

Report title	Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds, City Economy Councillor Steve Evans, City Environment	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable director	Julian Wain, Director of Regeneration Ross Cook, Director of City Environment	
Originating service	Planning and Environmental Services	
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Report has been considered by	Future City Board	1 May 2018
	Strategic Executive Board	25 June 2018

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

Adopt the City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval to adopt an updated version of the City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP), which will direct investment and planning decisions on open space across the City in future years, help the Council to secure external funding (including developer contributions) and release surplus assets to maximise local community and regeneration benefits.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Well managed and located open spaces make a vital contribution to the quality of life and health of individuals, families and communities across Wolverhampton. The Council owns and manages most of the open space in the City, providing a range of recreational opportunities for sport, exercise, play, contact with nature and growing produce. The Black Country Core Strategy is clear that a network of good quality open space is vital to attract people to live and work in Wolverhampton. A good quality open space network is vital to help deliver the Council's Vision for Public Health 2030.
- 2.2 Investment is currently taking place in open space across the City, to improve the quality of key sites, create quality open space to serve new and existing residents, such as at the former Goodyear site and Ward Street, and maximise use of existing sites such as playing fields. Much of the funding for on-going improvements has been secured from developers through the planning process. Over the period 2016-2018 capital S106 funding in the region of £405,000 has contributed to nine open space improvement projects across the City totalling £690,000.
- 2.3 During 2012-2014, the Council adopted a strategic approach to open space in Wolverhampton, set out in a suite of documents: Sport Development Investment Strategy (SDIS); Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (PPSAP); Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP); and Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document. The strategic approach makes efficient use of open space assets and ensures delivery of regeneration priorities within constrained budgets through working with local communities and reconfiguring sites and services, where appropriate, to release funds for reinvestment. To make decisions about where this should happen, secure external funding and guide delivery it is important to have an up-to-date evidence base, strategy and action plan based on realistic open space standards.
- 2.4 When Cabinet adopted the OSSAP on 26 March 2014 it was agreed that the Action Plan part of the OSSAP would be monitored and updated annually and the Strategy element reviewed at least every five years. The PPSAP and OSSAP Action Plan were updated in 2015, as reported to Cabinet on 13 January 2016 and 24 February 2016. Towards an Active City was adopted in 2017, which replaces the SDIS.
- 2.5 In 2017, consultants were commissioned to refresh the open space standards in the OSSAP, as the population has increased and there have been a number of changes to open space provision across the City since this work was last completed in 2013. Minor changes were also made to the Strategy to reflect recent policy and operational changes.

An update of the OSSAP Action Plan was then completed. In parallel, a partial update of the PPSAP was commissioned, to provide an up-to-date evidence base for decisions affecting playing pitches in the City and to feed into the OSSAP Action Plan update.

- 2.6 It is important that the Council adopts the updated OSSAP, which is available at <http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/planningpolicy> in order to:
- Secure investment for priority open space, sport and recreation projects which will support regeneration, housing delivery and health objectives and increase the attractiveness of Wolverhampton as a place to live, visit and work;
 - Provide clarity and certainty to developers and land owners, including the Council, in relation to the disposals programme and planning obligations; and
 - Provide a strategic context for external funding bids and future budget decisions.

3.0 Delivery of the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan

- 3.1 The OSSAP is an investment strategy and evidence for planning decisions, which:
- Applies deliverable open space standards to different parts of the City and highlights areas of surplus and deficiency;
 - Provides clear, prioritised actions to protect, improve the quality of and extend open space provision where there are deficiencies, and rationalise open space provision where there are surpluses or this could improve quality or access (taking into account cross-boundary effects and City-wide priorities);
 - Maximises effective use of existing physical and financial resources in improving open space provision.
- 3.2 The OSSAP sets out quantity, quality and access standards for seven different types of open space:
- Parks
 - Natural green space
 - Amenity green space
 - Provision for children
 - Provision for young people
 - Outdoor sports (including playing pitches)
 - Allotments

It applies these standards to five Analysis Areas and highlights areas which have surpluses or deficiencies against the standards. The standards are generally lower than those set by neighbouring authorities, reflecting the densely built, urban nature of Wolverhampton. The OSSAP standards update highlighted a decrease in most quantity standards as a result of population increases between 2012 and 2018. However, the Parks standard has been maintained, as a result of the creation of 16 ha of new Parks across the City associated with new housing development. The overall quality of open space provision has also increased due to investment, with more sites classified as high quality compared to 2012.

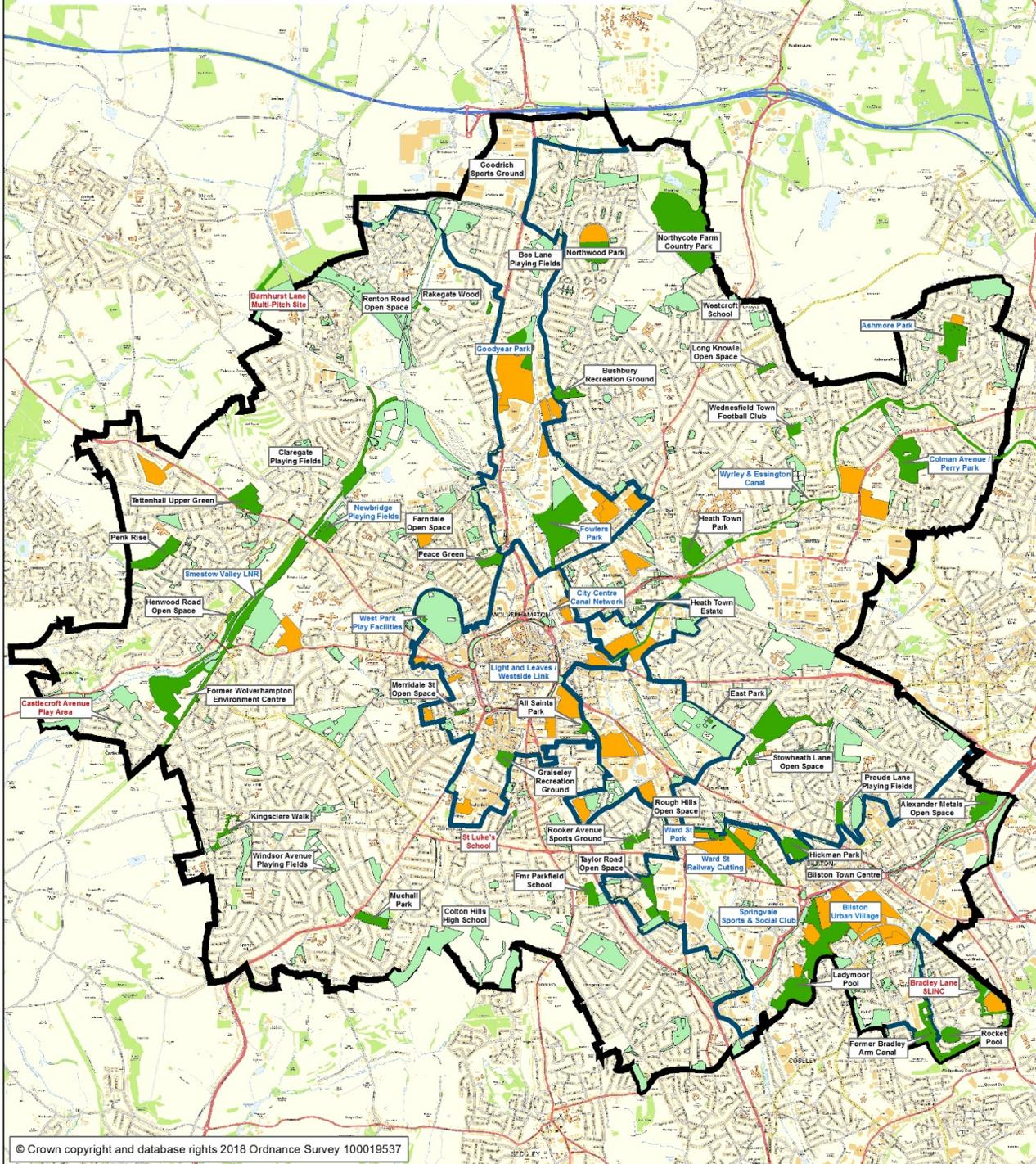
3.3 The City-wide aims of the OSSAP are:

- To broadly retain the same amount of open space across the City (4.38 ha per 1,000 residents);
- To target investment in key open spaces to address gaps and support growth;
- To allow poorer quality open spaces in local areas of surplus to come forward for development, subject to levels of compensation which provide reasonable capital receipts;
- To set out playing pitch priorities (based on the Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan) which provide a clear framework for disposal of former playing fields, including on school sites.

3.4 The priority projects set out in the Action Plan part of the OSSAP provide clear guidance on the Council's priorities for open space improvement by Analysis Area, which will form the focus for investment and allocation of developer contributions and other funding. The location of these projects and their regeneration context is shown on the plan below.

Wolverhampton Open Space Action Plan Priority Sites and Regeneration Context

-  Priority Open Space Action Sites
 -  Other Open Spaces
 -  Regeneration Spine - Area Action Plans
 -  Committed Housing sites (>50 homes)
- Red label - Project Completed
Blue label - Project Underway
Black label - Project not started



- 3.5 Since the OSSAP was updated in 2015 considerable progress has been made to deliver priority actions, funded by both internal and external resources. These actions include:
- Changing rooms for new multi-pitch site to serve the north of the City at Barnhurst Lane now under construction;
 - Creation of a new community use playing pitch at St Luke's Primary School to mitigate for playing field loss at the former St Luke's Junior School;
 - Phase 1 of Ashmore Park improvement works completed;
 - Castlecroft Avenue Play Area completed;
 - Designation of a new Black Country Wyrley & Essington (BC W&E) Canal Local Nature Reserve (LNR);
 - Successful Blue Network ERDF Bid contributing to a £500,000 investment programme for the new BC W&E Canal LNR, the creation of 4ha of LNR at the former Wolverhampton Environment Centre and other improvements to Smestow Valley LNR – works now underway;
 - Successful Bilston Urban Village Strategic Environmental Infrastructure ERDF and Local Growth Fund Bid contributing to a £2.0 million works programme for the creation and improvement of a series of linked open spaces, including Nettlefolds Park, Barbors Fields and Highfields Park, for recreation and biodiversity purposes – works now underway;
 - City-wide canal towpath improvements in the Wednesfield, City Centre and Bilston areas, funded through the Managing Short Trips project, providing a walking and cycling route between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.
- 3.6 Individual changes made to the original OSSAP 2015 are available on request. The Strategy and Action Plan have been subject to updates to reflect:
- Refreshed open space standards;
 - Amended playing pitch priorities following completion of an updated Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan;
 - Progress made in delivering priority actions, including any changes to details, timescales and funding arrangements;
 - Emergence of new priority actions in accordance with the Strategy, including:
 - Lights and Leaves and Westside Links projects to improve green infrastructure serving Wolverhampton City Centre;
 - Provision of new sports facilities at Peace Green Neighbourhood Park;
 - Improvements to pitches and facilities at a number of Council-owned open spaces and private sports clubs across the City;
 - Increasing community use of football pitches at a number of Council-owned open space and schools across the City;
 - Creation of a new football pitch at Grosvenor Street Open Space serving the Heath Town Estate, to mitigate for playing field loss at Burton Crescent housing development site;
 - Improvements to open spaces in Bilston Town Centre which require investment to improve quality or remodelling to enable more flexible use, in line with the priorities of the Bilston Business Improvement District Business Plan.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 In order to balance the need for regular updates with resource constraints, in future the OSSAP Action Plan will be updated every two years and the OSSAP will be subject to a standards and strategy refresh every six years. The PPSAP will be subject to a partial review every two years and a full review every six years. This means that there will be an OSSAP Action Plan update and PPSAP partial review in 2020.

5.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 5.1 The alternative option to updating the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan would be to continue to use an out-of-date document for decision-making purposes. This would reduce the effectiveness of the document to enable decision-making on a range of open space issues.

6.0 Reasons for decision

- 6.1 It is important that the Council and partners are able to make robust decisions on open space issues based on up-to-date evidence. If the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan is not updated on a regular basis there is a risk that this would reduce the effectiveness of the document to enable decision-making on a range of open space issues.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 The Action Plan contains details of projects that have either been successfully completed in recent years, are on site or have been identified as priority actions and therefore make up a programme of potential projects.
- 7.2 Elements of projects on site, namely Barnhurst Lane Changing Rooms, Peace Green, Bilston Urban Village Environmental Infrastructure, Fowlers Park, Heath Town Park, Renton Road Play Area and Castlecroft are already reflected in the approved capital programme.
- 7.3 The programme of potential projects will help support future bids for external resources and direct private developer contributions in line with Council priorities. Not all the potential projects will involve the Council incurring capital expenditure. However, any required on-going maintenance of the sites will impact on the Council's revenue budget. The costs stated in the Action Plan are indicative based on the costs to complete the desired works and do not include any future maintenance costs. However, potential projects will not be progressed until any additional maintenance costs have been quantified and at least 10 years' future maintenance costs secured.

- 7.4 The completion of desired works is dependent upon external resources from grant funding and developer contributions and until funding is confirmed it is not possible to finalise any capital and revenue estimates. Included projects will be subject to future reports to Councillors seeking approval for terms and costs once known in line with current approval processes.

[TT/12062018/C]

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

[TS/14062018/Q]

9.0 Equalities implications

- 9.1 An Equality Analysis has been completed, which concludes that, overall, the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP) will have positive equal opportunity implications, by seeking to achieve equal access for all to a sufficient quantity and quality of open space and sport facilities of different types. The OSSAP will increase participation in sport and physical activity and access to high quality open space across the City.

- 9.2 There is identified potential for some localised adverse impacts through development of a limited number of open spaces. However, in these cases there has been careful consideration to ensure that any impacts are balanced by secured mitigation measures which will result in overall improvements to quantity, quality and/or access to open space in the local area.

10.0 Environmental implications

- 10.1 The OSSAP update will have positive implications for the improvement of open space for people and wildlife across the City.

11.0 Human Resources implications

- 11.1 There are no human resource implications directly arising from this report.

12.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 12.1 Any potential Council schemes will require approval by the Council before any capital expenditure is incurred as ongoing maintenance of the sites will impact on the Council's revenue budget. This will involve the submission of proposals to Corporate Landlord Board to be reviewed on value for money and appropriateness based on the current financial climate. Capital expenditure has a direct impact upon the Council's revenue budgets and therefore needs to be restricted to projects essential to the Council's priorities. Any projects endorsed by Corporate Landlord Board will then be reported to Councillors for approval.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

Wolverhampton Open Space Audit and Needs Assessment, PMP for City of Wolverhampton Council (2008)

Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (February 2014)

Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Equality Analysis (January 2014)

Open Space, Sport and Recreation Supplementary Planning Document (2015)

Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment, KKP for City of Wolverhampton Council (2015)

City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (February 2016)

Cabinet 24 February 2016 – City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update

Wolverhampton Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment Update, KKP for City of Wolverhampton Council (June 2018)

City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update, KKP for City of Wolverhampton Council (June 2018)