

East Devon District Council's Green Space Plan 2017 -2027



CONTENTS

Page

PART 1	2
Foreword	3
Executive Summary	3
Green Space Plan	
1. Introduction	5
2. Our Vision	7
3. Our Aims	7
4. The Plan in context	8
5. Corporate green space policies	9
6. Green space management policies	10
7. The value of green spaces	14
8. Summary - Why do we need green space?	15
Further reading	
• East Devon Open Space Study 2012 and Review 2014	
• Corporate Asset Management Plan 2014 – 2017	
• Play Pitch Plan 2015	
• East Devon's Public Health Plan 2014 – 2017	
• East Devon's Beach Amenity Plan 2016/17	
• Land Trust – The Value of Our Green Spaces – January 2016	
 PART 2	
<u>APPENDICES</u> (Click to link)	
A1 Social Value	20
A2 Environmental Value	26
A3 Economic Value	30
A4 Service Management Policies – Formal and Informal Green Space	32
A5 Natural Green Space	36
A6 Beaches and Foreshores	39
A7 Active Recreation Space	47
A8 Children's and Young People's Space	53
A9 Linking Strategies and Policies	62
A10 Plan SWOT analysis	63
A11 Financial situation	64
A12 Typology maps	67

FOREWORD

East Devon has some superb green spaces that everyone can be proud of. East Devon's green spaces are places where people can relax, enjoy nature, take children to play or take part in sport or recreation. They are essential for the health and well-being of the district. However, there is more that can be done to improve the quality of our green spaces so that more people can visit and enjoy them.

This Green Space Plan is a key step towards protecting and improving East Devon's green spaces. It provides a vision and policies for how we would like to see green spaces planned and managed. It will help to secure attractive, safe and easily accessible spaces for all to enjoy. The Green Space Plan sets out proposals for how existing green spaces can be improved to be safer, cleaner, more accessible, and more sustainable. It also includes proposals for the future management of our green spaces as we face challenging economic times ahead.

The annual Viewpoint Survey's carried out by East Devon District Council show a very high level of support for the management of our green spaces and their contribution to a high quality of life enjoyed by people living in this outstanding place of ours. Some of the improvements proposed in this Plan will take time which is why this is a 10 year Plan. Improving East Devon's green spaces will also require the support and commitment of the whole community – there are many ways in which everyone can help to improve our green spaces.

Councillor **Iain Chubb**



Portfolio Holder - Environment

Executive Summary

The Green Space Plan (GSP) sets out our vision for using and managing our (Council owned) green spaces, and the ambitions we have looking forward for our green spaces in East Devon.

Councils that are proud of and want to proactively manage and expand their green spaces produce a GSP.

This GSP links with the Council Plan priority – **Delivering and promoting our outstanding environment** – the plan has an action to adopt a GSP the purpose of which is to value and help protect our natural environment.

It is widely recognised that green space is a vital part of the public realm and that attractive, safe, accessible green space contributes towards positive social, economic and environmental benefits, improving public health and wellbeing and the quality of life.

Green space and the environment make East Devon an outstanding place, and we have an amazing green space offer that contributes towards making the district such an attractive place to live, work and play.

If you look at the amount of green space that we own and/or manage and the different typologies you can see that we play a key role locally in the provision of green space, including beaches.

We manage approximately **1,565 hectares** of land including parks and gardens; nature reserves; housing land; allotments; play areas of various types; sports pitches; informal recreation areas; beaches and foreshores.

We spend about £2.5 million per annum on managing green space in our ownership and achieve about £1.2 million in income bringing net expenditure down to **£1.3 million p.a.**

We have considered some good examples of GSP from Bristol, Plymouth, Southampton etc and a good practice guide produced by Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to help produce this document.

The GSP sits with a range of corporate strategies and policy documents. There is a particular close affinity with the Public Health Plan and Culture Plan, but equally with the Playing Pitch Strategy, Public Open Space Plan, Local Plan and Council Plan.

The GSP explains the value and benefits of our green space with appendix 1, 2 & 3 going into detail on the social, environmental and economic benefits.

We have set out a series of aims in the GSP with a number of management policies under the headings of formal and informal green space; natural green space; beaches and foreshores; childrens and young people's space.

At a high level we want the GSP to:

- Define the value and role of green spaces;
- Generate political and inter-service support of green space and clear lines of responsibility;
- Develop a vision shared by politicians and all partners;
- Create a policy framework for the protection, enhancement, accessibility, and use of green space;
- Ensure that green spaces enhance the quality of life, diversity of environment and promote civic pride;
- Ensure that the network of green space meets the needs of local people;
- Provide a framework for resource allocation;
- Create a framework for voluntary and community groups to participate in green space provision and management.

We are already encouraging some exciting developments in park improvement, outdoor theatre, enhancing Seaton Wetlands, hire of our facilities, our events programme, pocket parks, community orchards, and we want to be able to continue to encourage these initiatives within the context of an overarching Plan.

We will support, enable and advise on the creation of Sustainable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and the use of Section 106 Planning Agreement contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions towards good quality green space provision.

Our Service Plans (Countryside & Leisure; Street Scene; Planning and Housing) contain specific actions and commitments relating to green space, together with performance measures so that we can monitor the progress of this Green Space Plan.

Our ambition, alongside managing and protecting existing green space, is to expand our green space offer where there is a sound business case for doing so.



Green Space Plan

1. Introduction

East Devon as an area of outstanding environment

East Devon is renowned for its beautiful countryside. In fact two thirds of the district are recognised as being nationally important for its high landscape quality and designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - the East Devon AONB covers some 270sq km of beautiful landscape between Exmouth, to Lyme Regis and up to Honiton, whilst to the north of Honiton you will find the Blackdown Hills AONB. East Devon also has a stunning coastline that runs the length of its southern border. Almost the entire coastline is part of a World Heritage Coast that starts at Exmouth and runs to Swanage in Dorset.

This natural environment makes East Devon one of the most attractive places for people to live. In its scores for natural beauty and natural environment, Local Futures put East Devon in the top 10% of all the districts nationally.

The natural environment also makes East Devon a wonderful place to visit whether to see internationally important wildlife on the Exe Estuary or walk through the Undercliffs National Nature Reserve with its unique biodiversity caused by the landslip hundreds of years ago and our natural economy brings significant employment and business opportunity to East Devon. The South West Tourism data for 2012 shows the financial contribution of visitors to the economy of East Devon:

- **£119,522,000** spend by staying visitors;
- **£136,905,000** spend by day visitors;
- **£11,977,000** other tourism related spend;
- **7,083** jobs related to tourism spending;
- **4,213,000** day visits;

Visit Britain's tourism survey *GB Tourism Survey 2015* shows total spend by staying visitors in East Devon 2013-2015 increased to **£149M**.

Robust research has shown the ecosystem value for the trees in the Sidmouth area is £764,020 p.a. This shows the importance to the economy of a good, healthy green space. A value which must not be underestimated and should hold equal importance to the revenue cost of such spaces. We will work on ecosystem values for our other areas to show their importance.

It is not just these internationally or nationally important areas that make East Devon such a desirable place to live and work, it is our network of green spaces which are an essential part of our day to day life. This is evidenced by our 2016 Viewpoint Survey findings where 79% of our local residents are satisfied with our open spaces and 84% of children and young people surveyed believed our natural environment is the best thing about where they live.

Green spaces provide breathing spaces and are essential to the successful functioning of our urban communities as outlined in **Appendices 1, 2 and 3**.

East Devon District Council (EDDC) manages in total **1,855** hectares:

- **1,500** hectares of accessible green space
- **355** hectares of countryside sites (including Exmouth LNR)

However as a rural district this provides challenges. Our ambition is to ensure open spaces are accessible to all members of the community within walking distance.

East Devon District Council manages some superb award winning green spaces and many local communities are proud of them such as Connaught Gardens & Manor Gardens (both Green Flag award winning sites) and the Seaton Wetlands, however, the challenge of future funding constraints is a threat to their future. The Plan therefore will seek to meet these challenges head on and ensure that EDDC continues to provide the quality and quantity of accessible green spaces that meets the needs of all its communities and achieve Green Flag status or similar national recognition where appropriate.

Developing a green space Plan

This Green Space Plan forms part of a suite of key council documents. It is a comprehensive, council-wide document, which directly contributes towards delivering the Council's corporate aims and policies as set out in the Council Plan. Other strategies and plans, such as the Local Plan; Culture Plan and Playing Pitch Strategy, have influenced the development of this Green Space Plan, and clear links have been shown between our plans.

Our Council Plan 2016-2020 outlines our four key priorities:

1. Encouraging communities to be outstanding;
2. Developing an outstanding local economy;
3. Delivering and promoting our outstanding environment;
4. Continuously improving to be an outstanding council.

Action 4 of Priority 3 is to:

“Adopt a Green Space Plan, the purpose of which is to value and help protect our natural environment”

2. Our Vision

“To provide, protect and enhance a publicly accessible network of diverse and quality green spaces that meet the needs of all our communities in East Devon.”

To ensure we have a successful Green Space Plan we recognise that it will need to:

- contribute to the wider policies of the council including improvements to the economy, housing, education, health, culture, planning, transport, regeneration, biodiversity, the environment and the public realm;
- be based on a clear assessment of the local community’s current and future needs, recognise opportunities, and use good design, management and maintenance processes;
- identify investment priorities to ensure that capital and revenue funds are allocated to meet priorities and performance standards;
- provide the basis for forming partnerships as part of the long-term management and maintenance of the green spaces, recognising that there can be no ‘one size fits all’ approach.

3. Our Aims

Our high level aims for the Green Space Plan are to:

- Provide and maintain quality green spaces in appropriate locations, which are protected for future generations.
- Ensure that our green spaces are safe, welcoming and well managed.
- Encourage local people to use our green spaces to benefit their health and well being.
- Maximise the income potential of our green space assets.
- Support, encourage and develop a network of voluntary groups that can help with the management of our green spaces.
- Enhance the biodiversity of all our green spaces.

- Deliver both high quality management of EDDCs green spaces and also excellent value whilst keeping our customers/users integral to all that we do.
- To produce a Green Space Plan that identifies potential new open spaces for management, and develop a hierarchy of sites that enables consideration of alternative options for future management.



4. The Plan in context

Types & definition of green space

Green spaces are in the broadest sense the wide range of open spaces – from parks and gardens to country parks, woodlands and wildlife sites to play areas, allotments to beaches – and the range of benefits they bring, which are provided and managed by East Devon District Council. Throughout this document, we use the shorthand phrase — **green spaces** - to represent the full spectrum of different and diverse green spaces that are available for communities to use and enjoy.

The Green Space Plan covers those sites managed by East Devon District Council:

- Parks and gardens
- Nature reserves
- Land associated with current or former Council owned and managed housing
- Allotments
- Outdoor play space

- Areas for play
- Areas for sport
- Access areas for informal recreation e.g. footpaths, bridleways, cycle paths etc.
- Beaches & foreshores
- Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGs))

5. Corporate green space policies

We have worked up a series of corporate green space policies which relate to the overall asset management of all East Devon green space. These policies involve collaboration across different service areas; the outcome of which will inform or influence service specific management policies and the future management of all our green spaces.

The table below summarises all the corporate green space policies for a quick and easy reference to the direction of travel for each type of green space area. The supporting text for each type and its corresponding management policy can be found in **Appendices 4 to 8**. The delivery of SANGs is incorporated within the Corporate Green Space Policies as it is seen as a corporate policy for the joint working between East Devon DC, Teignbridge DC and Exeter CC.

Corporate Green Space policies (CGS policy)

- **CGS policy 1** – Survey, plot and categorise all council managed green/open space across the district (including housing land, and allotment sites); assess sites based on a range of criteria including; strategic importance, accessibility, alternative or additional use, levels of use, amenity value, ability to protect our outstanding environment and cost. Identify which sites are suitable for retention, community transfer or disposal taking into account our corporate policies, our Local Plan and open space study.
- **CGS policy 2** - Carefully manage the provision and acquisition of new green spaces including SANGs by having early involvement in strategic planning / development management processes and a sound business case to ensure it can be managed in perpetuity. This includes the rejection of green spaces that don't meet our corporate aims and policies.
- **CGS policy 3** – Continue to work with the Planning Policy Team's strategic approach to identifying open space needs and projects across the District, which will benefit from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions.
- **CGS policy 4** - Ensure ongoing maintenance costs over min. 20yrs are included as a consideration within Planning Policy when new open space areas and infrastructure are developed.
- **CGS policy 5** – Ensure that devolved open space adopts the management standards as described in this Green Space Plan and signs up to a minimum standards agreement.

- **CGS policy 6** – Ensure that costs of green space asset management are fully understood and balanced against the economic, social and ecological value of the sites.
- **CGS policy 7** – Working with the Joint Habitat Regulations Delivery framework to identify suitable areas of green space within East Devon that can help fulfil our requirements under the Habitat Regulations directive and meet our needs for Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANGS).

6. Green space management policies

This Plan outlines key policies for delivering improved, accessible green spaces for our different classifications of green spaces that we manage, including:

- Formal & Informal green space (**FS**) – parks and gardens, areas for informal recreation, housing land, allotments, cemeteries and other public open spaces.
- Natural green space (**NGS**) – nature reserves
- Beaches & foreshores (**BF**)
- Active recreation space (**AR**) – areas for sport
- Children's and young people's space (**CP**) – areas for play, outdoor playing space

The tables below summarise all the Service management policies for a quick and easy reference to the direction of travel for each green space typology. The supporting text for each typology area and its corresponding management approach can found in **Appendices 4 - 8**.

Formal and informal green space (GSP FS policy)

- **GSP FS policy 1** - Ensure entry points and boundaries will be enhanced where necessary using the corporate branding for East Devon owned sites across the district to improve the welcome to the space.
- **GSP FS policy 2** - Our aim is to ensure that there is a good quality formal green space which offers a range of facilities, accessible to all members of the community within reasonable walking distance in our towns. We also want to ensure that all communities have access to informal open space within a reasonable walking distance.
- **GSP FS policy 3** - Sustain the appropriate staffing and resources to maintain our open spaces across the District to a good standard.
- **GSP FS policy 4** - Encourage community engagement events to engage the local people with the parks and open spaces, whilst using these activities for the community to take ownership of their area and help to alleviate anti-social behavior issues. Supporting larger events that help to provide for the local economy and also income generate to offset maintenance costs in these areas.

- **GSP FS policy 5** - Identify suitable locations for allotment use or community gardens and facilitate community groups or Town/Parish Councils taking on ownership or management of the land.
- **GSP FS policy 6** - Maintain horticultural standards by investing in training for staff to develop key horticultural skills.
- **GSP FS policy 7** – Developing a Tree Plan that maintains the quality and extent of urban and rural tree cover, through a programme of investment, maintenance, replacement, and additional planting that will champion, protect, manage and value our trees.
- **GSP FS policy 8** - Regularly inspect and maintain all sites to ensure the highest standards of health and safety are achieved.



Natural green space (GSP NGS policy)

- **GSP NGS policy 1** - Improve maintenance and management regimes, ensuring optimum conditions for wildlife alongside attractive, welcoming and easily accessible places for people to enjoy.
- **GSP NGS policy 2** - Expand the role of collaboration between council Services to engage in public liaison and improving biodiversity over a wider range of sites, and to explore alternative means of delivering day to day maintenance, e.g. through partnerships and volunteering.
- **GSP NGS policy 3** – Improve visitor infrastructure to improve the experience and security of users.
- **GSP NGS policy 4** - Maximise opportunities through the Community Infrastructure Levy and developer contributions, to improve the quality of provision and maintenance of natural green spaces where evidenced by need and in conjunction with the overall provision of open space.

- **GSP NGS policy 5** - Develop community engagement events across the district to make natural green space as accessible and engaging as possible to all.
- **GSP NGS policy 6** - Establish a series of regular visitor surveys, quantitative and qualitative, tailored to suit individual sites.
- **GSP NGS policy 7** - Prioritise the joining up of natural green space, to improve connectivity for species, as well as to improve accessibility.
- **GSP NGS policy 8** - Identify priority habitats and species for natural green spaces, and establish relevant monitoring programmes.
- **GSP NGS policy 9** - Ensure natural green spaces have appropriate and up-to-date management plans.



Beaches and Foreshores (GSP BF policy)

These policies are drawn from the draft Beach Management Amenity Plan and should be cross referenced with that plan.

- **GSP BF policy 1** – Utilise beaches to enhance and increase health and wellbeing opportunities.
- **GSP BF policy 2** – Provide effective beach waste management.
- **GSP BF policy 3** – Enable and encourage community engagement through volunteering.
- **GSP BF policy 4** – Appropriately manage risk on beaches to effectively deliver our Duty of Care and produce Beach Management Plans for all our beaches.
- **GSP BF policy 5** - Enhance beach infrastructure to attract and retain more visitors.

- **GSP BF policy 6** – Increase resources through income generation and sponsorship.
- **GSP BF policy 7** – Introduce an appropriate level of nationally recognized quality standards and accreditation.
- **GSP BF policy 8** – Ensure appropriate environmental management practices and encourage biodiversity.

Active Recreation Space (GSP AR policy)

- **GSP AR policy 1** – Open access is provided for all existing and for new multi-use games areas and tennis facilities, many of which will be funded through Section 106 contributions. Ongoing maintenance budgets must be negotiated through s106/CIL.
- **GSP AR policy 2** – Support implementation of planning policy in relation to playing pitches to help improve the quality of experience and carrying capacity of pitches, quantity, changing facilities, pavilions and pitch quality.
- **GSP AR policy 3** - Review and rationalisation of bowling provision with LED and other relevant tenants.
- **GSP AR policy 4** - Support clubs and individuals by providing the right facilities and encourage participation in outdoor sport.
- **GSP AR policy 5** - Enhance the wider park environment for informal sport.
- **GSP AR policy 6** – Continue to provide active recreation opportunities in open spaces but also support, where possible and suitable, the development of hub-sites in association with Devon County Council and the National Governing Bodies for sports.
- **GSP AR policy 7** – Support negotiations for community use arrangements for all publicly owned and funded facilities. Ensure that suitable facilities are available within schools i.e. externally accessible changing rooms to ensure the school does not have to be open for a third party use.
- **GSP AR policy 8** – Continue to support the sustainable future of council tenanted facilities through re-gearing of leases, sale of sites and implementation of a rent support grant scheme.
- **GSP AR policy 9** – Completion of the review into our sports club tenants’ rent support grant scheme arrangements. Continue to support the maintenance and enhancement of facilities through review of leases and sale of freehold.
- **GSP AR policy 10** – Assess design of parks and open spaces to identify opportunities to increase informal active recreation. Review current types and levels of use within our wider park environment and where under-utilised consider diversifying activity use to encourage informal sport/exercise.

Children & young people's space (GSP CP policy)

These policies are drawn from the Play Plan and should be cross referenced with that plan.

- **GSP CP policy 1** – Continue to enhance some existing small play areas, and remove others to create fewer, larger, better quality spaces, whilst taking account of the accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Study, resulting in an overall increase in children's and young people's play space.
- **GSP CP policy 2** – Provide a diverse range of play spaces from fixed equipment to natural play spaces. Develop natural play spaces – these can use the natural landscape and the introduction of natural play materials to provide a range of play opportunities. Equipped areas should incorporate a grass run-around area and seating. A small number of high quality major play spaces attracting district-wide and regional users.
- **GSP CP policy 3** – Provide diverse, exciting and challenging spaces for young people, including MUGAs, skate/BMX parks, equipped play areas and shelters. Young people will have suitable access to a multi-use games area within a reasonable distance of home, taking account of the accessibility standards set out in the Open Space Study. Teenage areas will be provided, where possible and appropriate, on sites where children's playgrounds are located, including seating areas and a range of challenging equipment.
- **GSP CP policy 4** – Enhancing the wider park and natural environment for play, and working with children and young people to explore and use green spaces positively.

Progress against the policies will be tracked through the Service Plans for Countryside; StreetScene and Housing. We will review how we are delivering against individual policies and how we measure performance against a set of measurable criteria to demonstrate progress. This will include customer feedback and footfall at our key sites.

7. The value of our green spaces

Good quality green spaces are an essential element of urban and rural communities, and make a profound contribution to the quality of life in those communities. They offer many economic, social and environmental benefits. Approaching their planning and management strategically will help us to optimise the value of capital investment and revenue expenditure.

A Green Space Plan offers an opportunity to improve green spaces, and its benefits include:

- reinforcing local identity and enhancing the physical character of an area, so shaping existing and future development;

- maintaining the visual amenity and increasing the attractiveness of a locality to create a sense of civic pride;
- raising property values and aiding regeneration and good place shaping;
- boosting the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities;
- securing external funding and focusing capital and revenue expenditure to achieve value for money;
- providing a wide variety of cultural, social and community facilities, including seasonal activities such as fairs, festivals and concerts;
- protecting the historical, cultural and archaeological heritage;
- illustrating the contribution to health and wellbeing, including good mental health by providing formal and informal recreational facilities;
- providing popular outdoor educational facilities for schools and academic institutions;
- improving physical and social inclusion, including accessibility, particularly for young, disabled and older people;
- offering alternative routes for circulation, including networks for walking and cycling and safer routes to school;
- raising air quality and moderating extremes of temperature;
- protecting and enhancing levels of biodiversity and ecological habitats;
- providing an environmental infrastructure to improve water quality and flood control.

8. Summary – Why do we need green space?

Social Value (refer to Appendix 1)

East Devon District Council's green spaces are used by a wide variety of our communities. Many use green spaces to socialise, have picnics, walk dogs, go to our events and all are welcome. The users of all our green spaces are the eyes and ears and play an important role in the management of green space. Relaxing or participating in active exercise in a green space is an effective way to tackle issues of poor health and East Devon has adopted a Public Health Plan that identifies that green spaces can assist in addressing a number of the priorities identified in the Plan. Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can help to improve both physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging people to walk more, to play sport, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment that is local to them.

Environmental Value (refer to Appendix 2)

The precise implications of climate change in East Devon over the next fifty years is not fully known however it is clear that any significant increase in hard surfacing of our green spaces along with the reduction in providing green spaces in our towns will lead to higher temperatures than in the surrounding countryside. East Devon's green spaces will therefore play a critical role in helping to redress this imbalance. Green spaces bring many important environmental benefits to our urban areas, including the cooling of air, storage of water, reducing the risk of flooding and the absorption of atmospheric pollutants. Whilst there is no definitive view of the effects of climate change, we are seeing more extreme weather patterns with warmer wetter winters and drier hotter summers. This will inevitably impact on how we plan our maintenance and management regimes for all our green spaces and we will be looking to working towards adapting design and planting in green spaces to minimise this impact. Green Spaces in East Devon therefore have an important role to play in reducing the effects of climate change and ensuring that we continue to make our district an outstanding place to live.

Economic Value (refer to Appendix 3)

The quality of our green spaces and the accessibility of them to all our residents and also to those who work in East Devon is an essential “vehicle” for the promotion and marketing of our district to attract businesses. We know that companies want to relocate to places with high quality natural environments that are attractive to their employees and customers. Properties close to good quality parks and green spaces also attract higher property values, this we have seen with housing developments adjacent to the Seaton Wetlands. This provides an overall economic gain to the district where there are more opportunities for developments close to high quality green spaces.



Further Reading

- East Devon Open Space Study 2012 and Review 2014
- Corporate Asset Management Plan 2014 – 2017
- Play Pitch Plan 2015
- East Devon's Public Health Plan 2014 – 2017
- East Devon Beach Amenity Development Plan 2016/17
- Land Trust – The Value of Our Green Spaces – January 2016

BACK PAGE

Contact details

Logos

Accreditations