

## **APPENDIX 2b – NATIONAL POLICY**

### **Urban Task Force**

The Urban Task Force was established by the Department of the Environment to identify the causes of urban decline in England. The Task Force role was to notionally identify the causes of decline but also identify measures and ways of bringing people back into the cities, towns and inner urban areas.

The Government's Urban White Paper identifies the need for well laid out urban areas with quality buildings, well laid out streets and good quality public open space that is readily accessible.

The aim of the Task Force was investigate the ways in which an Urban Renaissance could be achieved and to demonstrate how to create the quality of life and vitality that would make urban living desirable again.

The Task Force identified the need for change to achieve this. The change would be through improving the physical attributes of the built infrastructure and the environmental Green space that linked them. The strengthening of democratic local leadership and a commitment to re-engaging public participation, interest and confidence would support the approach to change along with increases in investment within the urban environment.

The recommendations made by the Task Force advised that local authorities should be instrumental in leading the renaissance and that they should strengthen their enforcement, and strategic management role over their environment. Local authorities would be required to produce and prepare strategies that dealt with design, provision, maintenance, funding and management of their public realm including open space.

### **Urban White Paper –‘Our Towns and Cities: The Future’**

The launch of the Urban White Paper ‘Our Towns and Cities: The Future’ by the Government aims to provide a long-term strategy for breathing life back into the country's towns and cities.

The paper is the first for 23 years that deals with identifying urban issues and how through long term joined up policies, economic, social and environmental needs can be redressed and bring an end to the under investment in our towns and cities and also bring an end to the inadequate planning approach.

The Urban White Paper includes a programme for improving the quality of parks, play areas and green spaces and recommends that local authorities aim to achieve the national standard for quality green space provision ‘The Green Flag Award.’ This will be enforced through better design and by making parks and open spaces safe attractive places to use.

Well managed open space such as parks, squares, greens and children's play areas help improve the attractiveness of where people live they help in the promotion of healthy lifestyles and can therefore significantly contribute to the quality of the urban environment and the quality of lifestyle.

The Government wants everyone to have access to safe, well maintained, parks, play areas and other open space close to where they work and live.

## **APPENDIX 2b – NATIONAL POLICY**

The Government has recognised that over the last few decades a significant amount of public open space has been lost to development and often a great deal of what is left has been neglected and poorly maintained. The White Paper recognises that simply halting the decline is not enough, the real challenge lies in consciously striving to find ways of improving the quality of parks and play areas and open spaces, thereby making them cleaner with better maintenance and safer for local people.

As a result the Government indicated it would implement three key drivers namely,

- Improve the way we manage and maintain parks and open spaces and how we plan, design and develop new ones.
- Improve the information on the quality and quantity of parks and open spaces and how they are used and the levels to which they are maintained
- To lead and develop a shared vision for the future of Parks, play areas and open spaces.

The White Paper also encourages the promotion of leisure, sporting activity and culture through the establishment of beneficial creative partnerships with schools and through putting in place Spaces for Sport and Art. The paper encourages support for individuals and communities to take their ideas forward and to develop Local Strategic Partnerships that create the opportunity for people to have a clear voice influencing development and provision in their area.

### **Rural White Paper – ‘A Fair Deal for Rural England’**

The Rural White Paper – ‘A Fair Deal for Rural England’ was launched in 2002. The paper set many of the Urban White Paper priorities in a Rural Context. Five main action points are identified within the document aimed at revitalising England’s rural areas. These are in the areas of:

- Education, transport, housing and education
- Social exclusion
- Protection of the countryside
- Local democracy aimed at increasing the ability and effectiveness of parish and town council governance
- The rural economy

The White Paper identifies several specific proposals across a number of issues including those involving public open space and green spaces in rural community areas. These include:

- Agricultural and Farm Diversification
- Market Town Regeneration
- The importance of local and rural democratic structures

Also included are new measures geared towards protection of the countryside and wildlife these include:

- Legislation to protect commons

## APPENDIX 2b – NATIONAL POLICY

- To make access more inclusive with a review of diversity and the countryside to assess how more young people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities can be encouraged to visit
- A better assessment of the overall value of the rural landscape
- A commitment to prepare Bio-diversity strategies for England and a specific commitment to ensure that 95% of nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) are in a favourable condition by 2010 and to reverse the long term decline
- To improve and increase access and enjoyment of the countryside with a £13million New Opportunities Fund to improve public Greenspace

### Living Places - Cleaner, Safer, Greener

This document identifies the Government's approach to making cleaner safer and greener public spaces. It also recognises the benefits that good parks and open spaces bring by making places more liveable and sustainable whilst also enriching the quality of peoples' lives and local communities. The objectives within the document are;

- To provide good parks and green spaces that are close to where people live or work.
- To provide a more diverse range of green space that caters for the social, educational and physical needs of peoples changing lifestyles.
- To meet the needs of all people, especially children and young people, older people, those with disabilities, minorities and people in disadvantaged areas
- To create networks of accessible, high quality parks and diverse green spaces in all our towns and cities

### Green Spaces, Better Places

The final report of the Urban Green Space Taskforce highlighted concern over the major decline in the quality of many urban parks and green spaces and identified urgent action as being needed to enable such spaces to deliver their many benefits.

The report considered a number of problems affecting green space and suggested solutions to overcome them:

- **Investment-** the report highlights the need for over a £100 million per year of capital funding being required over the next five years simply to reverse the decline in green space quality and to provide opportunities for the creation of new ones.
- **Capital and revenue** funding needs to be supported with a range of training and management skills for staff and local groups, more partnership development and increased community involvement. It also advocates the need for better information systems and a new administrative body is proposed to direct the improvements
- **Partnership** the report highlight show more needs to be done to attract private sector and local businesses into partnership with Councils, users and local communities.
- **Marginalised Groups-** Green spaces are needed to serve the whole community, especially young people and children, the elderly, those with disabilities, minorities and people in disadvantaged areas

## **APPENDIX 2b – NATIONAL POLICY**

The report suggests common criteria to measure both quality and care and recommends that each green space be it a formal park, informal kick about or wildlife area should be considered as part of a continuous network of green spaces.

### **Rethinking Open Space**

An influential research paper produced by the Scottish Executive designed to identify practical methodology for the preparation of open space strategies.

The main recommendations of the research are;

- Open space policies should seek to satisfy local needs
- They should place greater emphasis on promoting sustainable green networks that are accessible and of high quality
- Where appropriate existing spaces should be enhanced before providing, more of the same
- The long term value and quality of open space is dependent upon effective management, robust and adequate maintenance and strong community support
- Partnership working by those with a stakeholder interest was essential to ensure long-term viability.
- Local authorities and their partners should aim to deliver comprehensive networks of accessible, high quality, sustainable green and civic spaces that should provide a positive contribution to the image and strategic development framework of an area, promoting economic development and social inclusion.

### **Sport England 'Towards a Level Playing Field & A Sporting Future for the Playing Fields of England'**

Sport England is the National Agency for the protection and development of sport. Local authorities have a statutory planning requirement to consult with Sport England. Sport England's 'A Sporting Future' sets out policies to oppose the loss of playing fields through development unless one of the following five exceptions apply:

- A quantified documented assessment of current and future needs has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Sports Council that there is an excess of playing field provision in the catchment and the site has no special significance to sport
- The proposed development is ancillary to the principal use of the site as a playing field or playing fields, and does not affect the quality or quantity of pitches or adversely affect their use
- The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any part of the playing pitch)(including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing area of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting /ancillary facilities on the site
- The playing field or playing fields which would be lost as a result of the proposed development would be replaced by a playing field of equivalent or better quality and of equivalent or greater quantity, in a suitable location and subject to equivalent or better management arrangements, prior to the commencement of development

## **APPENDIX 2b – NATIONAL POLICY**

- The proposed development is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility, the provision of which would be sufficient benefit to the development of sport as to outweigh the detriment caused by the loss of the playing fields

### **Government Action**

The Government has identified the actions necessary to improve the coordination of action and policy development for Green space these include;

- Clearer national policy- over the next five years the Government will lead in developing an effective national framework for Urban parks and Green space
- Better organisational focus for Urban Space – the appointment of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE Space) to ‘champion the role of urban parks and green space’
- Through CABE Space the Government will encourage the development of new strategic partnerships with such organisations as; The Groundwork Trust, The Urban Parks Forum (Green space), The Civic Trust Green Flag Award, The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to disseminate best practice in service improvement.