

## **AGENDA ITEM 10.1**

### **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

#### **Report to Cabinet**

**19<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Parks and Countryside Strategy</b>
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>Leisure, Sport, Parks and Countryside</b>
<b>OFFICER:</b>	<b>Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer</b>
<b>WARD:</b>	<b>All</b>

#### **Appendices Attached –**

**Appendix A:** [table of amenity land types and definitions](#)  
**Appendix B:** [summary of assessment conclusions and proposed responses](#)

#### **1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 To approve the development of a strategy for the future management and improvement of public green space and countryside amenity in the Staffordshire Moorlands, in response to the 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment' of 2009 (PPG17).
- 1.2 To approve the publication of a summary document for public consumption, which clearly sets out the Councils priorities over the next 5 years.

**Reason:** The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (2009) provides an audit of public recreation facilities in the Staffordshire Moorlands. The report identifies the extent to which recreation needs are met in the District and where there are gaps or deficiencies in provision for the population now and through to 2026. A strategy is needed to programme a response to the recommendations in the assessment as recommended at 1.3 in the report given at agenda item 14.1 to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 Cabinet.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The proposed strategy will respond to nine of the total eleven categories of open space, sport and recreation facilities considered in the 2009 assessment .
- 2.2 A table listing and describing all the categories is shown at [Appendix A](#). Outdoor Sports Facilities are separately addressed in the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy approved at the Cabinet meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009. Civic spaces – the limited areas of hard landscape usually in town centres have not been considered at this stage.
- 2.3 The primary purpose of providing public access to open green spaces and countryside is for the physical and mental health benefits obtained.
- 2.4 The importance which people attach to green space amenities is such that their distribution, condition and quantity have a direct bearing on the perception of an area's quality as a place to live and work, and thereby upon the actual economic vitality and potential of an area.
- 2.5 Biodiversity – the range of habitat types and plant and animal life making up the area's green spaces – is a defining ingredient without which green spaces cease to exist. In any strategy therefore to provide and improve green space amenity, measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity are an essential core.
- 2.6 The schedule at [Appendix B](#) summarises the recommendations made in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment and provides recommended responses. These responses are related directly to the previously published open space assessment.

## 3. Options and Risk Assessment

- 3.1 Risks in producing a strategy are low. Consultation is an important part of the process and this has the risk of introducing delay or generating controversy. Consultation should however minimise the risk of overlooking issues of local interest or concern.

## 4. Implications

- 4.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998) In a strategy for public open space amenities, including parks and play areas, community safety and the impacts on residents need foremost consideration.

4.2	<u>Employees</u>	A strategy helps give clarity of purpose and direction, ensuring actions reflect the Council's priority intentions.
4.3	<u>Diversity</u>	This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies. A strategy is a valuable means of ensuring that diversity and equality objectives are met appropriately within the Service.
4.4	<u>Financial</u>	Expenditure on maintaining public open space amenity under direct responsibility of SMDC (excluding sports pitches) equates approximately to £850K in revenue expenditure and with capital schemes to the value currently of £820K.
4.5	<u>Legal</u>	None
4.6	<u>Sustainability</u>	The planning of future amenity provision to meet changing population size and demographic; protection of biodiversity; the direct management of substantial areas of public Council-owned green space, and the capacity to engage, influence and involve local people in groups and organisations, or as individuals, represent a significant ability to positively influence and drive sustainability improvements for the area.

Andrew P. Stokes  
**Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer**

**Background Papers**

**Location**

**Contact**

Andy Brown

**Decision:**

**Reason:**

**Interests Declared:**

## **5. Background and Detail**

- 5.1 A strategy for the Staffordshire Moorlands parks and countryside was previously adopted in 2003 for the period 2003 to 2007. Essentially a set of guiding principles, much of the content of the 2003 to 2007 strategy remains valid and should continue to be followed however the recent assessment of open space approved by the Council broadens the scope of the service by setting priorities based on minimum standards where help form clear planning guidance for any future developments in the Staffordshire Moorlands Area. A copy can be viewed at [www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/downloads/Countryside\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/downloads/Countryside_strategy.pdf) on the Council's website.
- 5.2 The completion in 2009 of an audit of all open space amenity opportunity in the District provides a detailed evidence base against which to develop a new and more detailed strategy. The findings were reported in summary at section 11.2 of the previous report to cabinet on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.
- 5.3 The schedule at [Appendix B](#) to this report quotes the summary conclusions of the 2009 audit and sets out proposed strategic responses.

## **Appendix A: summary of open space categories considered**

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
<b>Country Parks</b>	Includes country parks. These facilities tend to attract users from a wider and in many cases, have a higher local and regional profile. These sites are frequently outside of the settlement boundary due to their characteristics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informal recreation</li> <li>community events.</li> </ul>
<b>Formal parks</b>	Includes urban parks and formal gardens. Local parks usually have a local profile (and are therefore unlikely to attract visitors from a wider region). Local parks may <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have a smaller effective catchment</li> <li>contain a range of facilities</li> <li>include formal planting or bedding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informal recreation.</li> </ul>
<b>Natural and Semi-natural green spaces</b>	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wildlife conservation</li> <li>biodiversity</li> <li>environmental education and awareness.</li> </ul>
<b>Amenity green space</b>	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informal activities close to home or work</li> <li>children's play</li> <li>enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.</li> </ul>
<b>Provision for children</b>	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below the age of 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces containing equipped play facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children's play.</li> </ul>
<b>Provision for young people</b>	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose) as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teenage shelters</li> <li>skateboard parks</li> <li>BMX tracks</li> </ul> Multi Activity Play Areas (MAPA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>activities or meeting places for young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Outdoor sports facilities</b>	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outdoor sports pitches</li> <li>tennis courts and bowls greens</li> <li>golf courses</li> <li>athletics tracks</li> <li>playing fields (including school playing fields)</li> <li>water sports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>facilities for formal sports participation.</li> </ul>
<b>Allotments</b>	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.</li> </ul>





## Public Green Space and Countryside Strategy 2010 – 2015

Proposed strategic responses to the PPG 17 Audit (Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment, 2009).

Reproduced below in italic are the summary conclusions (as numbered in the original report) of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment (2009) – the PPG 17 Audit of public green space in the Staffordshire Moorlands. Each extract is followed by a proposed series of strategic responses intended to address the recommendations of the Audit Report.

The strategic response comments are numbered according to the audit recommendation to which they refer eg 1.1 to 1.4 all relate to recommendation 1, 2.1 to 2.2 to point 2 and so on, this is to make it easy to cross refer directly with the Open Space Assessment. Summary boxes have been used to pick out recommended principal actions. In the first column a priority from 1 to 3 is proposed using the notation 1<sup>o</sup>, 2<sup>o</sup> or 3<sup>o</sup>. The boxes also show the lead responsibility for the action and other key partners. The end columns show the anticipated timetable over the years 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. Finally a note is added in the box to further summarise and pick out key actions.

### **Parks and Gardens**

#### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 4.1 *Residents highlight Parks and Gardens as being of particular value for recreation. Country Parks are one of the most frequently used open spaces in the Staffordshire Moorlands and many residents identified particular value in the natural qualities of these open spaces. The wide range of facilities available at formal parks was perceived as the main contributor to the high value of these sites.*
- 4.2 *The role of parks and gardens in meeting targets to increase people's levels of physical activity and improve health should also not be underestimated, along with far reaching wider benefits.*
- 4.3 *The quality of parks and gardens is excellent, with the average quality score of a formal park being 81%. Leek's Brough Park is the highest quality open space in the District, achieving a quality score of 100%. [NB these scores are based on the PPG17 auditors' own assessments.]*



- 4.4 *Although measures to increase the quality of existing parks and gardens in the District is highlighted as particularly important, application of the accessibility standards reveals that distribution of parks is uneven. In particular there are deficiencies in Biddulph. In contrast, almost all residents are within an appropriate distance of a country park. New provision is therefore recommended within Biddulph.*
- 4.5 *While provision in all rural settlements would be undesirable and impractical, consideration should be given to the implementation of the pocket parks scheme, where residents take ownership of local spaces.*
- 4.6 *It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of improved provision of formal parks in the Staffordshire Moorlands, that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework (LDF) and/or other delivery mechanisms, are:*
- 1. maximise the role that parks can play in striving to increase participation in health and physical activity across the District*
  - 2. continue to promote activities and alternative means of exercise at parks to maximise people's usage of them*
  - 3. ensure that the LDF contains policies that protect parks from development*
  - 4. drive a strategic programme of qualitative improvements across the District*
  - 5. seek to designate and develop 'community sports parks'*
  - 6. improve public transport and green corridors between country parks and settlements*
  - 7. provide a new formal park in Biddulph. This may be delivered by upgrading an existing amenity space or natural open space*
  - 8. consider the implementation of the pocket parks scheme in rural settlement across the District, focusing firstly on rural settlements where demand exceeds 1ha, specifically Werrington, Cheddleton, Blythe Bridge and Checkley.*

**Strategic response** [Note: 1.1 to 1.4 address point 1 at para. 4.6 above]

- 1.1 In Leek, focus activities and events on Brough Park (central), The Waste (links with Haregate), and Westwood Recreation Ground (Leek West and South Wards) at each of which locations strong and supportive community groups are linked with the sites; also at Pickwood Recreation Ground and Ladderedge Country Park.
- led by P&C Team; minimum 6 events per annum
  - key partner role for residents' groups

- 1.2 In Biddulph focus activities and events on Biddulph Grange Country Park (Biddulph North Ward but serves wider area), Biddulph Valley Park (accessible centrally to town) and Church Road Community Garden (Biddulph East), the latter two of which have supportive community groups associated.
- led by P&C Team
  - key partner role for residents' groups
  - further expand role of community groups at BGCP Visitor Centre
- 1.3 In Cheadle focus activities and events on the Cecilly Brook and Hales Hall Pool Local Nature Reserves and aim to forge connections from these sites to the rest of the town and Hamersley Hayes in particular.
- 1.4 Ensure activities and events programmes provide suitable opportunities to encourage healthy activity.
- led by P&C team
  - twice annual programme; minimum 40 events / activities per annum
  - priority focus on introductory health activities of walking

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1	P&C Team	Community groups NHS North Staffordshire	•	•	•	•	•
The aim is to promote a progressive increase in healthy activity by encouraging more people to realise and increasingly use and enjoy their local green spaces for the health benefit opportunities freely available in their immediate neighbourhood.							

[Note: 2.1 and 2.2 address point 2 at para. 4.6 above]

- 2.1 Develop short and medium walks with exertion levels tailored to appeal to people as a means of obtaining nationally recommended exercise levels. Measured routes with specific exercise ratings should be developed both within larger sites and linking sites to housing areas. Priority locations are likely to be Biddulph Grange Country Park, Biddulph Valley Park, Biddulph Valley Way, Ladderedge Country Park, Brough Park Fields, Cheadle Town Park and Cecilly Brook corridor.
- 2.2 Work with the NHS North Staffordshire and SMDC health promotion staff to provide opportunities for healthy activities and events and for the promotion of healthy walking and other activities within and around sites.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1	P&C Team	SMDC Communities Team Community groups NHS North Staffordshire	•	•	•	•	•
The aim is to promote a progressive increase in healthy activity by encouraging more people to realise and increasingly use walking opportunities available from their doorsteps.							

- 3.1 Work with planning policy and regeneration colleagues to ensure appropriate LDF policies and Supplementary Planning Documents.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1	P&C Team	SMDC Forward Plans	•	•			
Policies will set frameworks for developer contributions towards new and improved provision of green space in accordance with distance and quality standards as warranted by the development size and location.							

- 4.1 Ensure parks and country parks are managed to a high standard for access, biodiversity, health and safety, and horticultural standards to mirror those required for Green Flag accreditation.

- 4.2 Manage Country Parks and other principal sites to management plans drawn up on a 5 yearly basis.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1	P&C Team	Friends /Community groups Natural England			•	•	
- Wetely Moor SSSI due 12-13; Ladderedge CP due 13-14; BGCP due 13-14							

- 4.3 Brough Park will be managed to a management plan drawn up as part of the application for Green Flag.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1	P&C Team	Friends of Brough Park	•	•			
Management plan produced in 2010-11; Green Flag Application Jan 2012							

- 5.1 Sports Villages part of the play pitch strategy to be delivered by Sports Development/Leisure Centres

- 6.1 Liaise with Staffordshire County Council and other partners to prioritise the development of linkages between settlements and country parks in order to promote usage and encourage sustainable means of transport. An example could be to promote the Leekbrook Line as a green route to Ladderedge CP from the Leek South Ward.

- 6.2 Work with SCC and other partners to prioritise the improvement of public transport links between the rural settlements of the District, seeking to increase access to formal parks for residents located in these settlements.
- 6.3 Liaise with Cheadle Town Council to focus on increasing access to Memorial Recreation Ground, Cheadle, particularly for those residents in areas of deficiency to the north and west of the town. Achieve part of this by promoting Cecilly Brook as a green route through Cheadle.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
2 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team	Staffordshire Moorlands Countryside Management Liaison Group SCC Parish and Town Councils	•				
A transport topic will be raised in 2010-11 through the Staffordshire Moorlands Countryside Management Liaison Group to develop actions.							

- 7.1 Assess sites in Biddulph to identify potential for a formally recognised town park. Priority should be considered for a site in the north of Biddulph as this would also address a lack of amenity green space in that area. Whilst public consultation has tended to discount Biddulph Valley Park as a location for a formal park (due to its burgeoning semi-natural qualities, other areas in Biddulph would appear to be suitable. These include areas near to the new supermarket development in the town centre or at Halls Road Playing fields.

- 8.1 Identify sites in Werrington, Cheddleton, Blythe Bridge and Checkley of a suitable size (>1ha) and location for creation of pocket parks.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
2 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team	Parish and Town Councils Forward Plans Team	•	•			
- identify options 2010-11 with funding profiles for favoured sites - consultation on at least one site in 11-12 subject to likelihood of funding							

## **Provision for Children and Young People**

### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 7.1 *Equipped provision for children and young people was the overriding theme of consultations throughout the study. Residents expressed concerns over the quantity of provision, as well as highlighting that the quality of many facilities is insufficient and that facilities are perceived to be boring and not challenging.*
- 7.2 *The Staffordshire Moorlands Play Strategy provides a detailed overview of provision for children and young people in this area. This document supports the key*

*findings of that strategy and sets local standards which can be used to facilitate decision making. The key issues arising out of this document mirror those emerging during the preparation of the Play Strategy.*

- 7.3 *Analysis of existing facilities highlight that there is significant variation in the quality of sites although sites are distributed relatively evenly across the District.*
- 7.4 *There are particular priorities for new provision, particularly in Biddulph East, Leek East, Leek South, Cheadle South East, Cheadle West, Forsbrook, Werrington and Cellarhead.*
- 7.5 *Any new facilities developed should meet the suggested quality criteria and should provide exciting play opportunities for children and young people. Site assessments carried out at existing facilities should also be used to inform decisions on those facilities in need of enhancement.*
- 7.6 *Effectively providing facilities in the rural area is an important challenge and it will be essential to ensure that public transport links are maximised.*

### **Strategic response**

The recommendations from this assessment must be read in conjunction with the Council's Play Strategy approved June 2007. Mini play plans for each town or other location are proposed. These will summarise diagrammatically the requirements for each area and should include:

#### **Leek East**

- Pickwood recreation ground has £10k allocated for minor improvement but it requires more to bring it up to the standards described in the play strategy

#### **Leek South**

- Level of provision greatly improved in 2009 with new expanded play area at Westwood Recreation Ground and new provision at Woodcroft Wildplay area
- A site to the rear of the Prince of Wales Public House needs attention subject to funding and subject to local neighbourhood consultation and support
- A possible additional site is at The Carriageway at Hillside Avenue again subject to funding and neighbourhood support

#### **Cheadle South East**

- If LDF proposals are confirmed for this part of Cheadle the deficiency must be met as part of any new development.

#### **Cheadle West**

- Allocate new sites through the planning process or investigate options within existing green space eg. at Glebe Road subject to funding and local neighbourhood consultation and support

#### **Forsbrook**

- Significant recent investment at Forsbrook recreation ground through Playbuilder has improved the situation here however opportunities should continue to be

taken to further improve both this site and other suitable locations potentially e.g Elmwood Drive

#### Werrington

- existing locations are managed by the Parish Council
- liaise with the Parish Council over opportunities for funding and improvements

#### Cellarhead

- existing locations are owned and managed by Werrington Parish Council
- liaise with the Parish Council over opportunities for funding and improvements

#### Brown Edge

- A good location needs funding and support any new development will need to be supported by stand alone new provision

#### Biddulph

- Biddulph East will be provided through developments on the Church Road Recreation Ground
- Other sites in Biddulph are recommended for priority improvements or changes most notably St Lawrence's Recreation Ground, Slater Street and The Paddocks. In each of these cases it is likely the sites could be better designated for other amenity use with new sites sought in their place. This would be highlighted for local consultation through a mini play plan for Biddulph.

In addition to more traditional sites of fixed play equipment , numerous locations hold potential to provide an enhanced play experience particularly through use of the natural environment. Again these need to be identified in the mini play plans.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team	Parish and Town Councils Community Groups SMDC Forward Plans SMDC Communities Team SCC Children's Services	•	•			
Mini Play Plans developed sequentially as follows: Biddulph; Cheadle; Brown Edge and Endon; Werrington; Forsbrook and Blythe Bridge; Leek							

### **Allotments**

#### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 10.1 *There are currently nine allotment sites across Staffordshire Moorlands, totalling 7.90 hectares and equating to an overall level of provision of 0.09 hectares per 1000 population. Seven sites have waiting lists and it is evident that demand for allotments is increasing.*
- 10.2 *Results from the household survey show 44% of respondents consider the provision of allotments in Staffordshire Moorlands to be insufficient (over 30% had no opinion).*

- 10.3 *The majority of residents indicated that they would expect to walk to an allotment, hence an accessibility standard equivalent to a 15 minute walk has been set. This reflects the expectation for local provision.*
- 10.4 *Toilets, clean and litter free and good access were perceived to be essential if high quality allotments are to be provided. Graffiti and vandalism were identified as problems, highlighting the importance of security and safety.*
- 10.5 *The current distribution of allotments across the District is uneven. The application of the recommended local standards highlights a number of deficiencies, particularly focusing on Cheadle, Biddulph and several rural settlements.*
- 10.6 *The key priorities for improving the provision of allotments over the Local Development Framework period therefore include:*
- 1. regularly review, investigate and monitor demand for allotment provision and look for opportunities where demand is increasing through ongoing evaluation of waiting lists. Evaluation of demand should consider demand in areas where allotments are not currently provided as well as monitoring the usage of existing sites*
  - 2. ensure new housing developments contribute to provision of allotments as necessary*
  - 3. ensure that allotments are protected from development through the Local Development Framework and provide ongoing support to local providers*
  - 4. identify opportunities for improving the quality of allotments*
  - 5. identify opportunities for new provision in Cheadle, Biddulph Moor and west and north Biddulph*
  - 6. facilitate the provision of small allotment sites in Werrington, Forsbrook, Cheddleton and Endon*
  - 7. seek to improve the quality of existing allotment sites in order to ensure that all sites are of adequate quality to meet the needs of local residents*
  - 8. explore alternative opportunities for the provision of allotments including co-location at school sites*
  - 9. following the provision of additional allotments, promote the availability of sites to local residents maximising awareness of the opportunities available.*

## **Strategic response**

- 1.1 **Ensure that allotment provision is provided for in the LDF and is periodically reviewed.**

- 2.1 Include provision for allotments in the New SPD for development contributions.
- 3.1 Ensure that exiting allotments are protected from development through the LDF.
- 4.1 Work with town and parish councils to identify opportunities for both extending and improving the quality of allotments.
- 5.1 Work with Cheadle Town Council and other partners to identify new provision in Cheadle.
- 5.2 Work with Biddulph Town Council and other partners to identify new provision in Biddulph.
- 5.3 Continue to develop the Church Road Recreation Ground Community Garden in Biddulph East established with funding from NHS North Staffordshire.
- 6.1 Liaise with parish councils and other partners to seek opportunity for additional or extended allotment sites in Werrington, Forsbrook, Cheddleton and Endon.
- 6.2 As 1.1 above, ensure suitable sites are identified in the LDF
- 7.1 Offer to work with Leek Town Council to evaluate the existing management practices of allotments in Leek and investigate opportunities to provide half plots in order to accommodate more residents. In light of high levels of demand, identify opportunities to provide additional sites. Given the distribution of the existing sites, new provision should be considered to the south of the town.
- 7.2 Work with town and parish councils to seek to improve the quality of existing allotment sites in order to ensure that all sites are of adequate quality to meet the needs of local residents.
- 8.1 Work with town councils, parishes, schools, Transition Town Movement and through the LDF to explore opportunities for the provision of allotments.
- 9.1 Work with partners to advertise and promote allotments new and old in all areas where available.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
3 <sup>0</sup>	Forward Plans Team P&C Team	Parish and Town Councils SMDC Forward Plans SMDC Communities Team	•	•	•		



		NHS North Staffordshire					
<p>Allotments in the Staffordshire Moorlands have up to now been entirely under the management and planning of the town and parish councils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- inclusion of appropriate policy through the LDF will follow the LDF timescales and be primarily for the Forward Plans Team supported by the P&amp;C Team</li> <li>- development of a Community Garden led by SMDC P&amp;C team supported by NHS North Staffordshire is underway and on-going at Biddulph East</li> <li>- support is being given to Transition Leek to develop their community gardening ambitions for the Leek Parish</li> <li>- further partnership with Parish and Town Councils to be explored initially by inviting parish and town councils to set out their needs and intentions in light of the audit findings</li> </ul>							

## **Amenity Green Space**

### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 6.1 *The community interaction benefits of amenity green space are recognised, with residents identifying this type of open space as valuable to the local community.*
- 6.2 *Application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards illustrates the need for qualitative enhancements to a number of existing amenity green space sites. Amenity spaces can be particularly important to local residents in light of their close proximity to the home.*
- 6.3 *While the overall focus is on increasing the quality of amenity spaces, consideration should be given to new provision in some larger rural settlements, focusing firstly on settlements where the population exceeds 700.*
- 6.4 *It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision for amenity green space in Staffordshire Moorlands that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework and/or other delivery mechanisms are to:*
- 1. seek to improve the quality of amenity green spaces, aiming to achieve a minimum score of 75%*
  - 2. seize opportunities for new provision of amenity green space within the north of Biddulph and Biddulph Moor*
  - 3. seek to enhance the quality of existing amenity green space site within Biddulph, Cheadle and Leek*
  - 4. facilitate the provision of amenity spaces in settlements where the population exceeds 700 residents*
  - 5. ensure that amenity space is provided in new developments which fall outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space.*

## **Strategic response**

- 1.1 Identify priority sites for improvement especially larger sites and those in areas where amenity space provide the only informal recreational opportunity.
- 1.2 Identify improvements required and develop a programme of improvement across the district.
- 2.1 As part of the assessment for a new formal park in Biddulph (Parks and Gardens 7.1) assess the possibility for creation of areas of amenity green space in the North of the town particularly if a formal park is not created in that area.
- 3.1 In Leek we will seek to enhance the quality of existing formal parks in Leek to increase their value to the local community. We will do this by adoption of Green Flag quality criteria for Brough Park and Leek Cemetery. We will ensure that the quality of other sites is maintained through management plans or wider area management prescriptions where appropriate.
- 3.2 In Cheadle we will focus on enhancing the quality of existing amenity green space sites. This will include management and the provision of ancillary facilities. Particular consideration will be given to increasing access to sites for residents located in areas of deficiency to the north. This will be done by protecting suitable areas through the LDF and/or creating green links within the town.
- 3.3 In Cheadle we will also evaluate the value to local residents in the sites in question in order to determine the most appropriate future use. This will consider the current levels of use of the site as well as the quality and access.
- 3.4 In Biddulph seek to enhance the quality of existing amenity green space sites within Biddulph to increase the functionality of the sites. This may include providing ancillary accommodation.
- 4.1 Ensure that provision is included in the LDF for amenity green space in the following parishes:
  - Endon and Stanley CP
  - Brown Edge CP
  - Kingsley CP
  - Ipstones CP
  - Alton CP
  - Draycott in the Moors CP
  - Waterhouses CP
  - Caverswall CP

- Horton CP
- Bagnall CP

Include also the need for amenity green space in settlements devoid of other open space types.

4.2 We will seek to enhance the quality of existing amenity green space within the rural settlements through identifying priority sites and carrying out the necessary improvement. We will monitor demand for increased provision within the larger rural settlements where there is an existing deficiency and explore alternative solutions for the effective provision of amenity space through partnership working and inclusion in the LDF.

5.1 Where new development occurs we will, through the planning process, ensure that new amenity space is provided if the development falls outside of the recommended catchment of an existing amenity space site.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
1 <sup>0</sup>	Forward Plans Team P&C Team	Parish and Town Councils	•	•			
<p>- priorities in this section primarily met by ensuring appropriate inclusion in the LDF so following the LDF timescale but likely to be early in the programme presented here</p> <p>- monitoring and influencing new development to ensure policy compliance is an on-going function of the Parks and Countryside Service team and will be a principal means of securing future provision to the required standards</p>							

## **Cemeteries and Churchyards**

### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 11.1 *Cemeteries and churchyards can be significant providers of open space, particularly in rural areas. In towns they can represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land required, but are important for nature conservation.*
- 11.2 *Local standards for accessibility and quantity have not been set. Despite this, it remains important to consider the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards anticipating future demand as well as assessing the current level of provision.*
- 11.3 *The essential and desirable features set out in the quality standards should guide the future development and improvement of cemeteries and churchyards across the District. Site quality is currently good in comparison to other typologies. This is reflected in the findings of the household survey, with 54% of respondents thinking that the quality of sites is average while 45% of respondents felt that the quality was good.*

- 11.4 *In some instances, cemeteries and churchyards are the only type of open space within a village, making them a particularly valuable element of the rural green space network. Enhancements to accessibility and quality should be prioritised in these areas.*
- 11.5 *The wider benefits of churchyards are significant and it is wrong to place a value on churchyards and cemeteries focusing solely on quality and accessibility. In addition to offering a functional value, many cemeteries and churchyards have wider benefits including heritage, cultural and landscape values.*
- 11.6 *The key priorities for the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards across the district therefore include:*
- 1. recognise and promote the nature conservation value of closed cemeteries and churchyards and investigate the implementation of ecological management*
  - 2. enhance the quality of sites where appropriate using the essential and desirable features as a guide*
  - 3. the Council should keep under review the opportunities for the reuse, expansion or acquisition of suitable land to ensure the continued and sustainable provision of local cemeteries*
  - 4. the LDF should facilitate the delivery of additional cemeteries and should project need across the LDF period.*

## **Strategic response**

- 1.1 Carry out Phase 1 surveys on all closed cemeteries in SMDC management. Produce management plans to protect and enhance biodiversity on these sites.
- 1.2 Work with partners to encourage this approach across the District.
- 2.1 Assess sites against recommended standard (p.243 Open Space Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment).
- 2.2 Include a programme of improvements within the above management plans giving priority to those Churchyards in areas with little or no other public open space.
- 3.1 The provision and protection of suitable land for cemeteries can be incorporated into the LDF review.
4. The LDF will facilitate delivery of additional cemeteries and will project need across the LDF period.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
3 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team	Parish and Town Councils SMDC Forward Plans	•		•	•	

- closed church yard biodiversity survey 2012-13 and 2013-14
- liaise with Forward Plans team to ensure appropriate inclusion of future cemetery requirements with input from parish and Town Councils as necessary

## **Green Corridors**

### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 13.1 *Green corridors provide opportunities close to peoples' homes for informal recreation, particularly walking and cycling, as part of every day activities, for example, travel to work or shops. Therefore the development of a linked green corridor network will help to improve the health and well being of the local community. In this way, green corridors can be integral to the achievement of targets for increased active recreation.*
- 13.2 *There are already a large number of footpaths and green corridor networks within the study area and consultation indicates that they are well-used. Future opportunities and developments should seek to enhance the pathways along rivers and canals.*
- 13.3 *Future development needs to encompass linkages between large areas of open space, create opportunities to develop the green corridor network and utilise potential development sites. Development should consider both the needs of wildlife and humans.*
- 13.4 *A network of multi-functional greenspace will contribute to the high quality natural and built environment required for existing and new sustainable communities in the future. An integrated network of high quality green corridors will link open spaces, helping to alleviate other open space deficiencies and provide opportunities for alternative means of transport.*
- 13.5 *The key priorities for the future delivery of green corridors should therefore include:*
  - *the Council working in tandem with Staffordshire County Council, the PCT and other key partners to help maximise the use of green corridors and Public Rights of Way in the District and to deliver the PROW improvement plan*
  - *facilitating the protection and development of the network through the inclusion of appropriate policies in the LDF*
  - *capitalising on opportunities to address gaps in the network for cyclists and horse riders*
  - *driving a programme of qualitative improvements across the district including enhanced maintenance of footpaths and increased signage*

- *promoting the opportunities available to increase usage of green corridors*
- *undertaking a green infrastructure assessment in conjunction with adjoining local authorities.*

## **Strategic response**

- 1.1 Undertake an assessment of currently managed land to highlight possible green corridor routes within all areas. Examples include a route from Biddulph Valley Park through Halls Road Playing fields to the Biddulph Valley Way, or the promotion of the Leekbrook Line from Leek to Ladderedge Country Park.
- 1.2 Ensure that green corridors are incorporated into new developments to ensure that sites in these locations are connected or the new residents can access other locations within the town.
- 1.3 Work with SCC and other partners to ensure the delivery of a high quality rights of way network which is well promoted to the community.
- 1.4 Look for ways in which the acquisition and development of Cheadle railway line could proceed to provide a new amenity route within Cheadle matching the Biddulph Valley Way and Leek's Westwood to Rushton amenity routes and helping to meet amenity space requirements for the west of Cheadle.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
2 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team	SMDC Property	•		•	•	
- priority needed in relation to the Cheadle former branch line if no longer under consideration by SCC - liaise with SCC re Public Rights of Way through the Staffordshire Moorlands Countryside Management Liaison Group - green corridor assessment							

## **Natural and Semi Natural Open Space**

### **PPG 17 Audit Summary and Recommendations**

- 5.1 *Natural and semi natural open space is one of the most frequently visited types of open space in the District, indicated by 24% of respondents to the household survey. This emphasises the value of this type of open space.*
- 5.2 *In addition to the recreational value of natural resources, residents also frequently recognise the wider benefits of natural open spaces, particularly in terms of providing opportunities for biodiversity and habitat creation. The benefit of the abundance of accessible countryside in Staffordshire Moorlands is also acknowledged by residents.*

5.3 *The need to protect natural and semi natural open space from development was a key theme throughout consultation and while recreational opportunities should be encouraged, this should be balanced with conserving and promoting biodiversity.*

5.4 *Application of the recommended quality, quantity and accessibility standards highlights that the key priority for natural and semi natural open space is improvements to the quality of sites. Maximising access to natural and semi natural sites both within urban settlements and to those in the surrounding countryside should also be a key future priority.*

5.5 *It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision of natural and semi natural open space in Staffordshire Moorlands that should be addressed through the Local Development Framework and/or other delivery mechanisms are:*

- 1. identify opportunities for improving the quality of natural and semi natural open spaces both in terms of the wildlife and habitat values of the site, but also for recreational purposes*
- 2. maximise biodiversity on natural and semi natural open spaces through the implementation of effective management and maintenance regimes*
- 3. monitor the impact of recreation of natural and semi natural open spaces*
- 4. incorporate a policy protecting existing natural and semi natural open space within the Local Development Framework*
- 5. seek to increase access to existing natural and semi natural open spaces within the Biddulph area*
- 6. seek to improve the quality of sites in Cheadle*
- 7. seize opportunities to address the quantitative and access deficiencies in the east and south of Leek – this may be through the inclusion of semi natural open space within sites of another typology*
- 8. establish a network of accessible green corridors to link natural and semi natural sites within settlements to other types of local open space and to key settlements where residents would otherwise be deficient in natural and semi natural open spaces.*

## **Strategic response**

1.1 Carry out a process to prioritise sites to be brought into active management for biodiversity – prioritise sites in Cheadle see point 6 below.

1.2 Carry out an audit of site entrances and draw up a plan for improvements to maximise access to natural and semi natural open space sites by ensuring that entrances to sites are visible and that appropriate signage is provided.

- 2.1 Draw up management plans for individual sites or, where it is more appropriate, management prescriptions which cover a number of sites in an area.
- 2.2 Continue to manage already designated local nature reserves using 5 year management plans.
- 2.3 Assess the suitability of sites for designation as Local Nature Reserves such as 'The Waste' in Leek being a prime example.
- 3.1 Monitor the impact of recreational use on the biodiversity and quality of natural and semi-natural open spaces.
- 4.1 LDF policy addresses this
- 5.1 Develop a more natural area at Hot Lane Recreation ground to provide residents of Biddulph Moor with access to natural and semi-natural open space.
- 5.2 Scope opportunity for walking routes between Biddulph Grange Country Park and Biddulph Moor.
- 5.3 Promote Biddulph Valley Way both as site of natural or semi-natural open space in its own right but also as a route to Biddulph Grange Country Park, Whitmore Local Nature Reserve and the wider countryside.
- 6.1 Manage Hales Hall Pool, Cecilly Brook and Thorley Drive (non playing field areas) to costed management plans
- 6.2 Identify suitable areas for management including the northern reaches of Cecilly Brook .
- 7.1 Identify sites to the east and south of Leek which could incorporate some natural and semi-natural open space e.g Birchall playing fields, Pickwood Rec.
- 8.1 Work with SCC and other partners to encourage the creation of a network of green corridors with particular emphasis on Werrington, Upper and Lower Tean and Alton in light of deficiencies in natural and semi natural open space within the settlements.

1 <sup>0</sup>	Lead section	Key partners	11	12	13	14	15
2 <sup>0</sup>	P&C Team		•		•	•	



- designate Local Nature Reserve Status for 'The Waste' (Leek North Ward) 2010-11
- develop Hot Lane natural area 2010-11 (Biddulph Moor)
- prepare a specific programme of actions to cover the remaining actions in this section