



PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

PROJECT TITLE: A1763 London Borough Of Barking and Dagenham Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
Client: The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

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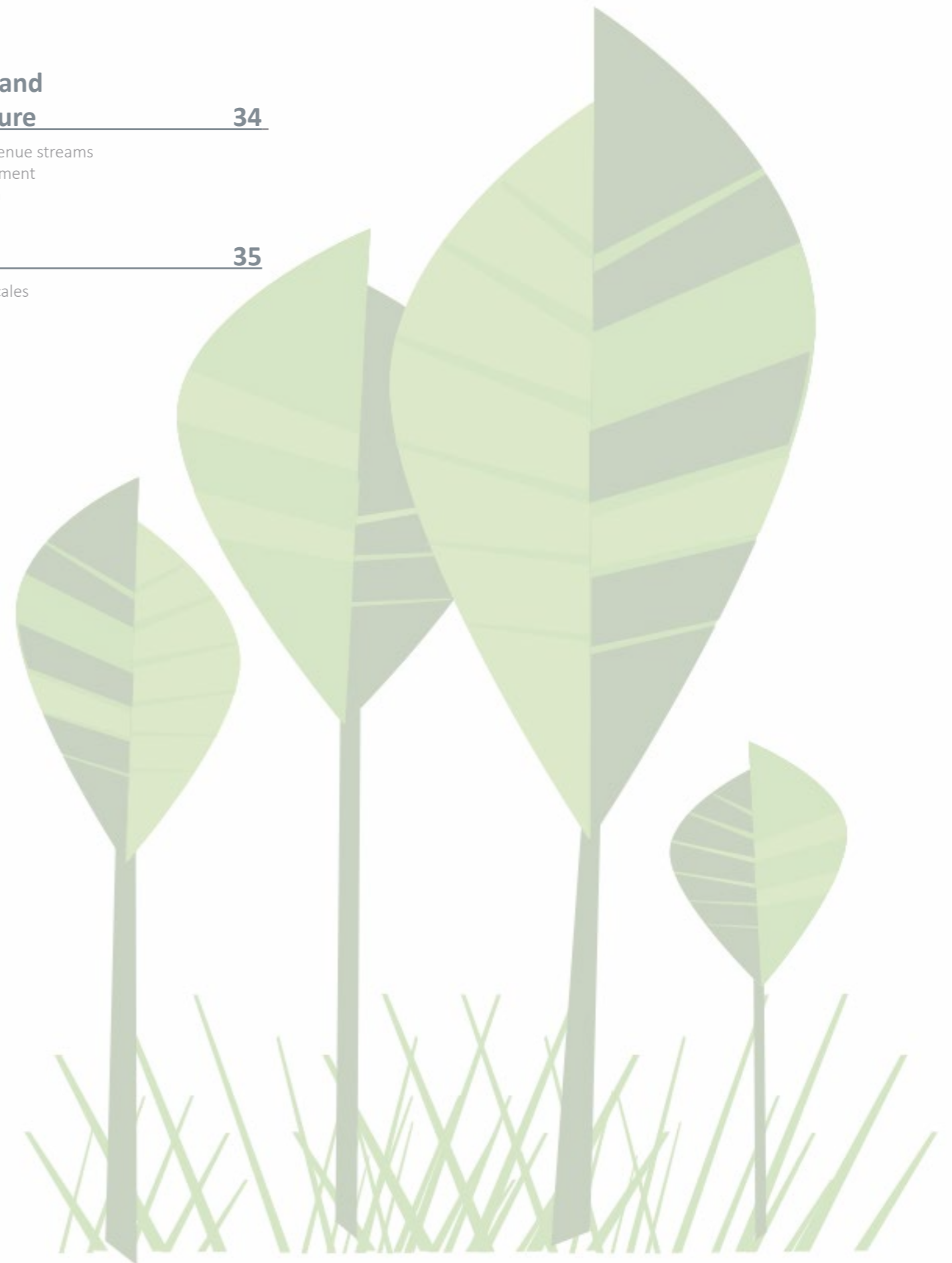
Acknowledgements

The project team would like to thank LB Barking and Dagenham for contributing to the analysis, providing the necessary data and guidance in a timely matter.

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List of Abbreviations

ANGSt	Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard
CO2e	Carbon equivalent
CNCA	Corporate Natural Capital Account
GIS	Geographic information systems
LBBD	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
MENE	Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment
NICE	National institute for Health and Care Excellence
ONS	Office for National Statistics
ORVal	Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool
OSA	Open Space Assessment
SEG	Socio-Economic Group





FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOREWORD

Executive Summary

Barking and Dagenham has a great collection of parks and open spaces. Whether these are associated with historic houses or were created at a time of rapid housing development in the 1920's, these spaces are a vital part of the fabric of the borough. Parks are great places to get fit and healthy, to play, to walk the dog, to meet and make friends and to enjoy nature.

Barking and Dagenham is going to experience a period of rapid housing growth with over 35,000 new homes being provided at Barking Riverside, Castle Green and other sites over the next 20 years. As was the case in the 1920's, new public open space will be at the centre of these new developments. However, we want to be sure that all of the borough's existing parks and greenspaces are also benefitting local communities as much as they can.

Recent research has clearly demonstrated the range of positive outcomes that good quality parks can deliver. Everybody understands that parks are great places to become fit and active and enjoy sports, but parks are also places where people are employed, can learn new skills, volunteer and they play a vital role in absorbing pollution and preventing flooding and urban warming. In this Strategy, we've looked at a new way of assessing the value of these benefits (Corporate Natural Capital Accounting- CNCA). We can use the evidence that CNCA provides to support the case for more investment in the borough's parks and green spaces.

We want Barking and Dagenham's parks to deliver as many positive outcomes for the economy, for communities and for the environment as possible. To help us plan this, we have assessed the current quality of the borough's parks and compared this with the quality assessment we carried out in 2003. This

has told us that we have some work to do to improve the quality of our parks so that they can deliver in the way that we want them to. Equipped with this quality assessment and the CNCA report, we can look at ways in which we can improve our parks over the next 10 years. We'll look at how we can use the council's own resources and at what funding we can bring in from outside to pay for these improvements.

We think the best way to improve parks is to work in partnership with local communities and organisations. To prepare the strategy, we've consulted widely across the borough, gathering the views of residents, whether they use our parks or not. We've incorporated what you've told us into the strategy recommendations and want to continue to work with you to deliver these ideas by helping you to establish 'Friends' groups for parks and by supporting volunteering and training initiatives. We also want to work with you to implement a programme of immediate investment to fix some of the issues you've identified

In common with many councils, the borough is facing a significant challenge in terms of funding and we need to consider the best way to deliver and sustain the benefits we all want to see. The strategy looks at new ways of doing things and considers if there might be different ways to run and pay for parks in future.

These are exciting times for Barking and Dagenham and we want parks to be a key part of the future borough just as they have in the past. By committing to this strategy and Action Plan, we can be confident that parks will continue to tell a great story about Barking and Dagenham as a place to live, learn and work.



Councillor Saima Ashraf
Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for community
engagement and leadership





THE PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

Barking and Dagenham has some wonderful parks, open spaces, nature reserves and playgrounds. Barking and Dagenham's parks are much in demand but some of the borough's parks are not as good as they could be.

2.8 million

More than 2.8 million visits to Barking and Dagenham's parks every year

(ref: ORVal, Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool)

The value of good quality parks and open spaces is now understood more clearly than ever before, so there are good reasons for investing in the borough's parks. There is also a clear need – the population of the borough is set to increase by 48% between now and 2037. Most of these new residents will be living in high density housing with little or no access to private gardens. The borough's parks and green spaces will help people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and will give free access to the outdoors and the natural world. Barking and Dagenham's parks need to be ready to face this challenge.

13%

Over 13% of Barking and Dagenham's surface area is set out as parks and greenspace

Barking and Dagenham is facing some immediate issues that good quality parks can help to address. The Action Plan section of the strategy will propose ways to address these issues.

- Barking and Dagenham has a very young population. The borough needs to have good quality play facilities in parks to encourage children to stay active and healthy
- Barking and Dagenham has high levels of obesity and long-term illness. We need to make the borough's parks more attractive to encourage people to adopt an active lifestyle
- Climate change is an issue facing us all. Parks can help to limit the impact of flooding, of urban warming and of air pollution. We need to make sure that parks can continue to deliver these outcomes

We want to develop an ambitious vision for the borough's parks that can be delivered by a practical and realistic plan of action. The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy will look at how parks can benefit local communities identifying priorities for investment and management over the next ten years. We'll base these decisions on an assessment of the current quality of Barking and Dagenham's parks and open spaces.

To make sure that the strategy is delivering what residents want, we've completed a comprehensive residents' survey and a broad programme of consultation and engagement. This has included school children, youth groups, individual parks friends and user groups, elected members, council departments and wider network of residents and stakeholders.

2.1 Enhancing place, identity and quality of life

97%

97% of people think that parks and open spaces make their neighbourhood a nice place to live

(Ref: GreenSpace. (2010).GreenSTAT visitor survey system)

Parks are a really important part of Barking and Dagenham's heritage. The lands of Barking Abbey once covered the whole of the borough and in medieval times, manor houses like Parsloes and Valence controlled country estates. In time and as London rapidly expanded, these former estates became the public parks we know today. Much of the borough's housing was built between the wars and parks became the centrepieces of these new estates (refer to Fig.2.1).



Fig.2.1- Historical photo of Becontree Estate, circa 1960's

Looking ahead, the borough has ambitious plans for growth. The population of the borough is set to increase dramatically and these new residents will need for better transport and community facilities.

Parks and open spaces can help people to become more healthy and active, are great places to relax, to play, to meet friends and to hold events. They also help to make urban life more sustainable by supporting food growing, biodiversity, improving air quality and controlling flood risk. Most important of all, parks are free.

We want to make sure that parks continue to be safe and welcoming to all, making the borough a great place to live and work.

2.2 The Council's strategic vision

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is one of a number of initiatives that the council is adopting to shape the future of the borough (refer to Fig.2.2).

2.2.1 The Borough Manifesto

Barking and Dagenham's Borough Manifesto sets out the council's long-term vision. The Manifesto suggests ways in which health, housing, education and the environment need to change over the next twenty years.

The Manifesto proposes:

- A much cleaner borough, and particularly its streets, parks and front gardens
- A borough of cohesive communities with a renewed sense of community spirit
- A great place to live and work and for businesses to settle and grow
- More facilities for young people
- More services for older people to keep them active

The Manifesto suggests that parks and open spaces can help to deliver these priorities.

- By maintaining parks to better standards
- By updating and repairing worn-out children's play and leisure facilities
- By ensuring parks are safe and easy to use, particularly for children and young people.

This strategy will be looking at ways in which parks can deliver these outcomes and others besides.

2.2.2 Delivering sustainable growth – the Growth Strategy

The council's Growth Strategy talks about creating neighbourhoods places with a clear sense of character. The borough's parks have a fundamental role to play in this process.

The Growth Strategy identifies locations for new developments as well as a programme of estate renewal. Parks and open spaces will be at the centre of these projects (see Fig.2.3)

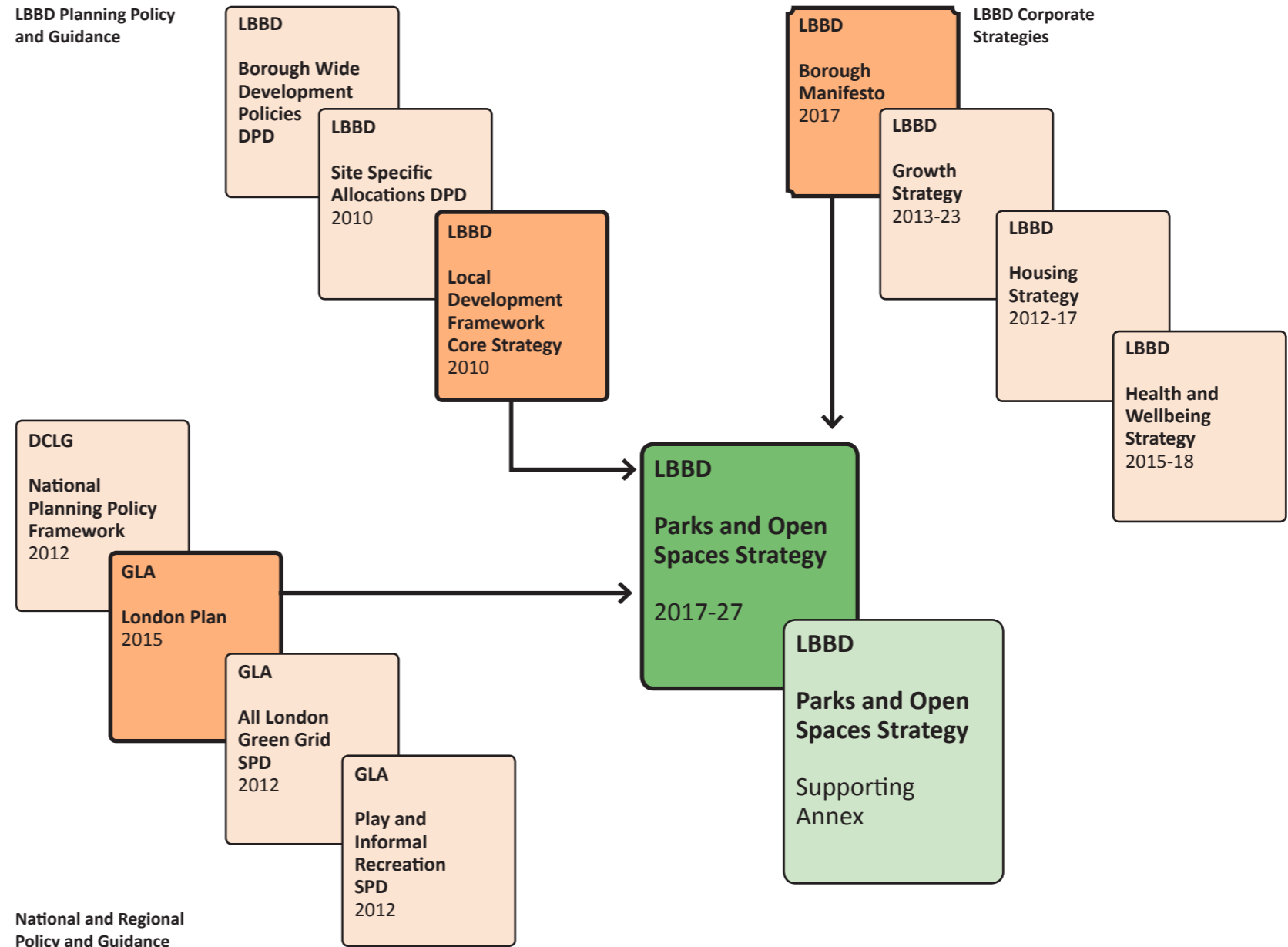


Fig.2.2 - National and local strategies and frameworks organogram

2.2.3 National and local planning policy

As a key document that will shape future planning, the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy also needs to reflect national and local planning policy:

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (2012) emphasises that parks and open spaces can deliver 'a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities'¹. The strategy includes an up-to-date assessment of the quantity and quality of the borough's parks and open spaces, giving us the evidence we need to decide how to improve the borough's parks and how to deliver more benefits for communities.

The *London Plan* (2015) describes a hierarchy for the city's parks and open spaces, seeks their protection and promotes the creation new spaces.

The *Barking and Dagenham Local Plan* (2011) refers to the council's Strategy for Parks and Green Spaces (2004). This acknowledges that 'there is a good level of public open space in the borough, but that public satisfaction with parks and other open spaces is below the London average'. The planning vision for 2025 proposes a major improvement in the borough's environmental sustainability by connecting parks 'by a network of tree-lined streets, wildlife corridors, and cycle paths'.




The specific policy for the Green Belt and Public Open Spaces (CM3) sets out the protection of a number of local public open spaces designated as District Parks, Local Parks and Open Spaces and Small Open Spaces. The protection of all of the borough's existing parks and open spaces from development will be a principal aim of this strategy.

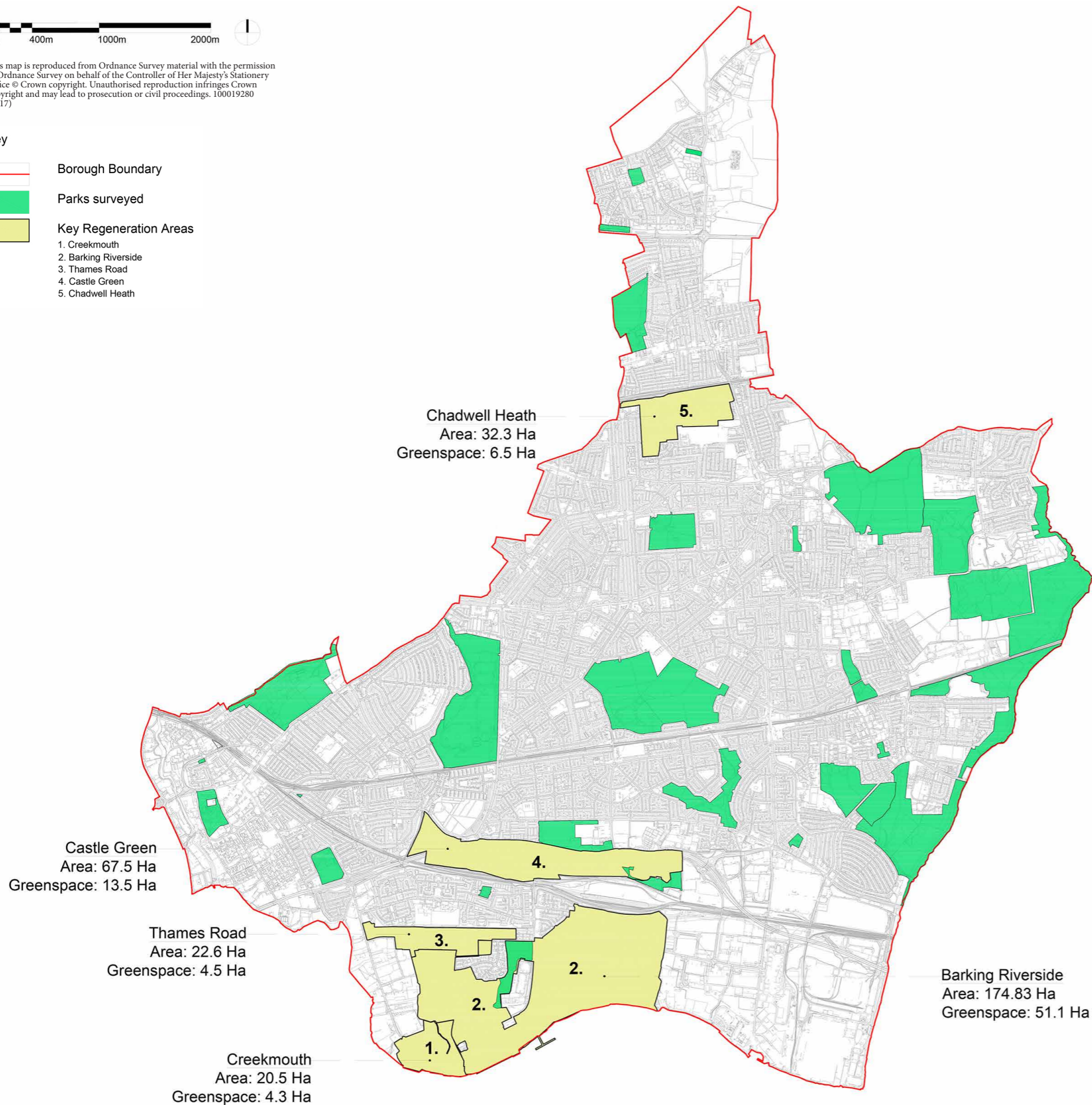
Fig.2.3 - Map of parks, development and renewal projects



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Key

-  Borough Boundary
-  Parks surveyed
-  Key Regeneration Areas
 - 1. Creekmouth
 - 2. Barking Riverside
 - 3. Thames Road
 - 4. Castle Green
 - 5. Chadwell Heath



2.2.4 Responding to wider strategies

Parks can also help to deliver a range of other important objectives:

- The *Housing Strategy*² emphasises the need to create and maintain popular and attractive neighbourhoods.
- The *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment* looks at ways in which parks can offer a variety of health programmes. These need to encourage more use of parks by every age group
- Barking Riverside is part of NHS England's *Healthy New Towns* initiative. This will look at ways in which green spaces and waterways can help to improve health.

2.3 Challenges facing public parks

Whilst it is clear parks and green spaces have an important role to play in making the borough a great place to live and work, funding for parks is under pressure. Across the UK parks budgets have fallen significantly and Barking and Dagenham faces similar pressures.

The council recognises the importance of parks to quality of life. In this strategy, we are looking at innovative park projects and models of good practice so these benefits can be secured in the long term.

NOTES

- ¹ National Planning Policy Framework, 2012, page 52
- ² Barking and Dagenham Housing Strategy 2012 – 2017



WHY PARKS MATTER

Over the past twenty years, there has been a revival in the quality of urban parks. Local communities have always valued good quality parks but there is now a lot of evidence that greenspace can contribute significantly to the quality of urban life in many different ways.

The benefits that parks can deliver can be grouped into three main categories:

ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

- Good quality parks make town centres attractive, helping to sustain their economic success and making them attractive places to work and set up business
- Good quality parks support the value of homes
- Parks are places where people work, run businesses, volunteer and gain skills
- Good quality parks are tourist destinations in their own right, boosting the tourist economy

£35 million

the annual value of volunteering in Britain's parks is up to £35 million

(ref: Greenspace (2003) Community Networking Project – final report)

SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Parks are free to use and diverse; parks are open to all irrespective of gender, age, ethnic background, or religion
- Parks can have a positive impact on some of the most serious health conditions affecting the UK population – coronary heart disease, Type II diabetes, stroke and clinical depression
- Regular contact with the natural world can significantly help children to achieve better results at school
- Parks are central to a sense of place and people strongly identify with their local park as an essential part of their neighbourhood

50% cut

take a daily brisk walk in the park can cut the risk of heart attack, stroke and Type II diabetes by 50%

(ref: Bird 2002: Green Space and our Health)

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Parks help to limit the impact of extreme weather events and can prevent flooding
- Parks absorb pollutants from the atmosphere
- Parks are cooler than the streets surrounding them
- Parks sustain biodiversity and forge stronger connections between the city and the surrounding countryside

Where greenspace occupies more than 50% of land surface, temperatures are up to 7°C lower than elsewhere. This effect can be experienced up to 300 metres from the park edge (ref: European Environmental Agency:2012)

1 tree



a single tree can compensate for 3,000-10,000 car kilometres a year in terms of carbon and nitrogen emissions

(ref: Trees and Design Action Group: 2010)

NATURAL CAPITAL ACCOUNTING

Natural Capital can be defined as the world's stocks of natural assets. These include the air we breathe and the water we drink but also the world's geology its soils and all living things.

Natural Capital provides us with a range of 'ecosystem services' which make human life possible.

The most obvious ecosystem services include the food we eat, the water we drink and the plant materials we use for fuel, building materials and medicines. But there are many more.

Until now, the cost of maintaining parks and open spaces has been measured using a traditional accounting method. This does not capture the value of the ecosystem services provided by parks and open spaces or the value of the economic, social and environmental benefits that they can deliver.

In developing the Strategy, we have used a new form of accounting (Corporate Natural Capital Accounting- CNCA) to capture the value of the ecosystem services that are delivered by parks and greenspaces.

The CNCA balance sheet shows that when £1 is invested in parks, the return to communities in terms of the value of benefits delivered by parks is in excess of £27.

This will make it easier for us to make a strong case for investment in parks in the future.





4.1 What parks can deliver for Barking and Dagenham

In the Borough's manifesto the council has identified a clear set of priorities for the future development of the borough.

- A much cleaner borough, and particularly its streets, parks and front gardens
- A borough of cohesive communities with a renewed sense of community spirit
- A great place to live and work and for businesses to settle and grow
- More facilities for young people
- More services for older people to keep them active

In the Strategy, we have described ways in which good quality parks and greenspaces can deliver benefits for people, for communities and for the borough as a whole. In the Action Plan, we'll consider how we can deliver these benefits through detailed programmes and initiatives across the borough. In this section, we'll consider the most important targets for the strategy:

4.2 Community health and wellbeing

Barking and Dagenham has some very challenging health statistics. The borough has significantly higher levels of childhood and adult obesity than both regional and national averages. The number of people diagnosed with diabetes was higher than the average for England. The prevalence of smoking in the borough is worse than the average for England and is rising.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By making parks more attractive and distinctive to encourage more people to use outdoor space and adopt a healthy lifestyle;
- Through a programme of investment in playgrounds across the borough to encourage children to play outdoors
- Through a programme of investment in sports facilities to encourage people to be fit and active;
- By designing out crime hotspots to make parks more secure and to encourage out greater use;
- By supporting food growing opportunities across the borough helping people to get fit and eat healthily;
- By giving people an opportunity to volunteer and help to maintain parks
- By working with GP's and health providers to develop health related programmes in parks to protect residents' health; and
- By improving accessibility for people with disabilities and special needs.



4.3 Placemaking and housing growth

The population of the borough is set to increase by 48% over the next 20 years. The borough’s new residents will be accommodated mainly in high rise high density accommodation with little or no private space. The provision of new greenspace will form an integral element of emerging masterplans for these regeneration areas, but an increased population will place increased pressure on the borough’s existing greenspace assets. The borough’s parks need to be ready to face this challenge.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By developing and adopting new masterplans for 10 of the borough’s most important parks. These masterplans will give us a framework for the future development of these sites that we can bring into effect as resources become available
- By developing a quick wins programme to address some of the most urgent issues facing our parks – how to make individual parks more attractive and distinctive, how to improve connections between parks and how to improve playgrounds
- By identifying short, medium and long term funding opportunities to deliver improvements to parks
- By getting started on major projects for Parsloes Park and Central Park
- By looking at how parks are paid for and how they are managed and by considering different ways of doing this in future to make sure that the parks service is improving in response to an increased level of demand

Barking Park case study, LB Barking and Dagenham

Barking Park is a very successful, well-designed, highest-quality play space. Its location is ideal, in the de facto hub of the park. It is close to the splashpark (a popular family destination), café, toilets and boat hire. It is also relatively near to the main sports facilities and skatepark.

The design is attractive, welcoming and offers a wide range of play opportunities for children of different ages and abilities, while allowing family groups of different compositions to visit together. The area has a strong spirit of place and identity. Exemplary design features include:

- Distinctive and thoughtfully chosen equipment. The bespoke sunken ship structure is eye-catching and memorable. The sand and water features are popular with families with young children. There are several challenging items such as the basket swing and slide, and several items that have good accessibility.
- Naturalistic features, landform and ground modelling that enhance the play offers and adds new ones.
- The long bench-wall: a design element that adds play value as a climbing/balancing item, offers generous seating to make the space more sociable, and divides the area into ‘rooms’ while allowing parents to keep an eye on children of different ages.

The lack of hard boundaries, while perhaps not universally appreciated, is a bold decision that brings several benefits:

- The area feels part of the wider park rather than a segregated ‘play ghetto’, solely for use by children and their adult carers. This enhances the degree of casual social contact with - and informal supervision by - other park users.
- The play area and features are easy to access from any direction.
- Children’s active play – especially chase games- can easily flow around and well beyond the features.
- The site can cope with high visitor numbers in a flexible way
- Responsible dog owners are more likely to keep their dog under control nearby the play area and possibly in the wider park
- It is not possible for the play area to be dominated by small numbers of aggressive or anti-social users, and it is unattractive to anti-social dog owners in search of places where they can bring/train their dogs (unlike a gated play area).

4.4 Children, learning and spaces to play

The opportunity to play is central to a healthy, happy childhood and the provision of good play facilities is a principal of the Borough Manifesto. Good play opportunities and time spent in green outdoor environments are good for children, for families and for communities.

Play facilities are evenly distributed across the borough but there are gaps in provision, notably within adjoining areas of Longbridge and Eastbury Wards, on the western edges of Becontree and Valence Wards, on the eastern fringes of Whalebone and Chadwell Heath Wards, in Alibon and Heath Wards and the eastern edge of Eastbrook Ward.

An area of deficiency in Thames and River Wards is likely to be addressed by new play provision in Barking Riverside.

The borough’s current playgrounds are often in poor condition and in need of repair. These playgrounds do not offer children opportunities for imaginative and adventurous play or opportunities for children to socialise. Barking Park is the most successful, highest-quality play space and sets a standard for play facilities in other parks.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By initiating a programme for the repair and renewal of playgrounds across the borough
- By providing new play facilities in the borough’s housing regeneration areas
- By making new and existing playgrounds inclusive, attractive and a distinctive part of the neighbourhood
- By building these design principles into playground designs for the 10 masterplan sites
- By encouraging children and families to be part of the design process for playgrounds
- By encouraging children to define risk for themselves
- By making playgrounds robust and easy to maintain and by carrying out repairs when these are needed



Now That's a Festival, Central Park, Barking

Now That's a Festival currently operates in Central Park on the August bank holiday weekend. The festival attracts 3,000 – 5,000 people per day and in 2017 is expanding to a two day festival. The festival receives a reduction in fees including not paying any park hire fees and gets to use council licences in exchange for leaving all their infrastructure (staging, generators etc.) up for the following day when a council managed event (Roundhouse music festival) uses that infrastructure at no cost allowing them to put on a larger event than would otherwise not be possible for relatively little hassle.



4.5 Programming and events

Many of Barking and Dagenham's parks already act as venues for events and celebrations and there are great opportunities to develop more. The existing programme of events is popular and well attended mainly by local residents.

The borough has a very young age profile, challenging health statistics and a very low engagement with the arts. An exciting and innovative events programme can help in all of these areas.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By identifying what is distinctive about each park and encouraging events that will complement this distinctiveness.
- By developing a balanced programme of events across the borough
- Where possible, to promote events that will generate revenue for the borough that can be ploughed back into park maintenance
- By identifying key parks to host large events and making sure that these parks can support events without causing long term impacts
- By setting up a clear booking system to ensure that a simple and straightforward process is in place for both commercial and community event organisers
- By encouraging commercial event organisers to share infrastructure with the organisers of community events to promote a diverse and inclusive programme
- By ensuring that event organisers immediately address any physical impacts of events on parks

4.6 Food and productivity

Growing food in parks has become commonplace over the last 10 years. While traditional allotments are still in high demand, provision of food growing within community settings is increasingly recognised as a way to give people more opportunity to get outside, get active, learn new skills and create a sense of place.

Within Barking and Dagenham, 42 community food growing projects have been initiated in schools, care homes, housing estates and communal areas during the last eight years. Around 20 of these are currently active.

There is huge scope for more food growing in Barking and Dagenham with land being more abundant than in many other urban areas. A number of successful local projects are already operating but there is potential to do much more.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By building initiatives for food growing into the 10 park masterplans; planting design will include orchard trees and plants that can be foraged
- By supporting current food growing partners, allowing them to re-purpose areas of parks that are currently under-used
- By seeking new partners to develop new health, education and skills initiatives linked to food growing
- By encouraging social enterprise as a means of growing the food growing sector





Growing Communities' Dagenham Farm

Growing Communities' Dagenham Farm produces about five tonnes of organic veg and fruit every year, in glasshouses and polytunnels and outdoors for sale locally and through Growing Communities' fruit and veg bag scheme.

The farm opened in 2012 on the former council nursery site. The aim is to produce excellent, organic food closer to where people actually live as well as helping local residents to gain skills in food growing, preparation and selling.

Dagenham Farm shows the potential for growing- and selling- significant amounts of produce from farms on the outskirts of London. With funding from the Big Lottery they currently run a community outreach programme that includes:

- A volunteer programme on Wednesdays and Sundays where local residents can come and learn new skills, take gentle exercise and buy fresh farm produce and learn about healthy eating via a free volunteers' lunch.
- A Grown in Dagenham young people's programme for over 130 young people a year as well as a free Growing on Holiday club and after schools club
- A 9 month paid Food Worker training programme, for unemployed local residents and lone parents.
- A weekly food growing and skills session for residents in recovery from alcohol and substance abuse.

In 2016 they recorded considerable success with 384 visitors to the farm including 42 regular volunteers, contributing 2205 volunteer hours and engaged 179 pupils. In addition they recruited 4 lone parent on a paid traineeship.

The farm set up was funded by the Local Food Fund, part of the Big Lottery, from March 2012 to March 2014, when it also became fully certified as organic. The growers' salaries and farm rent are financed through sales of produce.

Growing Communities secured more Big Lottery funding in 2015 for the Grown in Dagenham project to improve local people's mental and physical health and well-being and help them develop new skills from January 2016 to December 2018.



4.7 Sports provision

The provision of high quality outdoor sports facilities is an important priority for the borough. Working with local sports clubs, the council has adopted an Outdoor Playing Pitch Strategy (OPPS) that has looked at current provision and what future demand for pitches will be. Having adopted the OPPS, the council can approach national governing bodies for sports to seek funding for improved facilities across the borough.

How will the strategy support this?

- The OPPS suggests where playing opportunities for different sports should be created across the borough. These recommendations have been incorporated into the masterplans for the borough's major parks that have been developed as part of the strategy
- By talking to sports clubs about how the strategy will help to deliver new and improved sports facilities across the borough
- By adding proposals for funding applications for specific projects to the strategy action plan

4.8 Environmental sustainability

Barking and Dagenham is facing a number of key environmental issues and parks and green spaces can help to address these.

GLOBAL WARMING

The impact of global warming on the climate of the UK over the next century is difficult to predict but an increased frequency of extreme weather events with increased level of rainfall is likely. These weather patterns are likely to increase flood risk. Significant areas of the borough close to the Thames fall within "Flood Zone 3" but are protected by flood defences. Areas of the borough along Loxford Water, the Goresbrook, Mayesbrook, the River Beam and the River Ingrebourne are flood risk zones.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By looking at ways in which parks can provide flood storage capacity
- By naturalising river valleys and allowing rivers to flood parkland intermittently
- By sustaining and increasing tree cover and minimising hard surfacing to help to absorb rainfall
- By developing sustainable urban drainage systems for parks to reduce the loading on mains drainage

Average summer temperatures are predicted to rise between 2 and 4 degrees Celsius over the next 60 years. In combination with localised temperature rises in cities (caused by higher levels of pollutants) and a general rise in temperature across the borough caused by increased development, global warming will impact significantly in Barking and Dagenham.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By sustaining and increasing tree cover to ensure that the cooling effects of parks and shade areas within greenspaces are sustainable
- By the selection and planting of plant species that are adapted for higher temperatures and that are drought tolerant.

ECOLOGY AND BIO-DIVERSITY

Barking and Dagenham already has a significant area of land managed for ecology and bio-diversity. The strategy gives us the opportunity to develop this further. At the same time, increasing levels of development and climate change will place ecosystems under increasing levels of pressure.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By considering how green spaces can be better connected to encourage the development of wildlife corridors (including links to other boroughs and the countryside beyond London)
- By protecting habitats for species identified in the London Biodiversity Action Plan
- By selecting species that are adapted for the impact of climate change and reducing dependency on species that are vulnerable to disease.

4.9 Funding and governance

In common with other local authorities, Barking and Dagenham has managed parks and greenspaces as a local authority service since it was created. Funding for parks is under pressure as never before and many councils are having to make significant cuts to budgets. Almost half of local authorities (46%) are considering selling parks and green spaces or transferring their management to others.

In the Strategy, we are looking at new ways to fund and manage parks to make sure that the benefits they can deliver are secured for future generations. The options we are considering include:

The options we are considering include:

- Creating parks trusts with endowments to help fund their future maintenance
- Business Improvement Districts and Neighbourhood Improvement Districts where residents pay a small levy to pay for their local parks
- Working with external providers to develop new ideas for parks to make them self-funding
- Managing parks and open spaces in new housing growth areas separately through housing service charges

These options are discussed in more detail in Section 8 of the Strategy.



5.1 Summary of baseline characteristics

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is situated on the North bank of the River Thames to the East of London, nine miles from the centre of the city. The borough has a population of some 201,000 and a total land area of 3,611 hectares.

TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND HABITATS

Barking and Dagenham lies on the eastern edge of the Thames Basin and the topography of the area is characterised by gentle undulations shelving steadily to the south and the valley of the Thames. The valleys of the River Roding and Beam River define the western and eastern boundaries of the borough. Both valleys converge on the River Thames. A small plateau to the north of the borough, within Marks Gate, marks the highest point at 32-36m AOD.

The geology of the borough consists predominantly of made ground, alluvium (clay and silt, with some peat), Thames gravels and London Clay of variable thickness.

Barking and Dagenham includes a wide range of habitats that have been influenced by the underlying landscape and by human activities. Industry and housing in the 20th century shaped large parts of the borough and many greenspace sites are recovering from these influences.

The London Regional Landscape Framework (May 2009) defined four landscape character types within Barking and Dagenham:

- Essex Plateau
- North Thames Terraces
- Lower Thames Floodplain
- Wide tidal Thames

RIVERS AND WETLANDS

Three of the four Borough boundaries are watercourses. To the East is the River Roding, to the West is the River Beam and to the South is the River Thames. In addition the Borough has some further tributary watercourses including the Rivers Mayesbrook, Beam and Wantz, the Goresbrook, Cran Brook and Loxford Water. Flood risk across the borough is entirely confined to these river valleys.

Extensive gravel extraction has, and continues to occur, in the Borough. Where gravel pits have not been infilled they now form attractive water features, such as those found at Mayesbrook Park and Eastbrookend Country Park.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND LAND USE

Until the 19th Century, the Borough was predominantly rural, dominated by agricultural uses, contained in the north by Hainault Forest, to the south by the River Thames, in the west by the River Roding and to the east by the River Beam.

As London expanded in the late nineteenth century, pressure intensified on agricultural land use and development expanded eastwards, principally in the aftermath of the development of rail and road transport corridors.

Intensive development followed WW1. The Housing Act of 1919 permitted the London County Council to build housing outside the County of London and the Becontree Estate was constructed between 1921 and 1935 on 'cottage estate' principles. Upon its completion the estate was the largest public housing estate in the world.

In parallel, the borough developed a distinctive industrial landscape, dominated by the Ford Motor Company assembly plant in the south-east of the borough. Industrial development expanded and intensified after WW2 and remains the dominant built form in substantial parts of the south and west of the borough.

The 1960's and 1970's saw the construction of some higher density high rise housing but low rise suburban housing remained the dominant form of housing, as it does today. The future development of Barking Riverside, Castle Green and other housing regeneration sites will introduce new variety into the quality of the built environment across the borough.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Barking and Dagenham has been becoming an increasingly young borough over the past 20 years. There are now twice as many teenagers in the borough as there are people over 65. Only 10% of the borough's population falls into this age group (for the UK as a whole, 18% are over 65). One in four people in the borough is 14 or under.

Population distribution across the borough is determined by town centres, settlement patterns and proximity to areas of economic activity and transport hubs. Density intensifies towards the south and the west of the borough. Population growth is also projected to be greatest in the south and the west with greatest growth being projected in Valence, Mayesbrook and Longbridge Wards. The higher density housing planned for Barking Riverside, Castle Green, Thames Road, Chadwell and Creekmouth will impact on future densities in Thames, Gascoigne and Abbey Wards.

ETHNICITY

Barking and Dagenham has been becoming an increasingly diverse borough over the past twenty years. In 2015, the proportion of those living in the borough who identified as 'white' had fallen to 47%. 10% of people who identified as white were born outside the UK. By contrast, the majority (53%) of BME residents in Barking and Dagenham in 2015 were born in the UK.

Across the borough particular areas are favoured by different ethnicities. The Becontree Estate, Rush Green and Rylands Estate areas remain more strongly White British. Barking, the Leftley Estate, Longbridge Road area and the western edge of the Borough have significant Asian communities. Barking town centre, particularly the Gascoigne Estate, and the southern residential areas of the borough have extensive Black African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Crime rates across the borough have declined over the past four years. Despite this, fear of crime is high by London standards. The proportion of people worrying about crime (36%) is well above the London average (25%).

Crime levels in parks are relatively low but fear of crime in parks and open spaces is also higher than crime statistics justify. Barking Park, Mayesbrook Park, St Chads Park recorded the highest crime figures of all parks with respectively 70, 80 and 53 TNO offences. These parks are amongst the most popular in the borough so higher rates of reported crime could be expected to be higher than those for smaller or less popular sites

5.2 The distribution of parks and open spaces

Barking and Dagenham has a portfolio of 28 park and open spaces providing 463 hectares of public open space and these are distributed fairly evenly across the borough but with a concentration of provision in a central belt running from Barking town centre in the west to Central Park and Eastbrookend Country Park in the east. In the context of the GLA's 2011 Public Open Space categorisation, the borough portfolio consists of eight 'District Parks', 11 'Local Park' and nine 'Small Open Spaces.' (Refer to Table 5.1)

GREENSPACE PROVISION

Through its planned regeneration programmes, a further 80 hectares of public space will be added over the next twenty years at Barking Riverside, Creekmouth, Thames Road, Castle Green and Chadwell Heath, giving a total provision of 544 hectares.

Given the borough's population of 206,056, greenspace provision of 544 hectares equates to 2.64 hectares per 1,000 head of population. By 2027, the borough's population will have grown to 229,047, resulting in a rate of greenspace provision of 2.38 hectares per 1,000 head of population.

Open space provision across all types of green space, (parks, playgrounds, sports sites, natural and semi-natural greenspaces) is 888.76 Hectares (approximately 25% of the area of the borough). This equates to 4.3 hectares per 1,000 head of population. The addition of a further 80 hectares of greenspace will increase overall provision to 968 hectares, equivalent to 4.69 hectares per 1,000 head of population. By 2027, the increase in the borough's population will have reduced the overall level of provision to 4.2 hectares per 1,000 head of population.

Provision of parks and open spaces is evenly distributed across the borough with a significant concentration of district and local parks across the central belt of the borough. The council is planning further public open space Initiatives within the Creekmouth, Castle Green, Thames Road and Chadwell Heath regeneration areas but as these projects are at an early stage of development, their impact on overall provision and accessibility cannot currently be quantified in detail.

There is currently a deficiency of district and local parks in both the northern and southern areas of the borough but in the latter area, this is likely to be addressed by new park provision at Barking Riverside. This will leave a deficiency in local and district park provision in the north of the Borough which will in part be addressed by the new park provision at Chadwell Heath.

The borough does not currently have any metropolitan parks (parks over 60 hectares), although Parsloes Park at 59.5 hectares is very close to this

Table 5.1 - The distribution of parks and open spaces

	Name	Neighbourhood Area (refer to 9.1)	Typology	Area (ha)	Designations
01	Abbey Green-Abbey Ruins	Group 3	Local	6.27	NC, REGEN. AREA, CONS. AREA
02	Barking Park	Group 3	District	29.80	SINC, MOL
03	Beam Parklands	Group 2	District	38.75	SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR
04	Beam Valley Country Park	Group 2	District	26.99	SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR
05	Castle Green Park	Group 3	Local	10.41	Undesignated
06	Central Park	Group 2	District	50.17	GREEN BELT
07	Chase Nature Reserve	Group 2	District	42.22	SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR
08	Eastbrookend Country Park	Group 2	District	55.45	SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR
09	Essex Road Gardens	Group 3	Small OS	0.74	Undesignated
10	Goresbrook Park	Group 2	Local	14.71	SINC
11	Greatfields Park	SGroup 3	Local	5.80	Undesignated
12	Heath Park Open Space	Group 1	Small OS	1.23	Undesignated
13	Mayesbrook Park	Group 2	District	48.95	SINC, MOL
14	Newlands Park	Group 1	Small OS	0.79	Undesignated
15	Old Dagenham Park	Group 1	Local	13.38	GREEN BELT
16	Padnall Open Space	Group 3	Small OS	1.44	Undesignated
17	Parsloes Park	Group 2	District	59.57	MOL
18	Pondfield Park	Group 1	Local	5.68	SINC
19	Ripple Nature Reserve	Group 1	Local	7.23	SINC, REGEN. AREA, LNR
20	Scrattons Farm Ecopark	Group 2	Local	3.77	SINC, LNR
21	St Chads Park	Group 3	Local	14.44	SINC
22	St Peter & St Paul's Churchyard	Group 3	Small OS	0.87	SINC, LNR
23	Tantony Green	Group 3	Small OS	1.64	Undesignated
24	The Leys	Group 1	Local	7.54	GREEN BELT
25	Valence Park	Group 2	Local	12.20	SINC
26	Quaker Burial Ground	Group 1	Small OS	1.69	Undesignated
27	Kingston Hill Rec. Ground	Group 2	Small OS	0.56	GREEN BELT
28	King George's Fields	Group 1	Small OS	0.9	Undesignated
				463.19	

standard. Metropolitan parks in neighbouring boroughs (Wanstead Flats, Fairlop Waters and Britton Playing Fields) all have catchments covering areas of Barking and Dagenham.

Barking and Dagenham has 25 sites designated as being of importance of nature conservation. Three of these sites (River Thames, Ripple Nature Reserve and The Chase and Eastbrookend) are designated as being of Metropolitan Importance. A further 15 sites are designated as being of Borough Significance and a further seven as locally important. In the context of the 2017 Local Plan Review, a further site of Borough Importance will be designated and a site currently designated as being of Local Importance

will be upgraded to Borough Importance. 10 new sites are proposed for designation as sites of Local Importance.

ACCESS TO SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

The borough is fortunate to enjoy a significant level of provision of sites of Metropolitan and Borough Significance to Nature Conservation and access to these sites is evenly distributed across the borough. There are two small areas of deficiency (in Becontree, Valence and Parsloes Wards).

ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is an important factor to be considered when assessing 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.

In Barking and Dagenham, transport corridors are a major factor affecting the accessibility of both public open space and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The A13 road corridor and the mainline rail lines running between central London and south Essex and the Underground line between central London and Upminster all significantly influence the potential catchments of parks. The catchments to the south of for Mayesbrook Park and Parsloes Park are particularly affected by this restriction.

The creation of a new Overground railway link to Barking Riverside is likely to influence the catchment for greenspace within this proposed development. The proposal to tunnel sections of the A13 that form part of the Castle Green proposal are likely to significantly affect the accessibility of public open space within this regeneration area as well as its connectivity with Barking Riverside.

5.3 Public engagement and consultation findings

Parks are for people and it's important that the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy responds to the needs and aspirations of the borough's residents. There are a number of specific reasons for this:

- Satisfaction with the borough's parks and open spaces is currently low relative to other London boroughs. The implementation of the strategy should help to improve levels of satisfaction
- Parks and open spaces can deliver a variety of positive outcomes for residents but this can only happen if people use parks and open spaces. The strategy needs to address residents' concerns to make parks more popular
- The council wants people to be more involved in day to day decisions about parks and wants to support volunteering opportunities in parks



Fig.5.1- Public meeting in Dagenham Library, 25th March 2017

In order to meet these objectives, we have carried out a detailed consultation and engagement process to gather views on the borough's parks and ideas for their future management and development.

We have gathered information in the following ways:

- An on-line questionnaire was available for a period of six weeks. 583 residents participated in the survey process, providing us with useful information on current use of parks and the main issues faced by residents using parks
- Two public meetings to discuss the different parts of the strategy
- Two public meetings to discuss masterplans for the borough's most important parks
- A meeting with Barking and Dagenham's Access and Planning Forum for people with disabilities
- A meeting with the BAD Youth Forum
- A workshop with Northbury Primary School
- Three presentations for local Councillors
- A meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader
- Meetings with council officers to coordinate the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy with other council initiatives in respect of parks, events, planning, health, education, environment, crime and anti-social behaviour
- A workshop to develop the strategy Action Plan
- Discussions with neighbouring boroughs to encourage best practice and cross-border working
- By using social media, gathering views on parks and open spaces through the council's Facebook pages.

The consultation process has given us the following information:

- Cleanliness, safety and the quality of the facilities for parents and children in parks were identified as the most important issues affecting enjoyment and use of parks and open spaces (see Fig.5.2)
- The quality of facilities for families (including toilets and playspaces) and the cleanliness and maintenance of parks were identified as most in need of improvement in local parks and open spaces (see Fig.5.3).
- Respondents valued welcoming, accessible and inclusive spaces
- Opportunities should be developed for older children
- Opportunities for volunteering should be developed
- Dog fouling and control are seen as major issues
- Anti-social behaviour affects the use and enjoyment of parks
- The reintroduction of park wardens is seen as desirable
- A wide range of events in parks is seen as important
- People would also like to see more and better communication about events and volunteering opportunities in parks



Fig.5.2 - Looking at the list below, which three things are most important to you in your local parks and open spaces? (Please tick only three categories)

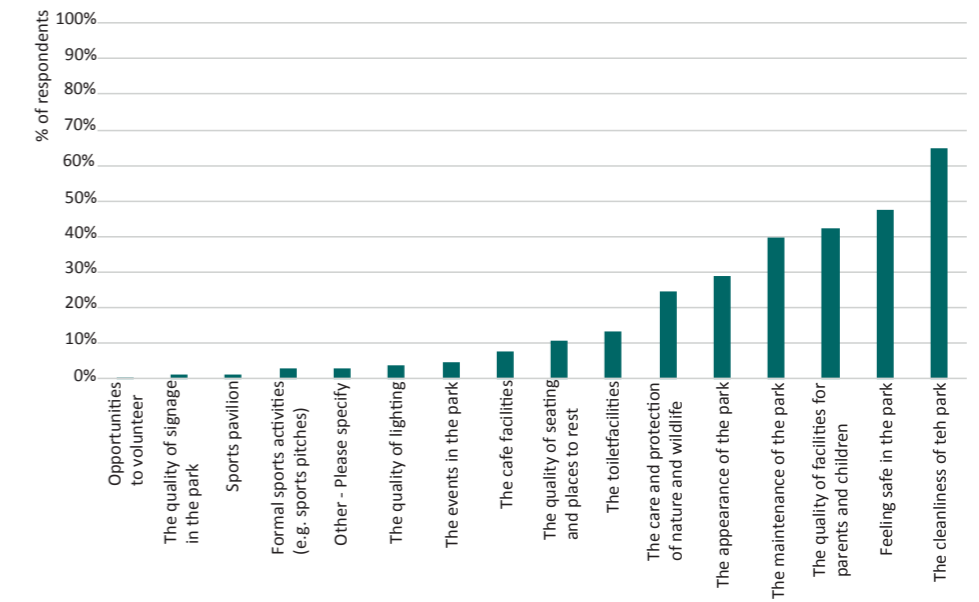


Fig. 5.3 - Which three things need most improving in your local parks and open spaces?

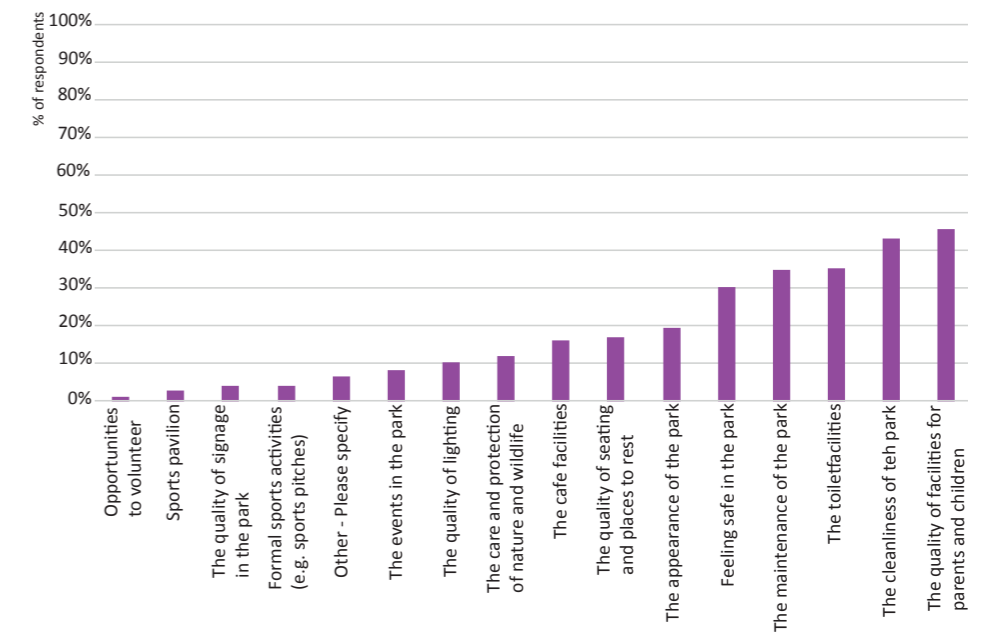
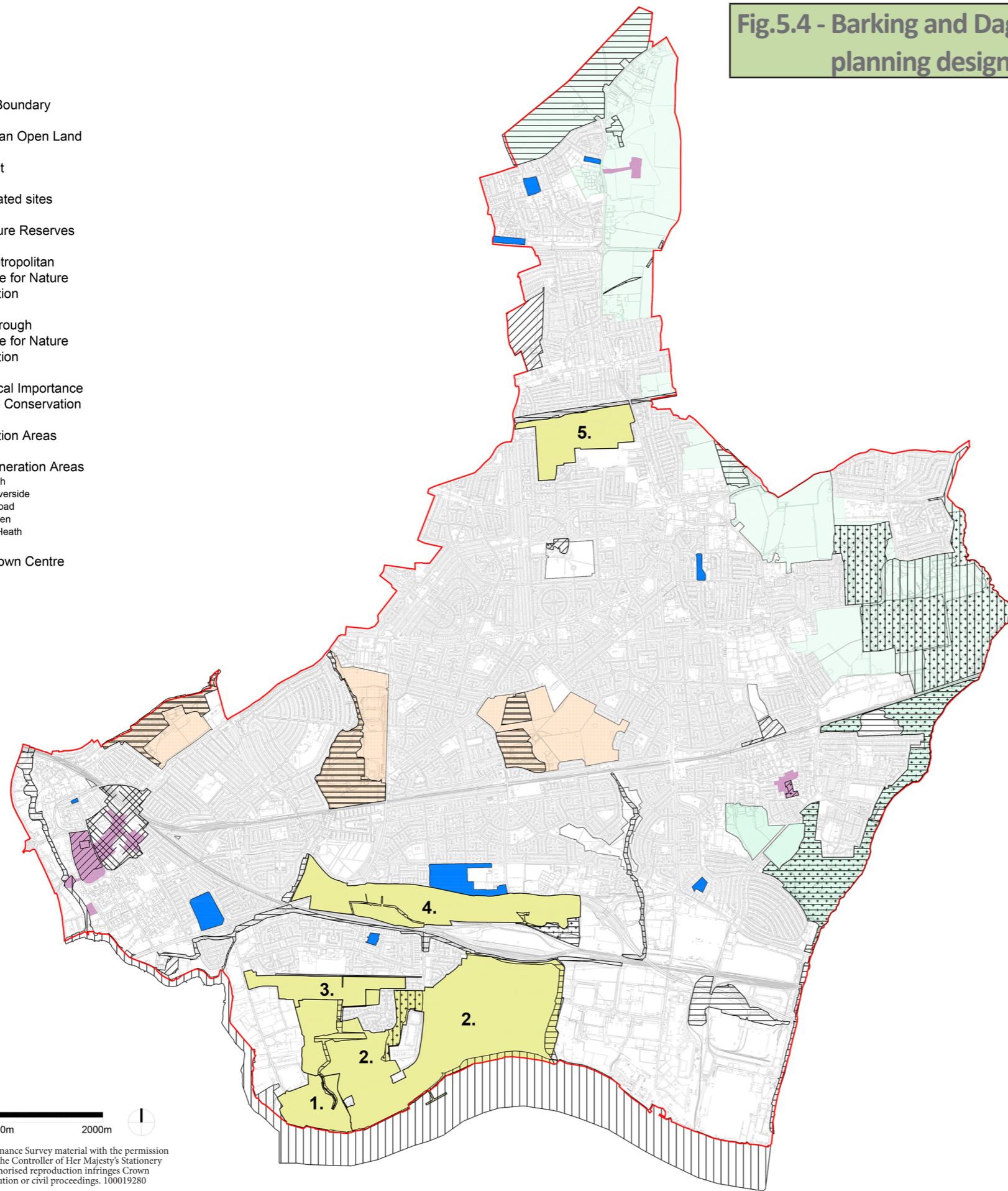


Fig.5.4 - Barking and Dagenham's Parks and Open Spaces by planning designation

- Key**
-  Borough Boundary
 -  Metropolitan Open Land
 -  Green Belt
 -  Undesignated sites
 -  Local Nature Reserves
 -  Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation
 -  Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation
 -  Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
 -  Conservation Areas
 -  Key Regeneration Areas
 - 1. Creekmouth
 - 2. Barking Riverside
 - 3. Thames Road
 - 4. Castle Green
 - 5. Chadwell Heath
 -  Barking Town Centre



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