

Give us your views

Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet

Consultation Document



Our draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy in brief and what we are consulting on

We have developed a new strategy for parks and open spaces in Barnet. The objective of the strategy is to ensure that Barnet's parks and open spaces are among the best in London.

We want everybody who lives or works in the borough (whether they use parks and open spaces or not) to give their views on the proposals in this strategy.

This consultation document outlines our vision for parks and open spaces by 2026 and our key proposals for how we are going to achieve this. For more detailed information you can read the detailed summary of the strategy which is provided as an appendix to this document and the full Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and background papers [here](#).

You can share your views by completing a questionnaire online at engage.barnet.gov.uk or by filling out a paper questionnaire that will be made available on request in libraries.

Why do we need this strategy?

Barnet has a unique blend of parks, open spaces, Green Belt and open countryside, which has helped to reinforce the impression of it as a leafy suburban borough with parks and open spaces forming part of this fabric.

But Barnet is set to change significantly, and over the next 25 years the borough will have one of the fastest rates of population growth across the capital and this growth will have to be accommodated in new housing.

This housing provision will be much more dense than is currently typical for the borough.

Urban parks and open spaces deliver a huge range of benefits for cities and the people that live and work in them. These benefits reflect many of the objectives that we have established for the economic success of the borough, the health of its residents and the quality of the environment with which they interact on a daily basis.

There is a strong opportunity for the council to secure significant resources for investment in parks and open spaces, we want to make sure that this investment will secure a range of economic, social and environmental benefits for people who live and work in the borough.

The strategy sets out how money might be invested, based upon:

- a survey of all the borough's parks and open spaces; this has included an assessment of the quality and value of all of the borough's parks and open spaces and the assets that these contain;
- an extensive engagement process that has gathered information from residents and stakeholders on what their future priorities for parks are.

But like other local authorities, we are facing very difficult decisions in terms of the level of resources we can apply to deliver services. The total Council budget for 2015/16 is £293 million and between 2015 and 2020 a further savings of £69 million will be needed, of this £1.7 million of those savings will be secured from the parks and green spaces budgets. We want to make sure that any investment we make in parks and open spaces is protected over time by improving standards of management and maintenance. We will also consider new ways in which parks and open spaces can be managed so that this new investment is protected in future.

What is our vision?

Barnet's vision for parks and open spaces 2026 is for a service that is:

- design-led, so that parks and open spaces can deliver the range of positive outcomes
- performance focused, using technology to increase efficiency
- community-focused, working with residents and getting communities involved
- pro-active and responsive, always looking to improve
- excellence-focused, aspiring to make Barnet a national leader in parks and open spaces.

It is proposed that this vision should be informed by a number of key principles:

- that we make the best use of the parks and open space assets in the borough to deliver the best range of benefits
- that we consider how best to manage the service in future to make these benefits sustainable

- that we measure performance in terms of how well these benefits (for health, education the environment and economy) are being delivered
- that we consider how to pay for, and sustain, a high quality service in future.

How will we achieve this?

The draft strategy includes a number of proposals to deliver this vision. These are based upon three sets of information:

1. The character of Barnet and its parks and open spaces:

- the physical characteristics of the borough's parks and green spaces
- the borough's current and future population (and the parts of the borough that will have the greatest growth in population)
- the amount of greenspace in Barnet and how this is distributed across the borough
- the quality and value of the borough's parks and open spaces and the individual assets within them.

2. The benefits that good quality parks and open spaces can deliver for cities and neighbourhoods:

- **economic benefits** – parks and open spaces can contribute to property value, make town centres attractive places to work and are places where people run businesses, are employed and acquire skills
- **social benefits** – free access to parks and spaces helps to keep people active and healthy, parks and spaces can support educational attainment and parks encourage people of all ages, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to meet and interact

- **environmental benefits** – parks sustain bio-diversity, help to prevent flooding, reduce pollution and moderate air temperatures.

3. What you have told us about your priorities for parks and open spaces:

- we have engaged with residents and stakeholders (both park users and non-park users) across the borough to find out how residents use the borough's parks and open spaces and how you would like them to develop in future.

We will use this information to develop new ideas about how parks and open spaces are managed in Barnet. These ideas will include:

- a capital investment strategy that will bring new resources into the borough's parks and open spaces. This investment will improve the quality of infrastructure in parks and will be based upon what residents and stakeholders have told us what matters to them
- a series of new policies for parks and open spaces that will deliver and sustain an improvement in the quality of parks and open spaces in Barnet
- exploring new options for managing and paying for parks and open spaces across the borough.

How will the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy affect me?

There are a number of ways in which proposals in the strategy will affect residents and the way in which they use parks and open spaces:

- the capital investment strategy will bring improvements to many parks and open spaces across the borough. Residents will have an opportunity to influence how money is invested in individual parks and open spaces. Informed by the consultation findings, detailed action

plans will be developed in the final strategy and these will describe how residents can get involved in decisions about future investment

- the new strategy will include a number of new policies, including proposals to:
 - improve facilities in parks and open spaces (e.g. playgrounds, toilets and cafes)
 - raise standards of management and maintenance
 - use parks and open spaces to enhance health across the borough
 - make parks and open spaces more accessible to schools
 - use parks and open spaces to limit the impact of climate change
 - support community involvement and volunteering.
- the strategy will consider ways in which parks and open spaces are funded and managed in Barnet and a number of pilot projects will be developed to explore these options.

These new options could include:

- the council continuing to manage parks and open spaces
- the council joining forces with neighbouring boroughs to manage parks and open spaces across a broader area of London.
- the council entering into a long-term contract with a private-sector company to manage our parks
- creating not-for-profit social enterprises to manage some of the borough's parks independently of the council
- creating a Trust to manage some or all of the borough's parks and open spaces independently of the council

- creating town centre improvement districts where local businesses and residents would make a financial contribution to the management of parks and open spaces in that area of the borough.

Whichever option or options are adopted there will be full consultation on the implementation and impact on specific parks.

What are we asking you?

We want to ensure that we get the views of those currently using parks and open spaces and those that currently don't use these services.

We will be asking for your views on our proposals for new policies that will define how parks are run, how and where we should spend money to improve parks and whether or not we should explore new ways to pay for parks.

Give us your views

Draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Barnet

Full Summary – Appendix to Consultation Document



Executive summary

Barnet has a great collection of parks and open spaces and these are an important part of what makes Barnet a green borough. People who live and work in Barnet enjoy access to formal parks and gardens, wild landscapes, extensive areas of greenbelt and leafy river valleys. Barnet's parks are places where people can take part in formal sport, visit a park café, take the kids to the playground or just walk the dog.

This strategy provides the council with a review of the quality of its parks and open spaces and suggests a range of opportunities that green spaces offer to enhance the quality of life and economic success of the borough. The overall objective of the strategy is to support the council's objectives for parks and open spaces as set out in the Corporate Plan: 'Barnet's parks and green spaces will be amongst the best in London'. The strategy links to a number of other pieces of work that consider health, wellbeing, sports provision and waste. All of these strategies are aimed at making Barnet a better place to live and work.

Currently Barnet has a unique blend of parks, open spaces, Green Belt and access to the countryside beyond London. This provision complements

an extensive pattern of housing with many residents having access to private green space. This has helped to reinforce the impression of Barnet as a leafy suburban borough with parks forming part of this fabric.

But Barnet is set to change significantly and over the next 25 years the borough will have one of the fastest rates of population growth across the capital and this growth will have to be accommodated in new housing. This housing provision will be much more dense than is currently typical for the borough.

Parks in Barnet will have to fulfil a new function in supporting the development of sustainable communities and attractive neighbourhoods and in bringing businesses and employment to town centres.

It is now accepted that urban parks deliver a huge range of benefits for cities and the people that live and work in them. These benefits reflect many of the objectives that we have established for the economic success of the borough, the health of its citizens and the quality of the environment with which they interact on a daily basis.

These benefits can be broadly grouped into three categories:

- economic benefits
- social benefits
- environmental benefits.

So that we can make well-informed decisions about how our parks and open spaces can deliver these outcomes, we need to understand their current condition. The last audit of our greenspaces was in 2009, so a key element of the strategy has been to survey all of the borough's parks.

Parks are for people and we would like residents and businesses to play an even greater role in determining how parks are managed and how they should function in future.

To develop this strategy, we carried out an extensive engagement with local residents and key stakeholders to find out what their priorities for the future are. This process of engagement will continue in a formal consultation that will be conducted in the winter and spring of 2016.

The engagement process and the quality and value assessment have established a broad range of priorities that will guide a future investment programme to improve the condition of the borough's parks and greenspaces.

Barnet has a relatively modest record in attracting inwards investment into parks and open spaces but this presents the borough with a strong opportunity to secure significant inwards investment from external funding bodies for projects focused on sport and heritage.

In common with all other local authorities, we are facing very difficult decisions in terms of the level of resources we can apply to deliver services.

This strategy suggests that we should consider other options for the future management and funding of parks and open spaces. This will ensure that any investment the borough makes in its parks and open spaces and the positive outcomes that this investment can deliver are protected in future.

These are exciting times for parks and open spaces in Barnet and this strategy establishes a road map for future investment, discussions around future funding and governance and an on-going dialogue between the council, residents, stakeholders and partners.

Through committing to these policies and implementing this strategy, the council will ensure that these key assets are enhanced and continue to tell a positive story about Barnet as a place to live and work.



Why do we need an Open Spaces Strategy?

Barnet has a great portfolio of parks and open spaces and greenspaces are integral to the cultural life of the borough.



The council recognises that a clear vision is needed to deliver a whole range of benefits for people who live and work in the borough. These benefits include:

- enhancing the physical and mental health of residents
- making Barnet a better place to live, work, learn and play
- joining communities together by creating new green links between different parts of the borough
- preparing the borough for the impacts of climate change by controlling flooding, reducing pollution and moderating temperatures
- protecting and enhancing the borough's cultural and natural heritage

The council is facing significant funding issues over the next five years and the Parks service will have to make a contribution to the savings that the council has committed to finding. The Open Spaces Strategy has been commissioned to help the council to consider options for alternative ways in which parks and open spaces services can be managed and paid for so that people living and working in the borough can continue to enjoy the benefits of good quality parks over time.



In order to deliver these outcomes the council needs to understand what it has in its parks. The council last undertook a survey of this kind in 2009.

Over the past six months, a survey of 199 parks and open spaces has been undertaken. This survey has recorded everything that each park contains – every bin, bench, gate, railing and every tree and area of planting.

During the survey, each asset has been photographed and its quality recorded. We have also assessed the overall quality of each park and open space against 'Green Flag' criteria ('Green Flag' is the national standard for parks excellence).

The Council will use this survey information to:

- make the management of parks and open spaces more efficient so that we can raise standards of maintenance
- compare the condition of the borough's parks now with their condition in 2009 so that we understand how things have changed
- guide a major investment in the borough's parks and open spaces over the next 10 years.

Barnet's parks and open spaces are extremely important to residents and the council needs to understand the aspirations of residents in terms of the future of the service. The council also wants residents to have a greater say in how parks are managed and developed in future.

In preparing the Open Spaces Strategy, the council has engaged with a broad cross-section of people who live and work in the borough to gauge their views of what the borough's parks are like today and what they should be like in future.

As the strategy evolves, the council will continue this discussion so that the plans for the service as a whole and for individual parks across the borough have been thoroughly discussed and are agreed upon.



Policy context

This Open Spaces Strategy has been developed in the context of a number of local, regional and national policies and strategies developed and adopted by the London Borough of Barnet.



The following policies and strategies have influenced and affected the development of the Open Spaces Strategy.

Strategic planning context including:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The London Plan
- Green Infrastructure and Open Environments: The All London Green Grid

Barnet's Local Plan including:

- Barnet's Core Strategy
- The Barnet Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Barnet Open Space, Sport and Recreational Needs Assessment

Barnet's wider policies and strategies including:

- Barnet Corporate Plan 2015-20
- Barnet Council Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) Strategy
- Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-20
- Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy (2015-20)
- London Borough of Barnet Playing Pitch Strategy (to be delivered Spring 2016)
- The Draft Municipal Recycling and Waste Strategy (2016 to 2030) (to be considered in January 2016)

- Barnet Community Asset Strategy (in consultation phase due to be adopted summer of 2016)

Benchmarks and standards including:

- The London Plan (2015) London Open Space Hierarchy



- English Nature - Accessible Green (ANGSt)
- National Playing Fields Association - Six Acre Standard

Best practice guidance including:

- Green Spaces, Better Places – the report of the Urban Greenspaces Taskforce (2002)
- CABI Space publications including:
 - ‘Open Space Strategies – Best Practice and Guidance’ (2008 - produced jointly with the Mayor of London)
 - Does Money Grow on Trees’ (2005)
 - ‘Making the invisible visible – the true value of parks assets’ (2009)
- Green Flag
- Re-thinking Parks – by Peter Neal commissioned by NESTA, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery
- NESTA ‘Re-thinking Parks’ pilot projects
- Third Report of the Natural Capital Committee

Other studies including:

- ‘The State of UK Parks’ (HLF: 2014)
- ‘Green Society – policies to improve the UK’s urban green spaces’ (Policy Exchange; 2014)
- ‘Cities Alive – re-thinking green infrastructure’ (Arup; 2014)
- ‘Places to be – green spaces for active citizenship’ (Fabian Society; 2015)



Baseline characteristics

This section sets out the physical context for the Open Spaces Strategy and describes how this will inform current and future provision. It addresses aspects of the natural environment, townscape and socio-economic characteristics and provides a summary of the existing park and green space assets across the borough.

Topography and habitats

Barnet lies on the edge of the Thames Basin and its land form is characterised by gentle undulations shelving to the south. Much of the borough lies on London Clay with more fertile alluvial soils laid down along the river valleys of the Silkstream, Dollis and Pymmes Brooks. Grassland of one type or another is the dominant habitat in Barnet. Considerable areas within the borough are devoted to woodland including Watling Chase Community Forest which covers 190 km².

Rivers and wetlands

Three rivers within the borough remain at the surface and form distinctive habitats and valuable green corridors. The most significant open water habitat in the borough is the Welsh Harp Reservoir, a SSSI that supports a wide variety of wildfowl.

Settlement patterns and land use

Settlement patterns reflect the absorption of former villages as the capital has expanded and follow the transport corridors of the Midland Railway line and the High Barnet branch of the Northern Line. The centre of the borough is semi-rural and contains significant areas of Green

Belt. Across the northern edges of the borough, housing is relatively low density and typically suburban.

Around Cricklewood, Colindale, Hendon, Finchley and Golders Green settlement patterns have become denser but individual distinctive town centres remain.

Demographics

Demographic projections suggest the need for the Parks service to respond to changes in population over the next 20 years.

- Barnet's population has been steadily increasing and is now projected to increase by 21% from 2011 to 2041.
- Between 2014 and 2021, the population of children (up to the age of 16) across the entire borough is projected to increase by 15.4%.
- Between 2014 and 2021, the number of residents of retirement age and over will increase by 6,400 (12.6%).
- By 2021, Colindale will have become the most heavily populated ward, having a 50% increase in population between 2014 and 2021. Over the same period, the populations of Golders Green and Mill Hill will have increased by 30% and 10% respectively.

Ethnicity

Residents classifying themselves as ‘White British’ constitute the largest ethnic group in Barnet. There is a slightly higher percentage of Indian residents and a lower proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean residents compared to London as a whole. Research does not suggest that the uptake of parks services is closely linked to ethnicity nationally.

Crime

While some parks do have greater reported crime than others, crime within the borough’s parks remains low.

Housing provision

The relative proportion of dwellings that are terraced houses, flats and apartments is an indicator of current and future demand for parks and open spaces as these accommodation types will often not include the provision of private open space. Accommodation for much of Barnet’s population growth will be through high density housing with minimal private space, implying a further dependence upon public space for access to the natural environment and places for recreation.

Greenspaces provision – Barnet parks assets

The Local Plan Development Management Policies (DMP) proposes that ‘where a development is in an area of deficiency for publicly accessible open space new open space should be provided in line with these standards:

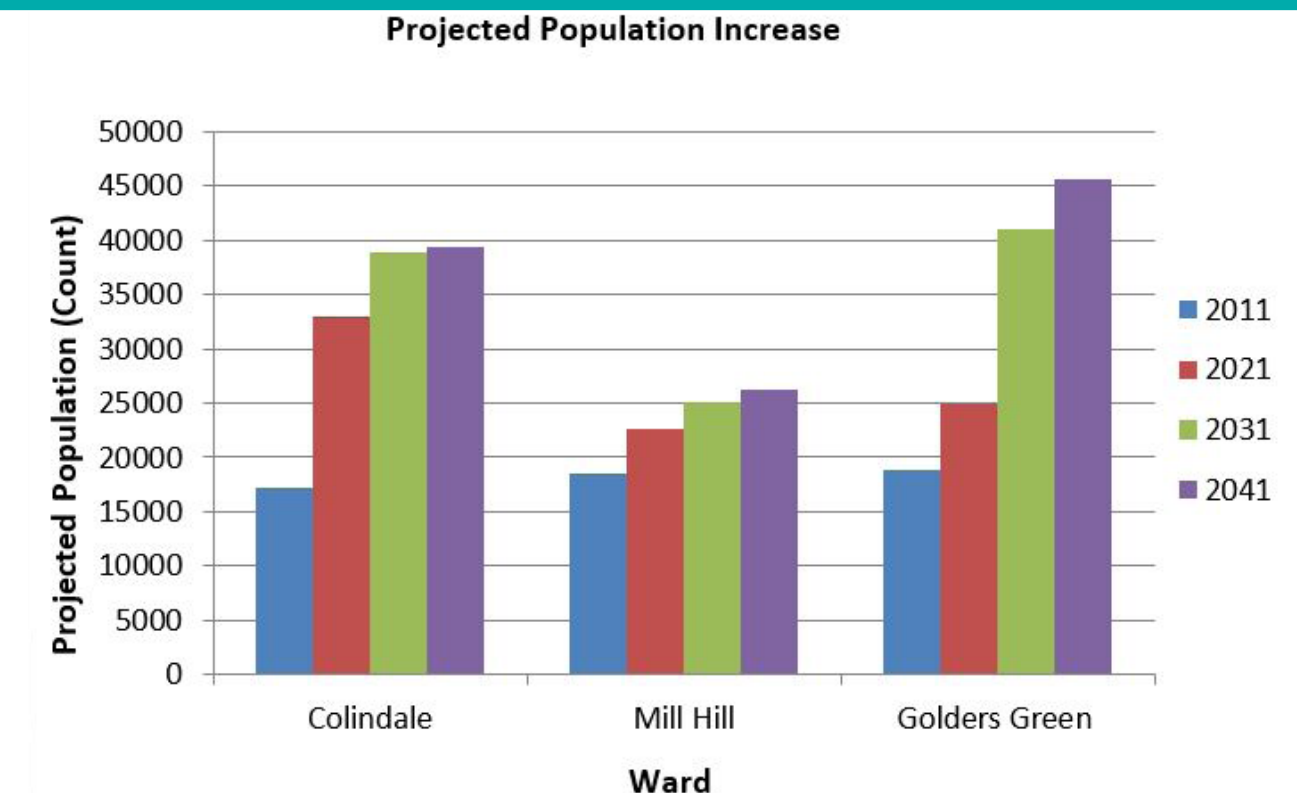
- Parks (1.63 hectares per 1,000 residents)

In 2015, the total area of parks in Barnet is 465.2 Hectares (approximately 5.4% of the total area of the Borough). Based on the 2105 population of Barnet (367,266), this represents parks provision of 1.26 Hectares per 1,000 head of population.

This the level of provision of parks falls below the standard set for parks in the Local Plan.

Projected population growth in Colindale, Golders Green and Mill Hill wards

Source: GLA: London Population Projections 2013



However, it should be noted that Barnet has total greenspace provision of 888 hectares. The ‘greenspace’ definition includes parks, playgrounds, sports sites, natural and semi-natural greenspaces and other miscellaneous sites. This equates to nearly 10% of the area of the borough and 2.41 Hectares per head of population.

Assessment of parks provision by area	
Chipping Barnet	244.03 Hectares
Finchley and Golders Green	80.07 Hectares
Hendon	141.1 Hectares

This assessment of open space provision across the borough excludes schools, private sports clubs and cemeteries, SLOAP (sites left over after planning) sites, verges, private gardens and private areas of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. If these areas are factored into an assessment, the level of greenspace provision across the borough is considerably higher.

There are significant variations of provision across the borough.

The provision of parks in the following Wards falls below the current borough average in terms of parks provision per 1,000 head of population:

- Brunswick Park, Burnt Oak, Childs Hill, Colindale, East Finchley, Edgware, Golders Green, Hale, Hendon, Oakleigh, West Finchley, West Hendon and Woodhouse
- High Barnet, Totteridge, East Barnet, Coppetts, Garden Suburb and Mill Hill all have levels of provision above the Borough average.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an important factor to be considered when accessing the provision of parks and open spaces. A high quality open space can be of limited value if access to it is restricted by major barriers such as transport corridors and rivers.

Local parks are evenly spread across the borough and overall most areas of the borough are well served, however a section of the borough from New Barnet to Oakleigh Park and parts of North Finchley, East Finchley and an area to the North East of Hendon do not lie within 400m of a local park.

North and East Finchley and Brent Cross/Cricklewood have a particular deficiency in District Park provision.



The value of parks and open spaces

Cities in the UK have witnessed a revival in parks provision over the past two decades. Following a period of long-term decline, a recognition arose that good quality parks and open spaces can make a significant contribution to the quality of urban life.



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.

While parks and green spaces are often highly valued by local communities, public parks have been largely assessed as having limited cash value because park land can't be used for development.

In reality, parks contribute to economies, to communities and to the environment. These contributions are both tangible (because they are based on buildings, land and infrastructure that have financial value) and intangible (because benefits are related to health, educational, environmental and social outcomes).

Benefits accruing from good quality parks and open spaces can be grouped into three categories.

Economic benefits include:

- the positive effect that good quality parks have on property prices
- the contribution that good quality parks make to town centres as places to work
- parks as places where businesses operate, where people are employed and acquire skills



- the contribution that parks can make to the tourist economy

The social benefits of parks are many and varied:

- parks are free and many people are already using greenspace for sports and exercise. This can have a positive impact on the cost of treating coronary heart disease, type II diabetes and poor quality mental health
- parks can be used for food growing to encourage people to further enhance their life chances by exercising regularly and eating well
- parks can enhance educational performance because children who have regular contact with the natural world

have higher self-esteem and enhanced educational attainment

- people strongly identify with their local park as an essential part of the fabric of their neighbourhood
- parks are diverse, encouraging people of all ages, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to meet and interact

Parks are places where people can access nature but are also an important part of natural systems.

Environmental benefits include:

- limiting flood risk caused by extreme weather events
- moderating temperatures (parks are cooler than streets)
- absorbing pollutants from the atmosphere



- sustaining bio-diversity and enhancing the connection between the city and the countryside

In developing the Open Spaces Strategy, we have undertaken an assessment of the value of each park and open space in Barnet. We have based this assessment on the positive benefits that have been outline above.

Having considered these benefits, we've developed a way of assessing the value of parks and open spaces in Barnet.

Parks will be particularly 'valuable' if they are:

- in a part of the borough with higher levels of deprivation
- in a part of the borough that is at risk from flooding
- in a part of the borough with poorer air quality
- in a part of the borough with higher than average temperatures
- in a part of the borough that has lower levels of satisfaction
- in a part of the borough where there is low level of use of parks services



Assessing quality and value

To help us to develop our thinking about how to improve the borough's parks and open spaces, we need to understand their current quality and value. This section describes how we've done this.

Quality assessment

In developing the Open Spaces Strategy, we have assessed all of the borough's parks and open spaces in terms of quality and value. We have assessed quality because:

- it will help us to understand whether the borough's parks have got better, stayed the same or deteriorated in quality
- it will help us to decide where we should invest money to improve the quality of Barnet's parks

- a combined assessment of quality and value will help us make decisions about which of the borough's parks are most important

When assessing quality, we've used a set of measures based on 'Green Flag' standards.

We've used the following criteria to assess quality:

- what facilities does the park or open space have?
- how welcoming is the park (e.g. we assessed noise, safety and security, lighting and access)?
- how clean was the park?
- how good was the information in the park?
- what natural features did the park or open space have?

Using these criteria, we awarded each park a score of Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor.

The same criteria were used when quality was last assessed in 2009, so we can compare whether parks have improved, deteriorated or stayed the same.

Overall we have found that parks have deteriorated since 2009. Five parks were classified as Excellent in 2009 but in 2015, only

one park achieves this rating (Golders Hill Park). Similarly, fewer parks are classified as Good in 2015 compared with 2009 while more parks are classified as Fair.

Parks – Quality trend 2009-2015

	2009	%	2015	%
Number of Excellent parks	5	7	1	1
Number of Good parks	15	21	9	13
Number of Fair parks	38	52	49	69
Number of Poor parks	15	21	12	17
Parks awaiting data	-	-	2	3
Total number of parks	73	100	73	100

Value assessment

We have also developed a set of criteria to assess the value of parks and open spaces. These are based on the ‘positive outcomes’ that have been discussed in section four of the strategy.



We've used the following criteria to assess value:

- is the park in an area with a lower level of parks provision?
- is the park in an area which will have high population growth?
- is the park in a deprived part of the borough?
- is the park in an area of high housing density?
- is the park in an area with high incidence of coronary heart disease?
- is the park in an area with high levels of obesity?
- is the park in an area with high incidence of clinical depression?
- do schools already use the park?
- is the park close to a school?
- is the park in a high flood risk area?
- is the park in an area with poor air quality?
- is the park in an area with higher than average temperatures?
- is the park a designated wildlife site or corridor?
- is the park close to a town centre?
- is the park in an area of lower than average resident satisfaction?
- is the park of historical or heritage significance?
- does the park support events?
- does the park have an established 'Friends Of' group?

We have also compared the scores for value in 2015 with those in 2009. In common with the quality assessment, we have found that there are fewer high value parks in 2015 and that most parks are now of medium value.

Parks – value trend 2009-2015

	2009	%	2015	%
Number of high value parks	8	11	4	5
Number of high-medium value parks	19	26	20	27
Number of medium value parks	38	52	48	66
Number of low value parks	8	11	1	1
Total number of parks	73	100	73	100

We have combined the scores for quality and value to give us four values: high quality, high value; high quality, low value; low quality, high value and low quality, low value.

By assessing parks using these criteria we can make better decisions about where investment should be prioritised and which parks should be prioritised in terms of future management and maintenance.

Asset data collection

In order for us to make better decisions about how to manage the borough's parks and open spaces and so that we can become more efficient, we need up to date data on exactly what we have in our parks. This section describes how we've collected this data.

In developing the Open Spaces Strategy, we have gathered a comprehensive set of data about what we have in our parks. We have recorded the position and condition of the following in 199 of the borough's parks:

- bin
- bench
- picnics table
- fencing – metal
- fencing (timber)
- fencing – other
- wall
- gates – single
- gates – double
- surfaces – bound
- surfaces – unit paving
- surfaces – unbound
- bridge
- pergola
- signage – wayfinding
- signage – interpretation
- water feature
- multi-use games area
- tennis court
- basketball court
- cricket net
- skateboard facility
- fixed play equipment
- outdoor gym equipment
- car park
- cycle stand
- bollards
- building



This data was collected from the following:

- public parks
- children's play areas
- natural and semi-natural green spaces
- green/blue corridors.
- smaller pieces of land – (the brief allowed for the collection of data from 10 pocket parks)

Section eight of the strategy describes how we will use new technology and the data we have collected to improve how we manage parks and open spaces, making it easier for parks users to report issues and for us to address these issues more quickly.

Example of the asset collection process (Clitterhouse Playing Field and Clarefield Park):

- each dot represents the location of an asset
- each colour represents a different asset type (e.g. yellow/ bin, green/ play equipment etc.)



Engagement and future consultation

In order to develop the strategy, we've talked to people who live and work in the borough about how they use our parks, why parks are important to them and how they would like to see them develop in future. This section describes this engagement process.

The council is committed to involving local people in shaping their area and the services they use.

By engaging with local communities, the council aims to provide them with opportunities to:

- understand what the Council does
- express their views and find out how they can get influence how the council makes decisions

Parks are highly regarded in Barnet. In 2015, 70% of those asked thought the borough's parks and open spaces were either good or excellent.

Given this, in developing a new strategy for parks and open spaces, it's important for us to understand how people use parks and how they would like them to change in future.

While developing the strategy, the council has discussed these questions with people who live and work in the borough. This engagement has included discussions with:

- people who use parks regularly
- people who don't use parks
- parks 'Friends' groups
- Neighbourhood Forums
- Residents' Associations
- schools and young people

- older residents
- people from black, asian, minority ethnic and refugee organisations
- faith groups
- people with disabilities



We've used a variety of methods to contact people and to have discussions. These have included:

- online questionnaires
- a Facebook page
- park events
- town centre consultations on the street
- presentations and Q and A sessions at meetings
- focus groups
- workshops

- face to face interviews
- telephone interviews

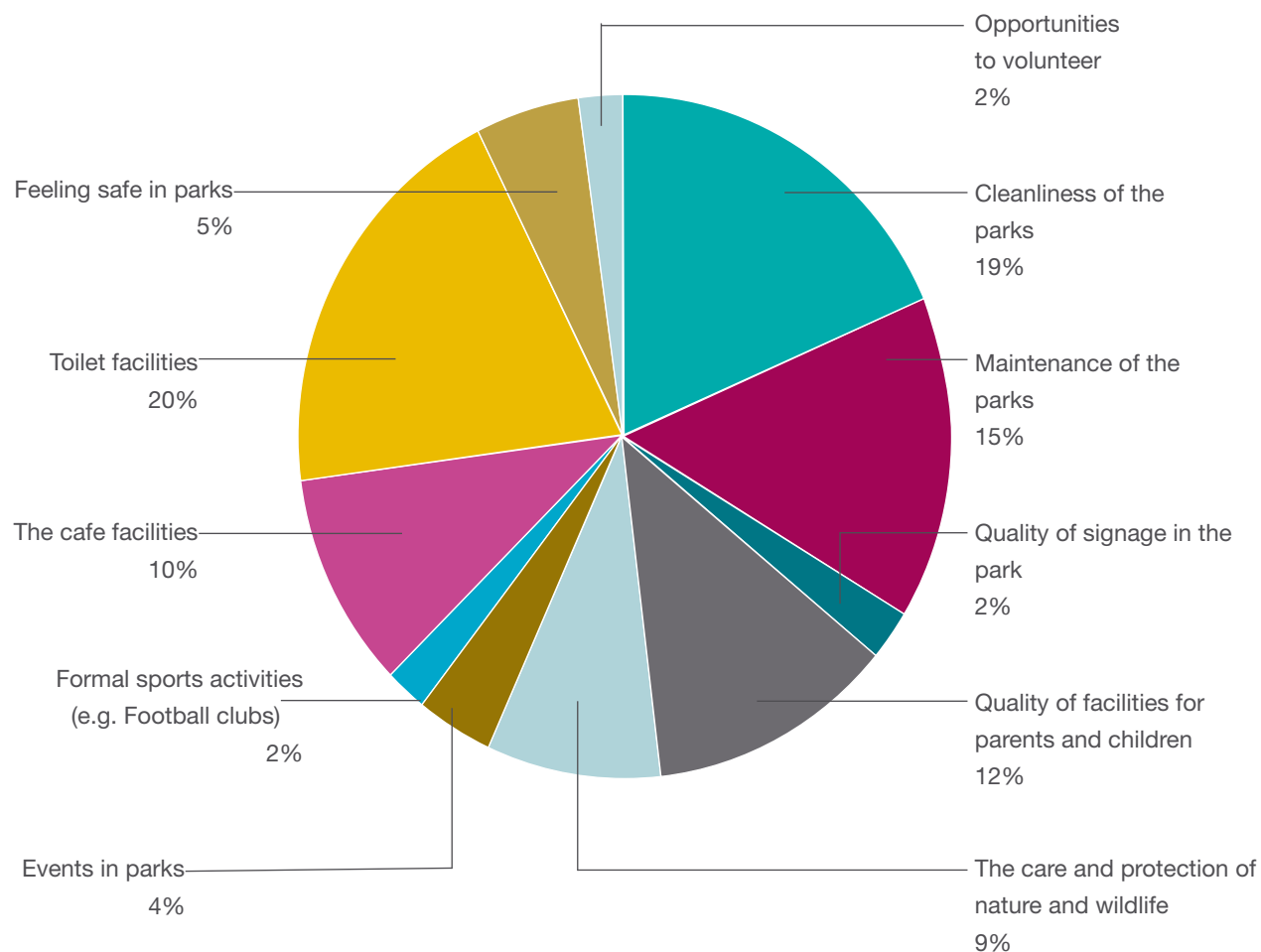
We have received and processed nearly 1,000 completed questionnaires and over 600 hundred individual comments.

This process has given the council a significant set of information about perceptions of the boroughs parks and aspirations for the future. We will use this information when we consider how the council should invest in parks and open spaces.

The council wants to continue the dialogue about how parks and open spaces will evolve and how the service will be delivered in future with people who live and work in the borough. A formal consultation will be carried out between January and March. We will consult with the same range of stakeholders and use the same techniques during this consultation.



Which three things need most improving in your local parks and open spaces?



Future challenges

Barnet is facing significant challenges in terms of the services it provides to residents. Some of these challenges are faced by all local authorities, other are specific to Barnet. This section discusses some of these challenges.

Resources for parks

Barnet will reduce council spending between 2015 and 2020 and the Parks Service will have to make a contribution to this saving and make further efficiency savings.

Although the borough's parks do generate money (through events, concessions and hires), this can't be significantly increased without there being an impact on day to day uses of greenspace.

Population growth

The population of Barnet will increase significantly over the next 20 years and much of this population growth will be accommodated in higher density housing where people will have little or no access to private garden space. This will place additional pressure on the borough's parks and open spaces (especially in the south and west of the borough where the greatest population growth is forecast).

Climate change

Barnet needs to prepare itself for the impacts of climate change and parks can play a major role in limiting these impacts. Barnet's river valleys can absorb more rainfall, limiting the risk of flooding. Barnet's parks can absorb pollution and CO2 and have a cooling effect on the borough generally.

Barnet's Parks Service

In order to deliver our aspirations for an improved parks service (including achieving 80% resident satisfaction with the borough's parks) and in order to meet savings targets, we need to make the delivery of parks services more effective. Section ten of the strategy looks at alternative ways in which the parks service might be delivered.

If the Parks Service continues to be delivered by the council, it needs to be:

- design-led, so that parks can deliver the range of positive outcomes described in section four
- performance focused, using technology to increase efficiency and assesses performance
- community-focused, working with residents and getting communities involved
- pro-active and responsive, always looking to improve
- excellence-focused, aspiring to make Barnet a national leader in parks



Emerging policies

The Open Spaces Strategy has assessed the quality and value of the borough's parks and the positive contribution that parks can make to the quality of life in Barnet. A number of new policies will be developed to deliver these positive benefits:

Parks provision

- create new parks to address deficits in provision
- consider creating a 'Regional Park' in Barnet
- develop distinctive parks that reinforce the identity of neighbourhoods
- make town centre parks more attractive to help make the borough's economy more successful
- establish new green networks to link parks together
- make parks safer by designing out crime hotspots
- make better and more varied playgrounds
- create new sports hubs with first rate facilities
- provide more toilets in parks
- improve parks facilities and encourage more park cafes and other businesses

Parks maintenance

- improve maintenance and get the basics right (litter, grass cutting, bin emptying and dog fouling)
- measure maintenance performance through the use of modern technology

Parks and the environment

- using parks to limit the impact of climate change –flooding risk control, control of pollution and cooling
- safeguarding bio-diversity across Barnet

Parks and health

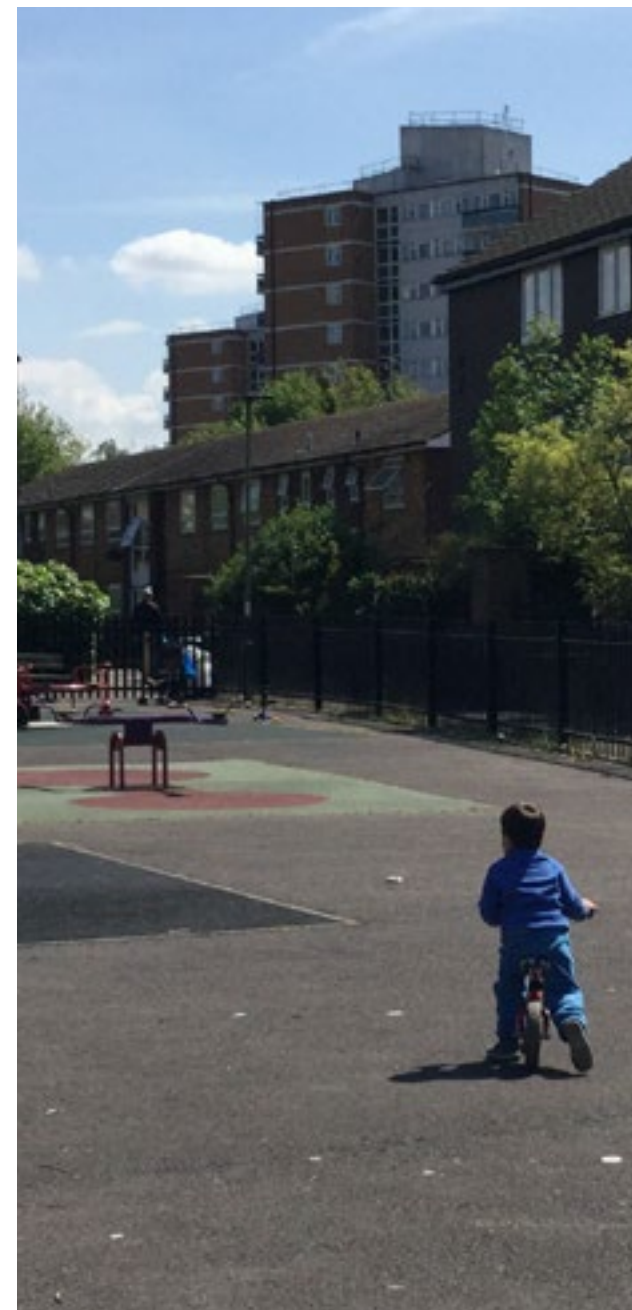
- using parks to prevent disease with a focus on coronary heart disease, type II diabetes and mental health

Parks and learning

- make parks more accessible for schools
- develop Forest School Learning across the borough
- invest in training and skills for staff, apprentices and volunteers

Parks and the community

- support stronger Friends groups
- actively encourage volunteering and community involvement in parks



Capital investment strategy

The past 20 years have witnessed a significant influx of capital funds into parks and open spaces in many areas of the UK. There are major opportunities for the council to invest in parks and this section describes possible sources of funding and how we might invest this funding.

Barnet has a relatively modest record in attracting investment into its parks and open spaces sector, but this now presents the council with an opportunity to significantly improve its greenspace infrastructure through a targeted investment programme over a 10-year period.

Heritage park investment

The HLF, in partnership with Big Lottery, remains the single most important contributor of capital funding to parks investment projects across the UK through its 'Parks for People' programme.

Through an assessment of Barnet's parks portfolio, four sites have been identified that could potentially attract HLF funding over a 10-year period:

- Friary Park
- Oak Hill Park
- Hadley Green
- Hendon Park



Sports facilities investment

In parallel with HLF funding, major capital investment opportunities are offered by a number of sports funders.

Barnet has not been as active as neighbouring boroughs in securing this investment in recent years and there is a considerable future opportunity to transform the outdoor sports offer across the borough as a consequence.

Potential level of HLF investment in Barnet over a 10-year period

Site	HLF investment (£m)	Barnet capital match (£m)	Total budget (£m)
Friary Park	3	0.75	3.75
Oak Hill Park	2	0.5	2.5
Hadley Green)	1.75	0.45	2.2
Hendon Park	1.5	0.375	1.875
TOTALS	8.25	2.075	10.325

Sports hub investment in Barnet

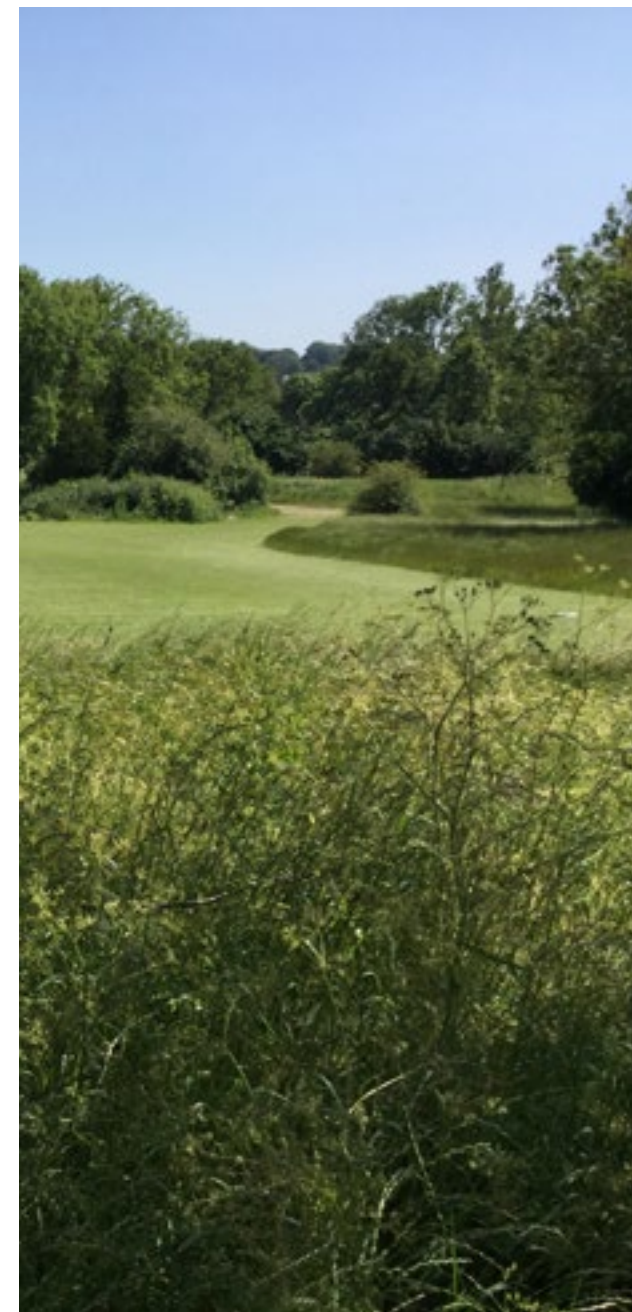
Site	Sports development opportunity	Funder
Copthall	Cricket pavilion	ECB
	BMX	Sport England
	Rugby facilities	RFU
Barnet Playing Fields	Changing facilities	Football Foundation
	Cricket squares	ECB
West Hendon Playing Fields	Changing facilities	Football Foundation
	3G pitch	Private Investors
	Cricket squares	ECB

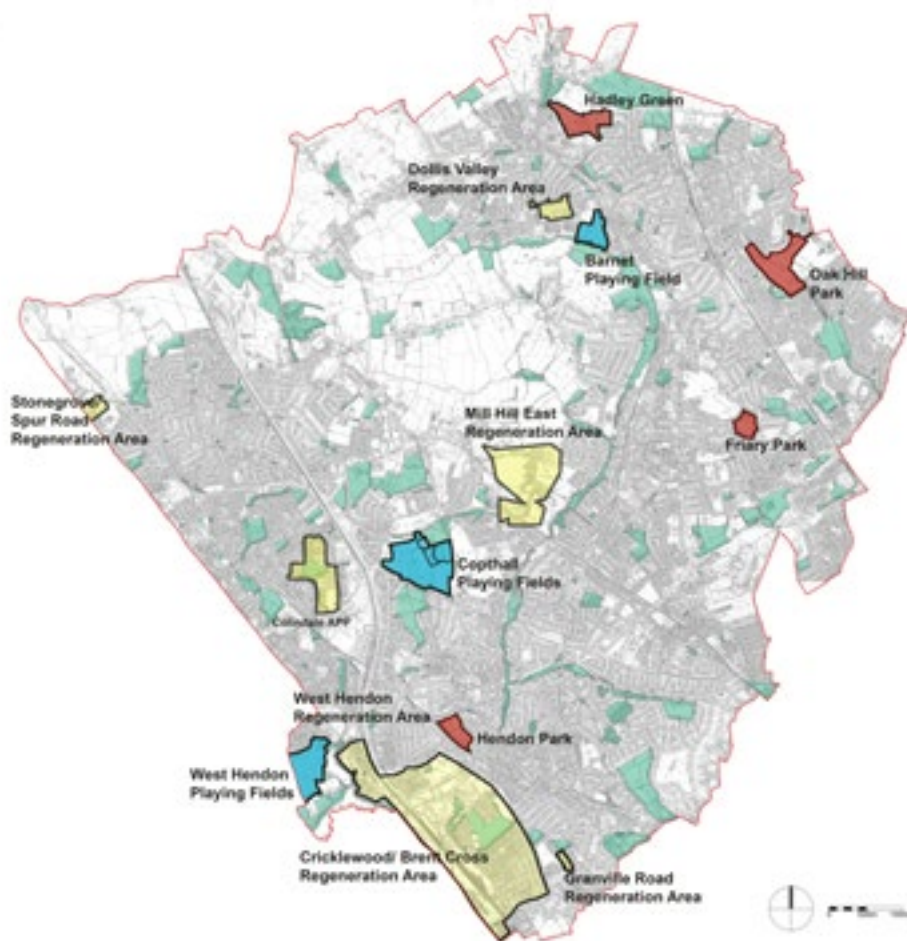


The Football Foundation currently offers grants of up to £500,000 per scheme through its Premier League and FA Facilities Scheme

Football Foundation funding can be augmented with resources from other funders (e.g. the London Marathon Trust, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), the Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)) to develop multi-sports hubs that can support a variety of facilities.

A number of 'sports hub' sites have been identified, potentially providing a geographical spread of elite sports facilities across the borough to augment the current focus on grass pitch provision.





Regeneration area investment

Barnet Council has identified eight regeneration and intensification areas across the borough:

- Dollis Valley
- Mill Hill East
- Granville Road
- Brent Cross/Cricklewood
- West Hendon
- Colindale
- Grahame Park
- Stonegrove/Spur Road

Seven of these regeneration areas within Barnet will include new high quality greenspace. This will result in an investment of approximately £20 million in new parks across the borough.

Investment from all of these sources will be evenly distributed across the borough, but more will be spent in the south and west of the borough because this is where population growth will be greatest over the new 20 years.



Barnet's own capital investment

We also intend to use some of the council's own resources to improve parks across the borough.

We are proposing to invest to support the delivery of the positive benefits described in section four and to respond to the themes that residents have identified during the engagement process.



Engagement process key themes		
Strategic theme	Engagement theme	Investment opportunity
Health	Improved personal fitness	Green gym programme Trim trail programme Cycle route programme Green ways and green routes
Education	Better playgrounds	Playground investment Forest school learning centres School partnerships to develop facilities for nature and ecology study
Community safety	Personal safety in parks	Designing out crime hotspots Improving visibility, lighting and patrolling
Economy	Better facilities in parks	Bringing park buildings back into use Promoting new café and concession outlets
Demographics	More investment in the more densely populated parts of the borough	Focus on investment in the south and west of Barnet
Place	Signage and interpretation Toilet provision	Parks signage project Better entrances Refurbish and repair buildings and facilities
Green infrastructure	Better access to nature	Tree planting programme Sustainable Urban Drainage System and flood plain enhancement

Future funding and governance

Barnet is having to reduce the amount of money that it spends on delivering services and parks will have to make a contribution to this saving.

This is an issue for many local authorities across the UK. In response to this, a considerable amount of research has been undertaken to look at new ways in which parks might be funded and managed in future so that they can continue to provide benefits for communities across the UK. This section considers some of the options for future funding and management that the council might consider so that Barnet's parks continue to deliver these benefits.

The council has a clear vision for the future of the parks service:

'Barnet's parks and green spaces will be amongst the best in London' and to achieve this 'The council will develop more innovative ways of maintaining its parks and green spaces, including through greater partnerships with community groups and focus on using parks to achieve wider public health priorities for the borough.'

To fulfil this aspiration, we will have to look at alternative ways to raise funds for parks and consider new ways of managing them.

New sources of income could include:

- charging for some services
- increasing the number of events and concessions in parks
- increasing levels of sponsorship in parks
- increasing the amount of community resources being drawn on for parks
- increasing the financial contribution made by planning gain funds
- issuing bonds and increasing commercial financing
- increasing local taxation
- capturing the value of environmental contributions made by parks
- securing more money from funds and trusts
- using parks land for other purposes



Future management and funding options

In developing the Open Spaces Strategy, we have considered a number of options for new approaches to the funding and future management of parks in Barnet. We will consult residents and stakeholders on all of these options as part of the process of adopting the strategy.

Option 1 – retaining the status quo

Section nine of the strategy suggests ways in which the current service might be reformed to deliver to higher standards.

Option 2 – shared public services

This option involves working with other local authorities to manage parks services (possibly in combination with other environmental services such as waste) across a larger part of London. This can generate savings but can lead to a loss of local control.

Option 3 – Third part contract management

Some local authorities have entered into long term contracts with the private sector to deliver parks services. These arrangements can deliver considerable efficiencies and a range of community outcomes but can be undemocratic if not properly set up.

Option 4 – Social enterprises and partnership

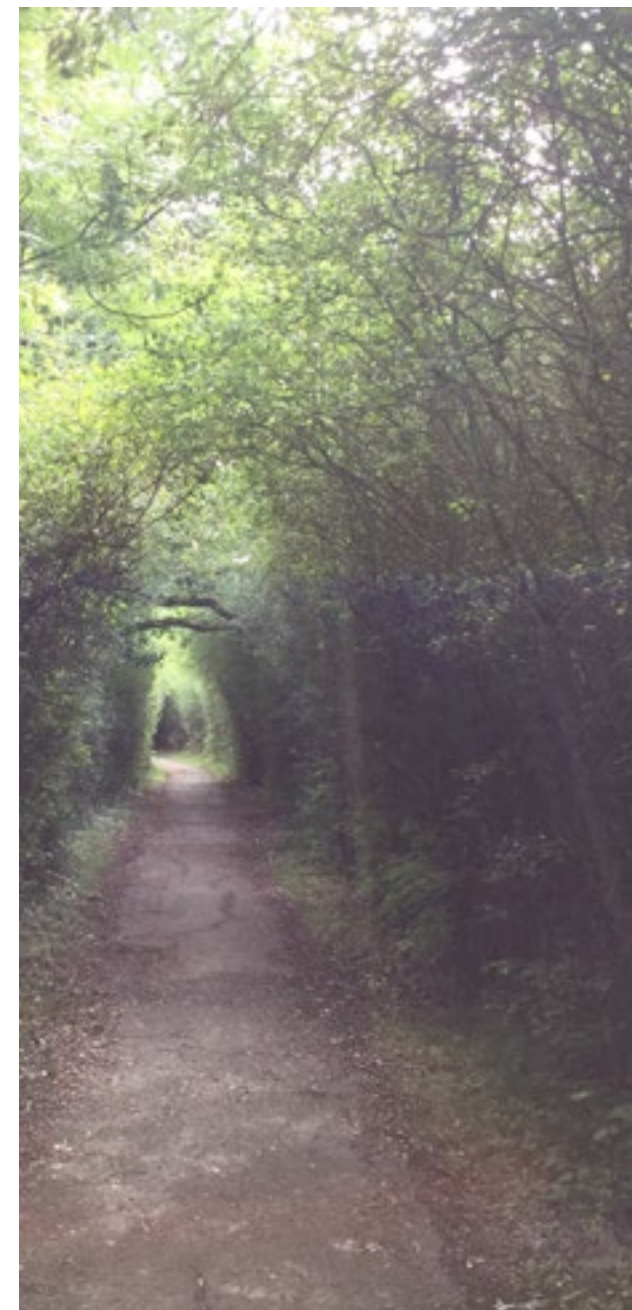
This option would involve creating social enterprises to manage parks and open spaces. This option would give local residents a considerable say in how parks are managed. There is not a well-developed social enterprise sector in Barnet so this option would require funding and support for it to be successful.

Option 5 – trusts and foundations

This option would involve transferring some or all of the borough's parks assets into a trust that would manage these parks in future. The advantage of this approach would be that a trust would be able to make long term plans for the borough's parks. Start-up and administration costs can be high and longer-term funding is best achieved through a large capital endowment.

Option 6 – precepts and levies

This option would involve asking local residents and businesses to contribute to the cost of managing parks and open spaces. Many Business Improvement Districts across London raise similar levies to pay for better streets and greenspaces. This would give residents and businesses the opportunity to directly influence the quality of services being provided but a clear rationale would have to be provided to justify a local tax.



Discussion

The objective of the strategy is to deliver our aspiration for a better parks service.

Some of these options might deliver this aspiration and could be assessed through a series of pilot projects.

The strategy should propose a way forward based on a number of principles:

- We make the best use of the parks and open space assets in the borough to deliver the best range of benefits
- We consider how best to manage the service in future to make these benefits sustainable
- We measure performance in terms of how well these benefits (for health, education the environment and economy) are being delivered
- We consider how we might create and develop an endowment to pay for and sustain a high quality service in future.



For more information visit engage.barnet.gov.uk
If you would like to request this consultation in an alternative format
please email: ruth.miller@barnet.gov.uk or call 020 8359 4642