage interest in underutilised allotment sites
- ◆ ensure our green spaces are designed and maintained to deter antisocial behaviour
- ◆ make sure the Council's trees are inspected to ensure they are healthy and safe for the public to enjoy

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Leisure ranger service and other agencies to work with users of green spaces to reduce incidents of antisocial behaviour
- ◆ Increase the number of activities undertaken and the number of participants in green spaces
- ◆ Improve the maintenance and publicity of the Greenway and develop shorter walks from the main circuit
- ◆ Review Crawley Borough Council's allotment service to increase takeup of allotment sites
- ◆ Ensure all Crawley B.C. trees are inspected on a 10 year rolling programme and maintained in a healthy condition.

3. Well Maintained and Clean

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, cleanliness and maintenance issues must be adequately addressed

We will:

- ◆ develop maintenance and cleaning regimes for our green spaces based around feedback from users, taking into account financial constraints
- ◆ use the powers of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 to keep our green spaces clean and free of litter
- ◆ continue to target dog fouling of our streets and green spaces
- ◆ work with West Sussex County Council and the Environment Agency to maintain and provide a good quality network of footpaths, cycle routes and waterways

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Ensure user feedback is sought on a regular basis and used to develop maintenance schedules
- ◆ Improve maintenance of hard surfaced areas, particularly car parks and tennis courts, possibly by introducing a pre planned maintenance schedule
- ◆ Annual programme of school visits, press releases, business meetings and publicity to stress the issues surrounding litter

- ◆ Use enforcement action against people and businesses who create litter problems and people who allow their dogs to foul streets and green spaces

4. Sustainability

Methods used to maintain the parks and green spaces are environmentally sound and are in accordance with the Council's commitment to EMAS. It is important that the parks, playing fields and other open spaces are sustainable, both operationally and financially.

We will:

- ◆ maximise external funding to invest in our parks, playing fields and other open spaces
- ◆ continue to seek contributions, where appropriate, from developers to improve our parks, playing fields and other open spaces
- ◆ work to reduce the cost of managing and maintaining public green spaces, while maintaining the quality of the areas
- ◆ ensure we undertake sustainable horticultural practices
- ◆ introduce wildflower verges on appropriate sites and in full consultation with local residents

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Identify external funding sources to improve the Council's Green Spaces
- ◆ Develop a policy with the Local Planning Authority to seek contributions from developers for the implementation of this strategy
- ◆ Capturing grey water to enable more sustainable watering of plants
- ◆ Identify opportunities to increase income and reduce costs within Parks and Open spaces

5. Conservation and Heritage

The conservation and appropriate management of buildings and landscape, structural and natural features, wildlife and fauna is important and requires regular attention.

We will:

- ◆ encourage biodiversity by incorporating appropriate actions into our management and maintenance regimes
- ◆ work towards achieving local nature reserve status for additional sites in Crawley
- ◆ work to protect important land in Crawley
- ◆ recognise the wealth of wildlife in Crawley and try and ensure that these areas are protected and enhanced

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Develop management and maintenance regimes to improve the biodiversity of the Borough
- ◆ work to protect important land in Crawley
- ◆ Work with housing developers to undertake ecological surveys to improve the biodiversity data held about Crawley
- ◆ Work towards achieving local nature reserve status for additional sites

6. Community Involvement

The involvement of the community who represent as many park or green space user groups as possible is important.

We will:

- ◆ consult with local residents, users and friends groups on all proposals for new and existing open space facilities
- ◆ work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to manage and enhance our parks, playing fields and other open spaces
- ◆ encourage organisations to become more involved in the management and maintenance of facilities they use
- ◆ encourage the development of the Let's FACE It! campaign to help keep the Crawley's green spaces clean.
- ◆ work with local schools and businesses to help improve the cleanliness of Crawley
- ◆ Develop a research programme to understand the needs of users better

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ encourage the self management and maintenance of their facilities by user groups and organisations
- ◆ Develop the Let's FACE It! campaign, with at least one project in each ward
- ◆ Develop a network of junior and senior representatives to help make our green spaces clean and safe
- ◆ Develop a programme of initiatives with local schools and businesses to help reduce the amount of litter
- ◆ develop a research programme to ensure we know the users of our parks, playing fields and other open spaces, together with the levels and patterns of use.

7. Marketing and Publicity

Good marketing and publicity of parks, playing fields and other open spaces increases usage and improves customer satisfaction. Linking with schools helps to instill a feeling of respect for the local environment and reduces anti social behaviour,

We will:

- ◆ improve the image of the open spaces in Crawley
- ◆ raise the profile of the open spaces in Crawley
- ◆ encourage schools to use the green spaces, Nature Centre and Greenzone to deliver parts of the national curriculum

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Identify the standards required to ensure public satisfaction levels with open spaces in Crawley remains in the top quartile of local authorities
- ◆ Introduce an annual survey programme for the Council's parks, playing fields and other open spaces to enable 'targetted' and improved promotion of the Borough's green spaces
- ◆ Develop the existing educational programme with local schools

8. Management

High quality management of parks, playing fields and other open spaces is essential if customer satisfaction is to remain at the current high levels

We will:

- ◆ subject all major Council owned parks, playing fields and other open spaces to an audit using an Open Space Quality Checklist
- ◆ ensure that all major sites have Management Plans and other sites have a coordinated maintenance regime
- ◆ work with Gatwick Greenspace Partnership to ensure successful management of Conservation
- ◆ try and introduce staff who are based at the main parks

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Introduce a system of quality checks for parks, playing fields and other open spaces
- ◆ Prepare and implement management plans
- ◆ Develop management template for greenspaces without full management plans
- ◆ Continue to support Gatwick Green Space Partnership unless performance deteriorates
- ◆ Review staffing arrangements to try and introduce 'on site management'

9. Planning

As the Local Planning Authority, the Council needs to ensure there is sufficient provision for Green space and open space and that it is in the correct areas to be used. In accordance with Government guidance as set out in PPG 17, the Council will undertake a qualitative and quantitative assessment of audit, both quantitatively and qualitatively, existing 'open space' provision within the town and bring forward a set of planning policies which meets the needs of the town.

The Submission Core Strategy identifies the Council's general approach towards the provision and retention of open space. This is provided in Policies ICS1-ICS3 and ICS5 which deal with community, leisure and educational facilities, the open space requirements of new development and surplus educational land.

A Development Control Policies Development Plan Document will also be prepared to provide guidance on the provision and loss of open space in the context of new development. Consultation on the document will take place in July 2007 and will examine the key issues which need to be addressed by the development control process in considering planning applications.

A further Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared during 2007/08 identifying the contribution developers will be expected to make towards infrastructure and community provision including open space.

The Council also intends to bring forward a Green Space Supplementary Planning Document following the outcome of the PPG17 open space assessment which is intended to identify the important character and landscape features of the town and how this should be protected and/or enhanced. This is programmed for consultation in 2009.

In preparing and implementing the above, the Council will:

- ◆ maintain the 'green' areas which make a significant contribution to the overall setting of neighbourhoods and the town as a whole
- ◆ ensure new development incorporates sufficient and accessible green spaces both for formal and informal recreation needs as well as ensuring existing 'valued' sites are properly integrated, protected and where appropriate enhanced
- ◆ establish dialogue with key landowners/neighbouring authorities to identify key issues surrounding the provision and retention of open space within the Borough,
- ◆ ensure that best use is made of the key ecological, landscape or streetscene features of the site involved where major strategic development, including new neighbourhoods or major new leisure, educational or community development is planned
- ◆ ensure that the levels of formal recreational provision – particularly play area and playing field provision - is maintained at a level required for the growing Town's needs whether through strategic development or through intensification of existing neighbourhoods which would place additional demands on finite open/green spaces

Action needed to achieve this:

- ◆ Develop a Development Control Policies Development Plan Document and Supplementary Planning Document setting out key planning guidelines for

developers in relation to developments which directly or indirectly affect open space provision and future maintenance of such areas

- ◆ Undertake a full assessment of the physical character of Crawley and develop an Urban Design and Landscape Framework to inform development control and land use planning policy
- ◆ Ensure all development Briefs, SPD's and site specific Development Plan Documents (including Area Action Plans e.g. West and North West of Crawley Area Action Plan) incorporate sound green / open space policies and provision
- ◆ Identify any sites (or parts of sites) which are not 'fit for purpose' or are surplus to requirement for possible disposal. Receipts from the disposals to be used to enhance other facilities
- ◆ Ensure all open space provided as part of new developments has amenity value
- ◆ Undertake an assessment of the physical character of Crawley and develop an Urban Design and Landscape Framework to inform development control and land use planning policy
- ◆ Develop an adoption policy for developers for the future maintenance of open space areas
- ◆ Implement the actions from the Council's Playing Pitch strategy and play strategy

10. Monitoring, Implementation and Evaluation

The strategy has a lifespan of 5 years. The actions identified will be incorporated into annual work programmes as appropriate and subject to available finance, with progress against the targets reviewed annually, through the Council's annual service planning process