A GREEN SPACE FRAMEWORK STRATEGY FOR FLINTSHIRE

Flintshire County Council

February 2013

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1. Introduction

What are green spaces, and why do we need a strategy?

Green Spaces are considered to be social spaces and/or spaces affording quiet reflection which can be shared by people and wildlife. The provision of a well managed network of green spaces catering for a wide variety of community needs is considered to offer similar infrastructure value as the roads/rail, schools and medical facilities that serve Flintshire towns and villages. However unlike other man-made infrastructure, this "green infrastructure" is a passive ever changing infrastructure whose benefits have to be experienced firsthand to understand its value and community benefit. One of the key goals of this Strategy is not to try to quantify this value, but is instead to encourage people to share the experience of these spaces to see the value for themselves.

It has been recognised by people who work across services within the local authority, which improved partnership working and a shared vision of what we want to achieve for people, places and wildlife through our green spaces is vital in order to make our green spaces the best that they can be.

This strategy has been written to maintain, promote and enhance publicly accessible green spaces in Flintshire such as parks, woodlands, coast path and common land[1].

Put simply, this strategy has been developed for 2 key reasons:

1. Green spaces are important for people, places and wildlife.
2. Promoting, enhancing and protecting green spaces need people and organisations to work together with a common vision and set of priorities.

This strategy therefore sets the strategic direction for what we want to achieve. More detailed action plans will define how we will

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[1] Appendix 2 provides a list of the types of green spaces within the scope of this strategy

work with partner organisations and communities to achieve our shared vision for green spaces in Flintshire.

Developing a Flintshire Green Space Strategy

In June 2012, Flintshire County Council hosted a workshop where some 70 participants represented the views of public agencies such as the Countryside Council for Wales; private interests such as Grosvenor Estates; community groups such as FlintShare; and key service providers within Flintshire County Council including Property Services, StreetScene, Planning and Transportation.

That session confirmed overwhelming support for the development of a strategy for Flintshire. The key messages from that session have been considered in the development of this draft version of the strategy and a report detailing those key messages will continue to be a source of reference in the development and implementation of action plans (see Appendix 3). The following key points have been used to set the strategic framework for this document:

- Green spaces should meet the needs and aspirations of all community members; including those who want to find tranquility and enjoy wildlife in its natural habitat, those who need opportunity to grow food and those who want to enjoy active recreation and sport in green spaces.
- Varied management is critical so that where appropriate, green spaces are managed and in other sites they are left in a more natural state. Management should be concerned with ensuring that they are species rich and onsite natural and manmade historical features and registered archeological sites are protected (eg Regionally Important Geological Sites).
- We need to think creatively about green spaces to achieve the diversity that is required – grass verges for example could be managed in a way that supports biodiversity, and when planting trees, focus could be given to how they can provide food or shelter as an alternative to an ornamental focus. We also need to think differently about how to overcome challenges in ensuring that land is available for allotments and community growing.

- A key cross cutting theme will be how these spaces are accessed and whether they are safely and conveniently located for the public to access and use regularly.
- The right and need for children to play in green spaces requires the removal of actual and perceived barriers to play and building parental and community confidence and support for play within communities. This also extends to a need to ensure that green space destinations are safely and easily accessible when needing to cross roads etc.
- We need to improve links between the coast and inland through Rights of Way for example, particularly to areas of known deprivation e.g. Community First Areas. There is also a need to ensure that walking routes connect housing areas and town centres for example to encourage and promote active transport.
- We need to improve how we gather, use, manage and share data and intelligence on green spaces in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility not only to facilitate coordinated and strategic planning, but also to make it easier for the public to know what spaces are available and how they can be used.
- A consistent message impressed the need for ongoing community engagement (including children and young people) in the planning and management of green spaces.

Listening to what you said

The broad consensus of the Green Space Workshop was that good quality green spaces can have a significant positive impact on local communities, but equally poor quality spaces can have a negative impact. It was clear from the day that Community Involvement is critical for resolving local issues affecting the quality of Green Spaces and that Community Involvement should become an intrinsic part of Green Space Management. **The role of the Green Space Strategy should be to ensure that Green Spaces are better managed and enhanced for the communities they serve.** Consequently the Green Space Strategy would deliver improvements in the local quality of life for residents and visitors by providing social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic opportunities.

We want people to use Green Spaces positively and more frequently as part of their daily lifestyle, and we accept that to do this we need to improve green spaces to deliver

welcoming, accessible, attractive and safer community spaces.

Given the value of these spaces to us all, it makes sense to produce a Strategy which shows how as a Local Authority, Flintshire County Council is responding to the needs of these spaces and the communities they serve, both human and natural. The Strategy and future monitoring and progress reports will improve transparency in the way Flintshire manages these spaces. It is hoped that through improved transparency in decision making that we can help people better engage with the Council leading to decisions which are more sensitive to local green spaces and communities.

Ultimately through a process of regular public engagement we hope we can: empower the community to take a greater sense of community ownership and pride in their local green spaces; and to help people take an active role in the management of green spaces to improve their local areas and help build vibrant and sustainable communities. This is the opportunity before us but the challenge to delivering this is considerable and only through partnership with local communities can we succeed in this task.

Following the stakeholder event in June 2012 a consultation draft strategy was developed and released for consultation with stakeholders. The findings of this consultation resulted in amendments to the strategy the comments received are summarized in Appendix 4.

Our Green Spaces Vision for Flintshire

"Flintshire will enjoy a well planned and managed network of integrated, accessible and diverse green spaces; creating a sustainable environment for the benefit of all people, wildlife and our natural heritage."

In order to achieve that vision, improvements are needed in three key areas; quantity, quality and accessibility. Our aims are summarised below and then defined in more detail in the following chapter:

Aim 1:   **To ensure all communities have appropriate and available green space provision.**

Objective 1.1   To increase the amount of publicly accessible green space in areas of identified deficiency

Objective 1.2   To increase the diversity of green space functions

Aim 2:   **We will maintain and improve the quality of green space provision across the County.**

Objective 2.1   To enhance existing green space for play, sport and recreation

Objective 2.2   To enhance the value of Flintshire green spaces as wildlife habitats

Objective 2.3   To improve the aesthetic and landscape quality of Flintshire's green spaces

Objective 2.4   To recognise and develop the value of green spaces for learning and education

Aim 3:   **We will make existing green spaces more accessible for both people and wildlife.**

Objective 3.1   To improve the connectivity between green spaces as a network of green corridors accessible to both people and wildlife

Objective 3.2   To ensure Children have local opportunities to safely access green space

Objective 3.3   To ensure everyone has access to green spaces

2. Aims and Objectives

Aim 1: **To ensure all communities have appropriate and available green space provision.**

Objective 1.1   To increase the amount of publicly accessible green space in areas of identified deficiency

Objective 1.2   To increase the diversity of green space functions

Broadly speaking Flintshire communities are well served by existing green spaces from the Dee Estuary, to country parks and the beauty of the Clwydian AONB. However local deficiencies do exist in both urban and rural locations and there is a responsibility for the Council to take action and redress existing imbalances in provision.

Objective 1.1 **To increase the amount of publicly accessible green space in identified areas of deficiency**

How much Green Space is enough ? The starting point for assessing the amount of Green Space available and whether there are deficiencies is the "Open Space Standard". Historically Flintshire has used the National Playing Field Association Six Acre Standard (2.4 hectares in metric measurement). However in accordance with advice and guidance from the Fields in Trust and Welsh Government, it is necessary to adopt a Local Standard of Provision.

The Open Spaces Survey (2005) demonstrates that there are considerable imbalances between green space provision from community to community. The spatial distribution of green space provision is a key challenge for this Strategy in ensuring that all

communities have access to green spaces. However whilst quantity, distribution and accessibility of green space is important we want to secure quality spaces which are fit for purpose.

Objective 1.2   To increase the diversity of green space

It is important that green spaces are multi-functional offering aesthetic landscape value to nearby local residents; greater natural value for wildlife; learning/education opportunities; and be locally valued play and sports facilities. There will of course be certain types of green spaces where multi-functional uses will be inappropriate such as cemeteries, graveyards, some natural spaces of national value and dedicated allotments and community gardens. Another challenge for the Strategy will be to deliver greater diversity within green spaces whilst respecting the intrinsic function and value of each green space for example, be it for quiet reflection or nature conservation.

All communities require a focal point for social activity, play and recreation (both active and passive) as well as contact with the natural environment. In this respect one of the key challenges for the Strategy is to deliver at least one green space for every identifiable community in Flintshire.

To deliver the objectives above this Strategy proposes the adoption of a new quantitative standard of green space provision for the County, as follows:

The benchmark standard for Open Space Provision in Flintshire will be 3.6 hectares per 1000 people (or 36 square meters per person). This target will consist of 8 square meters of playing space (formal); 16 square meters of playing field and sports pitch; and 12 square meters of semi-natural green space.

A key aspect of the proposed standard would be to include 12 square meters of informal natural space per head of population,

this is in addition to formal play space and areas of formal sport and recreation. This proposal is reflective of the Countryside Council for Wales Accessible Natural Green Space approach and the need to provide natural green space.

The detail supporting this standard will be developed further in the forthcoming Local Development Plan; the forthcoming revision of the Play Strategy; and associated Supplementary Planning Guidance on Open Space Provision.

Aim 2:   **We will maintain and improve the quality of green space provision across the County.**

Objective 2.1   To enhance existing green space for play, sport and recreation

Objective 2.2   To enhance existing green space as wildlife habitats

Objective 2.3   Green spaces will be managed on a site specific basis to maximise their public landscape, ecological and historical importance.

Objective 2.4   To recognise and develop the value of green spaces for learning and education

The quality of green space was a key issue raised in the Visioning Workshop. The key themes of quality related to landscape and aesthetic appearance; the quality and range of play and sport facilities; and the quality of the semi natural environment for wildlife. One of the key challenges for this Strategy is to deliver improvements to the quality of existing green spaces.

To enhance the quality of green space in Flintshire it is proposed that a new Quality Standard be developed and adopted by which green spaces can be assessed. The Flintshire Quality Standard will be largely based on the Green Flag Award which is the benchmark national standard for parks and

green spaces in the United Kingdom. The scheme was set up in 1996 to recognise and reward green spaces in England and Wales that met the high standards of the award body. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. The Green Flag Award is based on the following criteria:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure
- Clean and well maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing
- Management

The adoption of a Flintshire Quality Standard will allow the Council to measure and annually report on its progress in improving quality of green spaces. However underpinning the Standard (as is the case with many of the tasks identified in the Action Plan) will be the need for public engagement.

We anticipate that there will be different consultation and engagement needs with perhaps some organisations and individuals willing to give up time and resources to help in this process. Equally there will also be many who would just like to have the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions from time to time. To accommodate the different needs of the public we anticipate the need early on for the creation of a web-based system for receiving and responding to enquiries, comments and suggestions.

In pursuing Green Flag Awards for key green spaces such as Wepre Park (Connahs Quay), Bailey Hill (Mold), and Fron Park (Holywell) FCC will seek to develop "Local Friends Groups" to work in partnership in the management of these green spaces.

Alongside the Green Flag process the Council, will continue to improve natural spaces where there are statutory designations and areas of biodiversity importance. This role is part of a national duty as set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, and states that: *"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".* This statutory duty involves developing and influencing local policies and strategies; planning and development control; owning and managing their estates; procurement; education, awareness raising and advisory functions.

Any tasks as a consequence of this Strategy will have to satisfy the Countryside Council for Wales and the statutory regulatory system in place to protect sites of natural importance. This Strategy sits alongside an existing system of checks and balances and because these tasks will be the subject of detailed scrutiny they will avoid detrimental impacts to protected sites and species and will have positive benefits to habitats and species.

Many Green Spaces have value for key historical features for example the Village Green on Bryn Road in Bryn y Baal is a Regionally Important Geological Site; Truman's Hill in Hawarden has recognised importance as a historical fort; the Halkyn and Holywell Commons have importance for industrial heritage including quarrying and Lime production (i.e. the Kilns). Historical character features of a designated and an undesignated importance are important within Green Spaces and should be retained, promoted in the local community and where appropriate enhanced.

Aim 3:   **We will make existing green spaces more accessible for both people and wildlife.**

Objective 3.1   To improve the connectivity between green spaces as a network of green corridors accessible to both people and wildlife

Objective 3.2   To ensure Children have local opportunities to safely access green space

Objective 3.3   To ensure everyone has access to green spaces

Improving access to green space is the third and final of the key aims identified within this Strategy. Green Spaces should be planned so that they are accessible to everyone. This means that entrances and paths do not restrict people of any ability from benefiting from green spaces as well as considering the safety of all users. Green spaces should be easily accessible and closely situated to the communities they serve ensuring everyone has local access to a green space which offers both natural value and play value. Where-ever possible green spaces should be linked to one another to create "green corridors" to provide off-road routes which provide linkages to places of work, education, leisure and shopping facilities. Another key challenge for the Strategy is to make green spaces safe and highly accessible spaces for the communities they serve. And to do this the Strategy proposes that **everyone should have safe access to a green space within 5 minute walk of their home.**

For the purposes of this Strategy, a 5 minute walk is considered to be a journey of 500 meters, and it is anticipated that significant work will be required to ensure safe pedestrian and cyclist access is provided along key identified routes.

THE ACTION PLAN

The Green Space Strategy provides a framework which will set the context for strategic decision making. The associated Action Plan will consequently be focused on the delivery of broad strategic aims and objectives. Fundamental to the Action Plan is the delivery of:

- A green space for every Flintshire Community
- A new Open Space Standard for Flintshire
- Enhancement in the quality of all green spaces
- Ensuring that Green Spaces are accessible to everyone

The following page provides some detail and consideration for aims and objectives of the Green Space Strategy, followed by an action highlighting key tasks.

1. Identify and Address Areas of Green space Deficiency

The Green Space Strategy seeks to ensure that all communities have or will have access to a local Green Space. This is a basic and fundamental aim of the Strategy and it will be necessary to undertake a review to ascertain what the current situation is. The Council already has in place the Open Space Survey (2005) which was informally updated in 2010.

Using the Open Space Survey we will seek to identify areas of deficiency in open space provision. To do this we will need to set a standard for provision. The existing standard is the historic six acre standard (2.4ha per 1000 people) and this is fully referenced in the Open Space Survey. The Open Space Survey will be reviewed and amended to accommodate the new standard proposed by the Green Space Strategy (3.6 ha per 1000 people). Areas will then be assessed on a quantitative basis to identify areas of deficiency and the types of open space deficiency that exist. Then working with local communities and partner organisations we will investigate approaches to resolve identified deficiencies. This will involve, for example looking at how the planning system can deliver new open space provision through development; or how existing private spaces could play a wider public role.

The Council is currently in the process of undertaking an Accessible Natural Green Space Assessment of Flintshire Communities. A key task will be to complete this study but the value of this study will be to identify additional spaces of public value as part of the wider assessment of open space deficiency.

The above approach lends itself considerably to the requirement within the Children and Families Measure 2010 (C&FM) requiring the production of a Play Sufficiency Assessment and Action Plan in March 2013. There is considerable benefit to be had from marrying this approach with the C&FM process where there will be

scope for efficiency and longer term savings for Flintshire County Council, through greater collaborative working which can deliver no cost and low cost solutions to identified problems.

2. <u>Enhancement of Green Space</u>

Flintshire County Council manages thousands of individual green spaces across Flintshire. This management represents a significant budgetary commitment from the public purse to the management of public spaces. Many of these spaces are attractive and well used however many are not. A challenge for this Strategy is to how enhancements to open space quality can be delivered in light and where improvements are delivered how such improvements can be monitored and reported to demonstrate value for money and efficiently use of resources.

At the outset, it will be important to develop a Green Space Hierarchy this tool will help prioritise how resources are targeted in the future. However in identifying this hierarchy there will be a need to ensure that matters of deficiency and deprivation are taken into account.

The development and adoption of a Flintshire Quality Standard would provide a key mechanism for measuring the quality of green spaces in the present. A Standard would allow annual assessments of a space and over-time a comparison of whether a space has been improved or not. Such a Standard in conjunction with green space deficiency assessments would be a key driver for identifying where resources need to be targeted to enhance open space to acceptable standards to meet identified community needs.

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom. The scheme was set up in 1996 to recognise and reward green spaces in England and Wales that met laid down high standards. It is also seen as a

way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green space. Ultimately Flintshire County Council would seek in partnership with the local community to submit key destination parks in Flintshire to achieve Green Flag status. The Green Flag Awards System is a mark of national quality in open space provision and its achievement and continued retention (on a rolling annual basis) represents wider recognition that the open space is well planned, well maintained and well managed. Achieving Green Flag status would be a significant achievement for any community and it would be a measure of success for the implementation of this Strategy.

The Green Flag Award Scheme is not appropriate for most green spaces as many are too small and lack the basic facilities and amenities required. However whilst the Strategy seeks to achieve Green Flag status on its bigger destination green spaces it also proposes the development and adoption of a Flintshire Quality Standard which is in part based on the Green Flag Award Standard. This approach would seek to measure and monitor enhancement of all green spaces across the County in the context of a suitable and appropriate national standard.

Whilst we see the Flintshire Quality Standard as key to improving quality of green spaces there are many other tasks to be implemented not least are the development of management plans for sites of natural and/or ecological importance and local landscape management plans for other types of green spaces. Not least of these is the need for public participation which we consider to be a fundamental driver for this entire approach. In this particular regard the first key task is to devise a mechanism which will allow the County Council to engage successfully with the public.

3. <u>Improving Accessibility</u>

Improving accessibility to and between green spaces is all about improving connectivity for people and wildlife. Green spaces provide safe environments for people to play and relax. They also have a day to day role in providing wildlife with valuable habitats and feeding areas as well as allowing movement to habitats further afield. A challenge for the Green Space Strategy will be to identify where accessibility is constrained for people and/or wildlife and where access problems are identified to propose solutions. It is anticipated that the Play Space Sufficiency Assessment as required as part of the Children and Families Measure 2010 will consider in detail how children travel to green spaces and other play spaces. Meanwhile the findings of the Accessible Natural Green space Study will aid in better understanding our natural environment.

The improvement of accessibility between green spaces and key destinations such as areas of employment, schools, town centres and leisure facilities will encourage greater use of green spaces for recreation and travel. Ultimately the use of green spaces as walking and cycles routes would improve the health of the community, help reduce the use of cars and could help improve road safety. There are some exceptions to this approach and it is important to recognise that Cycling on Common Land is not a legal right nor would it be appropriate to encourage cycling on land with sensitive needs e.g. where there are sensitive nature conservation matters.

An important tool to identifying access difficulties will be the Accessible Natural Green Space Study. The completion of this study would enable significant progress to be made in identifying strategic opportunities and challenges to the creation of an integrated network of green corridors across the County. Such corridors consist of former railways; cycle ways; the coast and are

capable of providing people and wildlife with access to thousands of square miles of countryside.

Accessibility of information is also considered important to improving awareness of open spaces be it in relation to events, weekly or seasonal activities or news about changes to green spaces. This could be achieved by the provision of a website and discussion forum which would help make the Green Space Strategy a more interactive and accessible experience for the general public where it will be possible to make better use of information and networks such as Family Information Service; Sports Development, Children and Young People's Partnership; and the Flintshire Local Voluntary Council.

A summary of proposed actions and the aims/objectives to which they will contribute.

Please note that whilst the tasks are allocated within this table to one key action area, many of the tasks will contribute to a number of other actions and aims/objectives as illustrated.

	Aim 1		Aim 2				Aim 3		
	Objectives		Objectives				Objectives		
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2.	3.3
Action 1. **Working with local communities and partner organisations develop action plans to address and resolve identified open space deficiencies.** Significant tasks required to support this action include:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
1.1 Conclude the accessible natural greenspace assessment for Flintshire	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
1.2 Undertake play sufficiency assessments of Flintshire communities	✓	✓	✓					✓	
1.3 Reassess all Flintshire communities quantitative open space needs to identify areas of quantitative deficiency	✓							✓	✓
1.4 Conclude the Flintshire Play Assessments	✓		✓					✓	
1.5 Undertake a sports facilities assessment to identify deficiency of the number, quality and location of outdoor and indoor sports pitches in relation to known and future projected club demand				✓					
Action 2. Develop and adopt a Flintshire Quality Standard for green spaces. Significant tasks required to support this action include:					✓				
2.1 Undertake a baseline Quality Assessment of all Flintshire green space using the adopted Quality Standard		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
2.2 Using the Quality Standard produce regular monitoring reports to identify improvements in greenspace provision		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
2.3 Identify a County hierarchy of green spaces which will help in prioritising future schemes.								✓	

	Aim 1 Objectives		Aim 2 Objectives				Aim 3 Objectives		
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2.	3.3
Action 3. Develop plans to take key green spaces forward as Candidates for the (national) Green Flag Award System.		✓			✓				
Action 4. Seek to legally dedicate important green space for long term protection through schemes such as the Queen Elizabeth II playing fields challenge and the Owain Glyndwr Fields Initiative									✓
Action 5. Review and update the planning guidance note "public open space" specifically in relation to the new Flintshire openspace standard and updated public open space financial requirements.	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓
Action 6.Work with partners and communities to develop Local Landscape and Management Plans for individual Green spaces. Significant tasks required to support this action include:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
6.1 Develop new/update existing management plans for Sites of Natural and/or Ecological Importance.				✓	✓		✓		
Action 7. Develop a Dee Riverside and Coastal Strategy and Management Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Action 8. Work with partners and communities to develop a co-ordinated approach to the enhancement and maintenance of green corridors. Significant tasks/considerations required to support this action include:	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.1 Identify how communities access green spaces and evaluate where action is required to improve access and safety particularly for vulnerable users							✓	✓	✓
8.2 Identify and protect existing manmade and natural features that form green corridors				✓			✓		
8.3 Enhancement of the existing network of green corridors to bridge breaks, close gaps, and broaden pinch points for the benefit of people and wildlife.				✓			✓		
8.4 The creation of new links where the existing network is fragmented eg the existing Flintshire greenways project				✓			✓		
8.5 The identification and management of buffer areas around semi-natural corridors				✓			✓		

Appendix 1

	Aim 1		Aim 2				Aim 3		
	Objectives		Objectives				Objectives		
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.2.	3.3
Action 9: Increase public access to information about green spaces and improve mechanisms for public engagement						✓		✓	✓
9.1 Develop a green space promotion platform to inform and update the public of events, activities and news relating to green spaces in Flintshire						✓		✓	✓
9.2 Develop user friendly mechanisms which allow the public to offer feedback regarding the state and quality of individual green spaces across the County					✓				
9.3 Working with the public develop a County Network of Green space User Groups /"Park Friends"			✓	✓	✓				

Appendix 1:

Related Plans, Strategies and Other Documents

Related Plans, Strategies & Other Documents

(Draft) Active Transport (Wales) Bill	2012/13
Bailey Hill Management Plan	2012
(Flintshire) Countryside Strategy	2000
(Flintshire) Community Strategy	2009
Creating an Active Flintshire Action Plan	2010
Creating Space for Wildlife: Flintshire's Biodiversity Action Plan	2002
(Flintshire) Economic Development Strategy	2009
Green Infrastructure Action Plan: Flintshire Coast	2011
Green Infrastructure Action Plan: Lower Dee and Neston	2012
(Flintshire) Leisure Strategy	2009
(North Wales) Local Transport Plan	2010
Maunsell & Faber Greenway Study	2010
(Flintshire) Open Space Survey	2005
(Flintshire) Play Strategy	2011
(Flintshire) Rights of Way Improvement Plan	2008
Shoreline Management Plans	Various
(Flintshire) Unitary Development Plan	2011
Wepre Park Management Plan	2012

Appendix 2:

List of Green Space Types

Defining "green space"

"Green Space is a term used throughout this document to refer to different types of publicly accessible open spaces. However these are not necessarily in public ownership. In addition the term "Green Corridors" is also used to describe a wider network or clustering of spaces which afford the opportunity for movement of both people and wildlife.

The term includes:

Highway Verges and Amenity Grasslands and Flower Beds

Formal and informal Parklands

Allotments, Orchards, Community Gardens and Community Supported Agriculture

Play Areas, Playing Fields and Sports Pitches

Intact Disused Railway Track bed Routes **

Graveyards & Cemeteries

The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Country Parks

Common Land (e.g. Buckley, Halkyn Mountain & Holywell)

The Coast & the Estuary

The Dee Estuary RAMSAR

Natural Spaces (e.g. SSSI's)

Lakes, Ponds and Watercourses *

Woodlands *

*   Only Lakes, Ponds, Watercourses and Woodlands which are accessible are included in the definition of Green Space.

**   It is recognized that since the closure of many railways there has been fragmentation of routes and some of this land is in alternative use having been developed. For the purposes of this Strategy we use the term "Intact" routes to emphasize the need for the route to be reusable.

As can be seen from the list above the term green space is an all-encompassing term which would seem to include most outdoor open spaces. However this is not the case and exceptions do exist for example civic spaces often called grey space (eg a town square and pedestrianised streets); private garden space; inaccessible agricultural land; and land earmarked for development are not included within the term green space.

Appendix 3:

Stakeholder Event Report

Towards a Greenspace Strategy for Flintshire

Stakeholder Workshop

14th June 2012

Report (Final)

INTRODUCTION
On 14th June 2012, Flintshire County Council hosted a multiagency stakeholder workshop as a first and significant step in the development of a Greenspace Strategy.

The purpose of the session was to provide stakeholders with an early opportunity to engage in the process and share their views about what is needed in order to ensure that the greenspaces in the county are well managed, maintained and developed in a way to meet the needs of all communities and to ensure a sustainable future.

ATTENDANCE
The session was attended by representatives from a number of organisations and community groups:

- Chester West and Cheshire Local Authority
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Flintshare
- Flintshire County Council – officers and Elected Members
- Forestry Commission
- Greenflag Wales
- Grosvenor Estate
- Groundwork North Wales
- Local Access Forum
- NEW Play Wales
- North East Wales Wildlife Trust
- The Environment Partnership
- Transition Holywell & District
- Wrexham County Borough Council

OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION
The session was opened by Cllr. Peter MacFarlane, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Leisure.

The welcome and introduction was followed by presentations from a number of key speakers in order to provide a context to the afternoon and evoke discussion and debate in the subsequent working groups.

- The added value from Greenspace and key components of a local strategy. Peter Frost, Countryside Council for Wales

- Green infrastructures. Chris Marrs, The Environment Partnership

- Green Spaces and Play. Simon Bazley, Mike Dessington, NEW Play

Copies of all of the presentations are available on request to
Karen.Chambers@flintshire.gov.uk

DEVELOPING A VISION FOR FLINTSHIRE'S GREENSPACES
During a comfort break, participants were invited to share their thoughts about what should be included within the vision statement for the strategy. A number of suggestions and thoughts were submitted, which were as follows:

- Always plant productive rather than ornamental trees – thinking of future food and shelter needs
- Developing green Wales using old railway lines
- Support organisations like BTCV, Wildlife Trusts, Keep Wales Tidy, etc. to keep on walking groups (we need more of them)
- Develop some (experimental) forest gardens
- Provision for local food
- Ensure as many green (as possible) walking routes connecting housing estates to town centres
- Give communities access to food growing spaces
- Identify areas of Grade 2+ fertile agricultural land and protect from development
- Use and enhance existing row to provide circular routes with total access (families with buggies, wheelchair users, etc.) of varying lengths (15-60) around conurbations or between villages e.g. around Caerwys, Connah's Quay

In addition to thinking about how these comments can influence the overall vision statement, they will be used to develop the key objectives and actions for the strategy and subsequent implementation plans.

Following the break, participants were asked to join pre-assigned tables to begin a series of round table discussions under the following themes:

- Play
- Access
- Natural Greenspaces
- Allotments and community spaces

Each table were asked to spend 20 minutes discussing their responses to the following questions before moving to the next group (consequently each participant was able to contribute to discussions for every theme).

Table questions:

1. **What are the key indicators for success?**
   think here about what would need to be in place for us to think in 5 years time "yes - we got that right"
   How might we measure that? Are there already indicators in place to let us know what progress is being made?

2. **How are we doing on these?**
   we don't need figures at this stage, just a general feeling to aid discussion for the next question.

3. **What's the story behind these figures?**
   having established whether we are making good progress, standing still or not getting anywhere from the previous discussion, why is that the case? Again we don't want detail at this stage, just some intelligence to tell us the sort of things that need to continue or get better at doing for example.

4. **What are the key actions that need to happen?**
   high level actions only at this stage to act as the headline areas for action. Further work will take place to turn those into robust actions (record names of people who can give a bit more detail after the session)

nb. Due to the nature of discussions that took place and the limited time available, most groups discussed the issues and some of the solutions without addressing each of the above questions in turn.

All participants were also advised that any additional contributions would be welcome over the coming weeks through contacting the officers involved in putting together the strategy (see page 5)

KEY MESSAGES TO COME OUT OF THE SESSION
A debriefing was held after the workshop with the facilitators of the table discussions in order to bring together the key messages, which were reported as follows:

Play
There was general consensus that one of the priorities within the strategy should be to ensure that green spaces in Flintshire promote and encourage play in its many forms.

It is vital that children and young people have a voice – that is can actively contribute to decisions that are made within their communities about "provision" for play.

Support was offered for the creation and development of "destination play areas"

In its community leader role, the Local Authority should not create barriers to play such as "No Ball Games" signs. It was felt that this devalues children and young people and creates unnecessary tension in a community.

There is a need to build community and parental confidence and support for play in communities.

There was a consensus that schools and community buildings should be more accessible to Communities particularly if that is the only green space (or public green space within a community)

Implementing the existing Play Strategy and responding to requirements placed on the local authority to assess and respond to findings relating to "play sufficiency" should be an integral part of greenspace strategy developments.

Access

The importance and need for green spaces to respond/cater to the needs and aspirations of all community members was discussed in this group and mirrored in other discussions as well. For example, it was recognised that in some areas, the use of scrambling bikes, quad bikes and skateboarders causes problems – it was suggested that there should be designated areas for these users who want to be active outdoors in that way so that they can enjoy their recreation without any negative impacts elsewhere.

It was felt that there is a need to improve links between the coasts and inland through Rights of Way etc, particulary to community first areas.

There is a need to improve our data/intelligence management systems so that all of the appropriate information that is held within the local authority can be consolidated and shared with a wider audience. This would mean that for example a member of the public could see a map which (in one place) would tell them where the accessible routes are, destinations, places to stop en route and where they can cycle as an example. Another example would be a map which designates what the County Council owns, what the area is used for and who maintains it.

The various groups felt that mapping out greenspaces is important to show their funstions and to show how far the green spaces are from communities
Where they are in relation to the Public Rights of Way network.

It was raised that road safety is one of the biggest barriers to access greenspaces and that there is a need to improve crossings. In addition, it was elt that children needed to be educated about access to play areas.

All four groups raised the need to undertake surveys.

Survey of all strategic Footpaths and Cycleways to include:
- numbers using path by user type, i.e disabled
- ease of access
- customer satisfaction with route

Neighbourhood surveys to establish which are the most popular routes.
- establish which routes are not being used and why.
- establish Crime figures on routes and access areas
- establish perception of safety

A survey of all grass verges to establish how they can be best used as green spaces or for other useful purposes

Survey needs to include information on how far people are from their nearest open space and what are the barriers to accessing that open space

Surface materials on routes should be appropriate for level and type of usage including where the routes are. For example a route through a country forest should not be metalled

Allotments and community spaces
The discussions primarily focussed on allotments or other forms of community growing.

There is a need to be clear what level of demand exists across the whole county.

A main barrier is the lack of designated land for allotments and community growing. There are a number of issues that can be addressed including legalities around long term use for allotments etc to work through. A flexible approach needs to be taken. One possible solution is to look at the concept of landshare. There may be ways that FCC could facilitate the use of its assets for this use within communities.

Essentially, FCC and its partners need to identify ways to break down the existing barriers that are currently preventing individuals and communities that want land to grow produce and those who are able to "offer" land for that use.

The challenges faced in developing and maintaining sites must be appropriately recognised and considered.

It was agreed that residents and communities should be actively engaged in discussions relating to the provision and maintenance of areas for this use.

It was suggested that a network for individuals and communities should be established to share information, ideas etc and to increase the profile of allotments, community growing etc.
We need to think about how Section 106 agreements can be used to provide growing space within new developments.

Natural Greenspaces
A key message was that there is a lack of consistency and understanding about what is meant by the term "natural greenspace". It would be beneficial therefore to state within the strategy what we mean by this term.

There needs to be a mix of greenspaces in Flintshire so that they are "fit for purpose" across the spectrum of needs. Varied management is the key so that where appropriate, green spaces are managed and in other sites they are left in a more natural state with management being concerned with ensuring that they are species rich etc.

A message to come out of this group is that communities are not aware of where their greenspaces are and what they can use them for. In addition there is a lack of general awareness about the distance between all communities and greenspaces.

A number of key reports have been completed by the Countryside Council for Wales for example. It is vital that these are consolidated to provide an overall picture of the current baseline and that action plans are created and implemented to respond to the key issues identified.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a need to ensure that safety is considered, there was support for allowing roadside verges to be left as natural green spaces unless there was a specific reason not to do so.

EVALUATION OF THE SESSION
An evaluation/feedback questionnaire was circulated for participants to comment on the content and value of the workshop in providing an opportunity to contribute to the development of the strategy. All comments were recorded and where applicable will be used to develop the draft strategy and future implementation plans.

The final report will be circulated to all attendees and invitees to the workshop and used to inform the development of the draft and final strategy.

Thank you to all who contributed to the workshop session and in anticipated of your continued to support and involvement in the development and implementation of Flintshire's GreenSpace Strategy.

Appendix A – Evaluation comments

Q1	What did you find most useful or interesting about today's session?
1.	The presentations at the beginning. The different backgrounds of the attendees.
2.	Good wide spectrum of folk
3.	Broad range of interests being discussed. Awareness that it's not just one departmental area of interest and responsibility.
4.	Good to hear about the demand for allotments and the emerging play strategy. Good to hear that different Council departments are taking the lead on their parts of delivery of GI.
5.	Workshops.
6.	The presentations esp. Play and Pete Frost but also getting to know other people very intense programme which made best use of time! Thanks!
7.	I learned a lot about how complex the issue of greenspace is. There are many sections of FCC and society in general who need to work together more. Need to get LDP policies right – the correct baseline data, etc.
8.	Discussions sessions brought out many interesting points. Interesting presentations very good.
9.	Meeting a wide range of interesting parties. Thinking about different aspects – other than my concerns.
10.	Wide range of delegate and speakers Lots of varying, at times conflicting viewpoints led to good debate.
11.	The variety of stakeholders attending and keenness to contribute.
12.	Presentations were interesting and thought provoking. Workshops were useful.

Q2	Is there anything that you thought we could have done differently or better?
1.	-
2.	A bit rushed with facilitators.
3.	-
4.	Ok, it was good!
5.	Shorter presentations – more time for general discussion.
6.	The second presentation has very interesting but the "density" made if difficult to grasp if all so quickly. Access to presentation would be useful.
7.	No.
8.	It might have been useful to have a few sessions where it's …. Of ….main points that have been identified.
9.	-
10.	No.
11.	BISCUITS!
12.	-

Q3	Do you have any further comments to make about the session or want to tell us about anything that you feel should be considered during the development of the strategy?
1.	How private landowners will fit into the bigger picture and how greenspaces
2.	-
3.	-
4.	Can you work towards a "sustainable developer's guide" to provide some local entrepreneurs of what FCC would like to see in terms of design, ,…. , access, play and allotment bio diversity, etc.
5.	Would like to know how any greenspace strategy would be funded, remain sustainable, and how success will be measured. (contact details supplied)
6.	Food growing and food security played only a minor role which surprised me. The food

	theme should be interwoven into all aspects/projects, especially with towns like Mold – being Citaslow and Holywell – transition town.
7.	-
8.	The local area forum should be involved at the next stage.
9.	More community food opportunity provision. More support/encouragement/resources for schools to access Forest School and community food production. (contact details supplied)
10.	-
11.	Please ensure that the strategy plans for a qualitative neighbourhood level consultations or perceptions of their local spaces, or survey
12.	Map your priorities and keep the communities on board while making developing the strategy.

The session was facilitated and report written by:

Karen Chambers

The session was organised by:

Ste James

Tom Woodall

Alan Roberts

Karen Chambers

The workshops were facilitated by:

Mike Taylor and Sue Price – **Access**

Janet Roberts and Richard Roberts – **Play**

Amanda Davies and Sarah Jeffery – **Natural Green Spaces**

Linda Bletcher and June Morris – **Allotments and Community Spaces**

Appendix 4:

Consultation Responses

(Autumn 2012)

In general, the proposals within the consultation were supported and a number of respondents welcomed the links made to other key policies/drivers such as the Children and Families Measure. Consultees provided a number of useful comments and suggested amendments to the plan, resulting in a number of changes including:

- Increased reference has been made throughout the document to the importance placed on ensuring that people (irrespective of age, level of physical ability etc) can easily and safely access green spaces and enjoy the benefits of being able to sit and relax for example.

- The concept of "public benefit" in accessing green spaces has been strengthened to refer to the fact that these spaces also contain areas of historical and archaeological importance.

- The importance of community involvement e.g. with children and young people is recognised as important in the management and enhancement of green spaces . Indeed community involvement is key to identifying and resolving local issues.

- A new table format has been used to simplify and clarify how the actions proposed will often contribute to more than one aim. In addition, where applicable, "actions" are now referred to as key tasks in order to work towards an overall priority for action.

- Greater emphasis is placed on the need to ensure that in addition to quantitative standards being met for green spaces (how much), that there is a need for green spaces to be of sufficient quality (qualitative standards). A related point was made to the need to ensure that community benefit from the use of Section 106 and Community Levy is achieved.

- Additional reference has been made to the fact that cycling is not a legal right on Common Land and that there are other restrictions in relation to some areas due to sensitivity, rights of access etc.

- The consultation document referred to former railway track beds as a form of public open space but these spaces are not in public ownership and this has also been clarified in the final document

- The vision has been revised to refer to "all" people and to apply to the present tense rather than appearing to be something that can only be achieved in the future

- Reference to "Green Corridors" has been made as part of the definition of green spaces

- The Active Transport (Wales) Bill has been added to the Related Plans and Strategies section

- Objective 2.2 has been reworded to refer to the need to ensure value of green space as wildlife habitats

- A new objective (2.4) has been added "to recognise and develop the value of green space for learning and education"

- It was recommended that consideration was given to carrying out a test of likely significant effect under regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. It was also recommended that a screening opinion on whether the Framework requires a SEA is sought. Reference has now been made within the document to the fact that all tasks taken forward in relation to this strategy will have to satisfy the Countryside Council for Wales and the statutory regulatory system in place to protect sites of natural importance.

- The need for an increased level of public awareness relating to the location of green spaces will be addressed through work detailed under Action 9 in the action table included in this document.

- The document has been strengthened to address the need to consider Public Rights of Way and the "Related Plans" Section refers to key documents relating to this issue.

Other comments received which have not led to changes in the document but are considered important considerations during the implementation phase included:

- How the use of participatory budgeting can help to engage communities

- Need to ensure that we recognise the principles of Flintshire County Councils Asset Management Plan

- Green Spaces should not hinder rural development and should remain useable by communities.

- There is need for early engagement with landowners on specific strategic projects to ensure that no additional burden is placed on public safety as a result of additional land access.

- It will be beneficial to consider how new green space could be identified in accordance with the Highway Improvement Plan.

General Comments

- Concern was expressed relating to the absence of any resources being allocated to actions

- Concern has been raised relating to any suggestion of increased legal burdens.

- Concern was expressed that improvements in relation to green space provision should not be at the expense of the green barrier.

- A consultee had suggested that statutory protection of important natural green spaces can be delivered through Local Nature Reserves which requires production of site management plan. However, in response, there is a preferred option for county wide wildlife sites, with a strong need for partnership working. Local Nature Reserves can only be on FCC owned land which leads to restrictions in terms of future planning etc.

- A request was made for details relating to the amount of green space and where there are areas of deficiency within the strategy document. This detail however is contained within supporting documentation referenced within Appendix 1.