

**Darlington Open Space Strategy
2007-2017**

Update Report

November 2010



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Policy Context	3
Open Space Audit Update: Process and Methodology	3
Open Spaces: 2010 Key Findings	4
Open Space Typologies	5
Quantity of Open Space	6
Standards of Provision	6
Quality of Open Space	6
Value of Open Space	7
Accessibility to Open Space	8
Type of Open Space	8
Parks and Gardens	9
Cemeteries, Disused Churchyards and Burial Grounds	11
Children and Young People's Provision	12
Green Corridors	14
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace	16
Informal Open Space	18
Landscape Amenity Space	19
Civic Space	21
Allotments	22
Locality Profiles	24
North West	24
Central	25
South West	27
South East	28
North East	30
Rural Area	31
Resources and Implementation	33
Conclusions	33
Monitoring and Review	33
Appendix 1: Map of Darlington Urban Area	34
Appendix 2: Map of Darlington North West	35
Appendix 3: Map of Darlington Central	36
Appendix 4: Map of Darlington South West	37
Appendix 5: Map of Darlington South East	38
Appendix 6: Map of Darlington North East	39
Appendix 7: Map of Middleton St George/Middleton One Row	40
Appendix 8: Map of Hurworth/Hurworth Green	41
Appendix 9: Map of Heighington	42
Appendix 10: Low Value Spaces	43

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 Darlington benefits from an extensive open space network; 703ha covers a series of multi functional spaces including green corridors, parks, wildlife spaces, informal open space, children's play areas and allotments of differing sizes within or on the edge of the urban area and the main villages of Middleton St George/Middleton One Row, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Heighington.
- 1.0.2 High quality open spaces bring many benefits for the community; they provide better opportunities for sport, play and recreation while the tranquillity and absence of noise and pollution found in many spaces enhances well being. Many provide safe and sustainable transport routes for people to move around the Borough on foot or by bike while others provide opportunities to grow local food. Several spaces provide access to heritage and biodiversity assets as well as providing valuable habitats for wildlife.
- 1.0.3 The Council's Open Space Strategy and associated action plan was published in 2007 (OSS2007), since then the Council has continued to promote the many benefits of open space across the Borough. Work has been carried out in order to advance its policies and address its issues; new quality spaces have been created and integrated into the network while many others have been improved and developed into accessible multifunctional spaces. This 2010 Update Report provides an update on the state of publicly accessible open spaces as at summer 2010.
- 1.0.4 This report will help the Council identify areas of the Borough where there is a shortage of, or lack of access to a particular type of open space, or where the quality of open space needs to be improved. It will also help determine where contributions from new development may be sought, support bids for external funding and guide the allocation of resources.

1.1 Policy Context

- 1.1.1 The key principles of the Open Space Strategy remain to protect, provide and enhance a variety of well designed, high quality, accessible open spaces that are well maintained and safe which improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. But the Strategy was produced before the adoption of several key policy documents: One Darlington: Perfectly Placed, the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy, the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan and the Council's Play Strategy.
- 1.1.2 To provide an overarching, strategic approach to open space provision and enhancement the principles of these documents will be reflected in the Council's approach where they do not conflict with adopted OSS2007 objectives. This will ensure that the type and location of open spaces and improvements continue to meet identified local needs and ensure that there are fewer inequalities in provision across the Borough.
- 1.1.3 A key theme particularly in the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy is the importance of multifunctional spaces; better use should be made of existing open spaces, incorporating different open space functions in one space to meet identified community and wildlife needs. To do this fewer, higher quality multifunctional spaces have and will continue to be created and maintained; many now provide a mix of uses in one space like informal space, children's play and areas for wildlife. This approach helps ensure that spaces are valued and used positively throughout the day and in the evening by different age groups.
- 1.1.4 The information provided in this report will also be used to inform the Council's Local Development Framework particularly the detailed forthcoming Development Plan Documents and the Planning Obligations SPD. It will also provide considerable detail to inform the forthcoming Green Infrastructure Strategy and Allotments Strategy.

2. Open Space Audit Update: Process and Methodology

- 2.1 This Update Report provides details on the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in the Borough as at summer 2010. Site surveys were undertaken for 284 spaces; information was provided on site size, primary, secondary and tertiary purposes of the space, quality and value, access and other site specific information. The surveys were undertaken by the Council's Countryside Rangers and Planning Officers who have extensive knowledge of the requirements of open space provision

across the Borough. The Council's Allotments Officer provided specialist knowledge on the allotment sites.

- 2.2 The majority of open spaces assessed were 0.1ha or more within or on the fringe of the urban area and the three main villages of Middleton St George/Middleton One Row, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Heighington. But some spaces like allotments and children's play areas may be smaller; these have been included reflecting their specific function and importance to the open space network. The overall level of provision includes spaces owned by the Council, Parish Councils or in private ownership, with public or private access. Publicly accessible spaces are the focus of this report as they provide the basis for establishing community needs, appropriate standards of provision as well as securing provision from new development.
- 2.3 The quality assessment criteria used in 2007 have been changed to reflect the principles of the newer documents and the Council's consequential changing approach to promoting the open space network. The new assessment criteria reflect the different quality criteria important to each open space type now and in the long term. As a result it has been difficult to provide a direct comparison with the 2007 quality assessments although broad changes will be identified.
- 2.4 OSS2007 included playing pitches and outdoor sports facilities. Their very distinct requirements and standards have been subject to separate assessments; the Darlington Playing Pitch Strategy and Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy 2009 and will be monitored separately (see www.darlington.gov.uk/planningpolicy). Only publicly accessible playing pitches that are part of another type of open space e.g. South Park and are used for informal recreation by the community will continue to be assessed as part of the OSS.

Locality Working

- 2.6 Delivery of the environmental services parts of the OSS including street cleaning, grounds maintenance, arboriculture and parks management will continue to be delivered by the Council's Street Scene teams on a locality basis. There are five locality areas across the urban area for the North West, Central, North East, South East and South West as well as the Rural Area. For consistency open space provision will be considered for each of these locality areas; profiles for each area and main village can be found in section 6.

3.0 OPEN SPACES: 2010 KEY FINDINGS

QUANTITY AND LEVEL OF PROVISION	
Total area of open space	703.93 ha
Total area of open space within and on the fringe of the urban area	656.34 ha
Total area of accessible open space	613.03 ha
Total number of spaces	284
Total number of accessible spaces	211
Total number of spaces over 0.1ha	276
Accessible urban open space/1000 urban population	7.01 ha
Accessible open space/1000 population	6.61 ha
QUALITY AND VALUE: ACCESSIBLE SPACES	
No of high value sites	156
No of medium value sites	43
No of low value sites	12
Sites of 1 star quality	4
Sites of 2 star quality	51
Sites of 3 star quality	115
Sites of 4 star quality	39
Sites of 5 star quality	2
TYPES OF OPEN SPACE PROVISION BY PRIMARY PURPOSE	
Allotments	27

Cemeteries	9
Children and young people's space	22
Green Corridors	20
Natural and semi natural greenspace	25
Informal recreation	88
Landscape amenity	30
Parks and gardens	14
Civic Spaces	3

3.1 Open Space Typologies

3.1.1 The types of open space included in this update report are:

Open Space Type	Primary purpose
Park or garden	Provide for wide range of informal and formal recreation and community events, with active Council management.
Informal recreation space	Spaces which are not formally laid out close to home or work for informal activities and may contribute to the character and appearance of an area.
Natural and semi natural greenspace	Provide for wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education awareness.
Children and young people's provision	Space designed for play and social interaction involving children and young people including equipped play areas, natural play areas and youth provision like kickabout areas, skateboard parks and fishing.
Green corridors	Linear spaces for walking and cycling for leisure or travel with opportunities for species movement.
Landscape amenity	Space that enhances the appearance of residential, employment or other areas and can act as noise, visual or wind buffers.
Allotments	Spaces which allow people to grow their own produce, keep chickens and horses.
Cemeteries, churchyards, burial grounds	Areas for burial and quiet contemplation often with high biodiversity value.
Civic Spaces	Provide a setting for civic buildings and community events.

3.1.2 These typologies help divide the spaces into discrete categories to provide a meaningful analysis of the data collected. A number of open spaces perform several functions; each can have up to three typologies reflecting the different functions that are provided within one space. The primary purpose of the space is its main type, for example the primary purpose of St Cuthbert's Churchyard is as a cemetery, churchyard or burial ground but it also provides a valuable function as informal recreation (secondary purpose) as well as for natural and semi natural greenspace (tertiary purpose). Children and young people's provision are also categorised by the age groups they serve (toddlers, children aged up to 12 and young people's provision).

3.1.3 A hierarchy of provision has been established for each open space type reflecting its size, how far users have to travel to it and its characteristics. This helps ensure that a range of multifunctional spaces are provided in each locality to meet the demand from different levels of use and identified local needs:

Hierarchy	Features
Strategic spaces	Most are 10ha or more, have high levels of use by the wider community and/or by visitors, provide a range of functions and have active management like South Park.
Local spaces	Most are over 1ha, within 1000m walking and cycling distance of home, with a more limited range of facilities and are well maintained like Bensham Park, Harrowgate Hill.
Doorstep spaces	The majority are below 1ha, within 800m walking distance of home with one or two uses, including spaces found within housing areas.

3.2 Quantity of Open Space

- 3.2.1 Overall there is 703.93ha of open space on 284 spaces in the Borough; 276 spaces are 0.1ha or more. Provision of accessible open space varies across the urban area; the South East has the most spaces covering the largest area while the Central locality has the least number of spaces over the smallest area. Provision elsewhere sits within this range (see table below). In the Rural Area Middleton St George has the most provision; 25.34ha over 13 spaces while Heighington has the lowest provision; 6.34ha across 7 spaces. New maps showing open space provision for the urban area and the main villages have been produced (see Appendices 1-4).

Locality	No of accessible spaces	Total Area	Provision per 1000 people
North West	36	84.43	4.96/1000
Central	34	74.73	3.71/1000
South West	37	126.16	6.30/1000
South East	39	192.17	11.46/1000
North East	37	131.33	10.25/1000
Rural	28	40.36	3.58/1000
TOTAL	211	649.18	6.61/1000

- 3.2.2 The three community woodlands in the urban fringe have been included in the nearest locality Merrybent (South West), South Burdon (South East) and Skerningham (North East) as a result of the benefits they have to the community in that locality.

3.3 Standards of provision

- 3.3.1 A key output of this report is to up date the standards of provision for open space required by 2017. Standards help analyse the adequacy of, and gaps in provision at Borough wide and locality level, in particular where additional provision of specific types of space will need to be secured to meet the OSS targets by 2017 (see section 6). In some cases where provision of a particular type of space exceeds community needs the redesign of a space to an alternative function or change in management approach of a space to enhance multifunctionality can help reduce deficits in provision. New provision through development can also address gaps in a locality.
- 3.3.2 The overall total area of open space is equivalent to 8.35ha per 1000 people but not all of this is publicly accessible. To accurately assess community needs the standards for publicly accessible space are more appropriate; there is 6.61ha of accessible open space/1000 people in the Borough; in the urban area this is 7.01ha/1000 people. This exceeds the 2017 target of 6.2ha of accessible space/1000 people but this figure is expected to fluctuate up to 2017. New spaces may be added, while a few spaces like the former school sites are expected to be partly redeveloped.
- 3.3.3 The availability of publicly accessible open space varies across the urban area. The South East has the most open space with 11.46ha per 1000 population as a result of the existence of several large open spaces like Maidendale and Geneva Woods Nature Reserves and the Eastern Transport Corridor. In contrast, in the Central area where high density, older housing accommodates the highest population, provision is more limited; 3.65ha/1000 people exists. Details for each locality area are set out in table 1 above.
- 3.3.4 At a more detailed level there is very little open space in some urban wards. Wards with high density populations like College have the lowest provision with 0.54ha/1000 people. Whereas wards with fewer people like Faverdale that have seen recent suburban growth with open space provision have a higher level of provision with 17.90ha/1000 population.

3.4 Quality of Open Space

- 3.4.1 The quality of each publicly accessible space was assessed against a range of criteria considered important to the purpose and aspirations for each open space type. The cleanliness and maintenance of each space was scored as well as other key issues like the amount and condition of street furniture including litter bins, seats and equipment, condition of grass, plants and footpaths/cycleways as well as biodiversity value. For specific types of provision like churchyards categories were added like condition of headstones.

- 3.4.2 The score was converted into a percentage equivalent to a quality star rating system (1* is the lowest, 3* medium and 5* highest) to enable comparison between open space types (see below). This approach provides a benchmark against which the existing condition and need for enhancement of existing spaces can be measured. It helps the Council and its partners identify spaces which require improvement or which require a review of their design and management.

Open Space Type (primary purpose)	1* spaces	2* spaces	3* spaces	4* spaces	5* spaces
Parks and gardens	0	1	9	2	2
Children and young people	0	4	11	7	0
Informal recreation	4	30	45	9	0
Natural/semi natural greenspace	0	8	11	6	0
Green Corridors	0	3	12	5	0
Cemeteries	0	1	5	3	0
Landscape amenity	0	4	21	5	0
Civic Space	0	0	1	2	0
TOTAL	4	51	115	39	2
Allotments	1	1	9	16	0

- 3.4.3 Overall the quality of publicly accessible spaces has improved. Key results for quality are:
- 74% of spaces were above average quality;
 - South Park and West Park are 5* quality providing for a range of informal and formal activities for the community and for visitors in an attractive, well maintained safe environment. Both have seen significant investment over the last three years;
 - Children and young people's spaces have seen considerable improvements; 82% are above average quality reflecting the significant investment made over the last two years;
 - 26% of spaces are below average quality, a decrease since OSS2007 (35% of spaces);
 - All of the publicly accessible 1* spaces are informal open space; the long term management and maintenance arrangements of these spaces will be considered to encourage positive use;
 - A further 59% of 2* spaces are informal recreation but this disguises a number of issues. 20% are incidental open space with limited functionality providing little scope for improvement. A further four are former school sites; their quality will be improved through redevelopment.
 - 31% of natural and semi natural spaces are below average quality. Several are relatively new spaces requiring time for biodiversity features to establish. Lack of signage and limited access for disabled members of the community were issues that will be investigated and where appropriate addressed through management plans.
- 3.4.4 The quality of open space varies between locality areas but not as markedly as it did in 2007. Central, South West, North East and Rural have no 1* spaces. The South East has the majority of below average spaces (23) while the Central and North East areas have the least (seven each). The Rural area has 3 below average spaces. Only the North West and South West have a 5* space. Overall there is an even distribution of 2*, 3* and 4* spaces. Each locality is discussed in section 6.

3.5 Value of Open Space

- 3.5.1 Value is different to quality; a space can be highly valued to the locality and the community even if it is low quality. Each space was given a value rating from low-high to reflect:
- Access: publicly accessible spaces are higher value than spaces with limited access;
 - Similarity of provision: scarcity of other similar open spaces types in the locality would generate a higher value;
 - Type of use: a well used space by people and wildlife has a higher value;
 - Character and distinctiveness: spaces with protected trees, protected species or providing the setting for a listed building are higher value.
- 3.5.2 73% of spaces are high value. This reflects the limited accessible open space in wards with high residential densities like Bank Top, Northgate and Pierremont as well as the importance of accessible

open space in the villages. All 27 allotments are high value because of the demand compared to provision of this type of space. Only 14 spaces (6%) are considered low value, consistent with 2007.

- 3.5.3 Low value spaces are either informal recreation (eight spaces) or landscape amenity (four spaces). Many of the informal recreation spaces are incidental open space while the landscape amenity spaces provide traditional landscaping areas. All lack multifunctionality and have limited facilities that other spaces contain; consequentially they have lower use.
- 3.5.4 Only a minority of spaces (13%) are lower than average quality and value. Of these only 3% are low value/below average quality and are unlikely to be making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life or providing a valuable habitat for wildlife. Improved maintenance and management or their redesign to an alternative open space function could lead to improvements in the medium-long term. A full list of lower than average quality and low value spaces is in Appendix 5.

	Quality				
Value	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	2	5	5	0	0
Medium	1	19	23	0	0
High	1	27	87	39	2

- 3.5.5 18% of high value spaces are below average quality. However these are either:
 - newer spaces like West Park Corridor and South Burdon Community Woodland where time is needed to allow biodiversity features to establish as part of comprehensive management and maintenance regimes which will see quality and use increase; or
 - the former school sites where development is expected in the short-medium term.

3.6 Accessibility to Open Space

- 3.6.1 The accessibility standard defines the maximum distance that users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of space and to different spaces within the hierarchy of provision. Strategic spaces like South Park have a large catchment area but these spaces also have a local function, whereas doorstep spaces have a neighbourhood catchment area close to home.
- 3.6.2 They help analyse the adequacy of provision at Borough wide and locality level and help identify gaps in provision, in particular where additional types of space will need to be secured to meet the OSS targets by 2017. Where barriers like railway lines exist the catchment areas have been adjusted.
- 3.6.3 Overall accessibility to open space has improved:
 - In the urban area almost all of the community are within 300m of an informal recreation space: some small gaps in provision exist in the North West, South East and Central localities but the South West has the least provision particularly in the West End;
 - The majority of the population is within 1000m of a park apart from parts of the North East and small parts of the Central and South West areas;
 - Children's play area coverage has significantly improved; most of the urban area is within 666m of a space although small gaps exist in the South West, Central and North East localities. The majority of the urban area is within 1000m of a young person's space; the only gap is in the South West locality.
 - Access to natural and semi natural greenspace is more sporadic. The community are expected to walk 600m to an accessible space; gaps in provision are found in most localities.

4.0 Type of Open Space

- 4.0.1 There is also variation in provision between open space types. Since OSS2007 the number and total area of publicly accessible open spaces has increased, 25 additional spaces (22.6ha) have been identified. These are mainly associated with new development including the balancing ponds at West Park, the Arts Centre Garden and the landscaping at the Coleridge Centre. A summary of accessible provision is set out below:

Accessible Open Space (Primary Purpose)	No of spaces 2010	No of spaces 2007	Total Site Area (ha) 2010	Total Site Area (ha) 2007
Parks and gardens	14	12	82.6	55.43
Children and young people provision	22	15	20.62	9.55
Informal recreation	88	92	121.18	130.68
Green Corridors	20	20	110.86	109.27
Natural and semi natural green space	25	27	229.18	243.97
Landscape amenity	30	8	15.21	5.79
Cemeteries	9	9	32.86	32.86
Civic Spaces	3	2	0.52	0.4
TOTAL	211	185	613.03	587.95
Allotments	27	27	28.2	28.2

4.0.2 To meet community needs and address gaps in provision a redesign or change in management approach has seen the primary purpose of several spaces change to more appropriate provision. Further details for each open space type are set out in section 4.1 below. In summary these include:

- Parks and gardens: increased provision from the addition of the Middleton St George Water Park and West Park. This explains the consequential reduction in natural and semi natural greenspace;
- Informal recreation space: 41% of provision but has reduced since 2007 as a result of several spaces becoming the focus for other types of provision particularly for children and young people;
- Children and young people's provision: an additional seven spaces have been identified including Lascelles Park and Woodlands Green, Middleton St George;
- Green Corridors: the number has remained constant but the total area has risen slightly as a result of the enlargement of several corridors. For example the River Skerne corridor has incorporated adjoining spaces;
- Landscape amenity: increased threefold partly as a result of new development like at Darlington College and Smithfield Road/Neasham Road;
- Civic Spaces: one new space has been created at the Arts Centre.

4.1 Parks and gardens

4.1.1 Darlington's parks and gardens provide for at least three different open space functions as well as community events. Each park has different characteristics offering a unique experience; West Park and the Middleton St George Water Park provide natural and semi natural greenspace while South Park is a registered historic park and like North Lodge Park, Stanhope Green, Green Park and The Avenue are all found within Conservation Areas, contribute to the setting of the historic area. The Avenue provides landscape amenity space, while parks like North Park and Stanhope Green provide outdoor sports facilities.

Quantity and Type

4.1.2 Darlington has 14 parks; an increase of 2 since 2007; West Park is now an established park while the Middleton St George Water Park provides a range of open space functions within the village environment. Parks are particularly important for providing children and young people's facilities; 71% of parks provide equipped play areas and/or a range of facilities for young people.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic park	4	59.7
Local park	7	19.65
Doorstep park	3	3.25
TOTAL	14	82.6

Strategic parks

4.1.3 Darlington's four strategic parks are located in the North West, Central and South West localities and provide for active and passive recreation for the community and visitors. South Park has the most extensive range of facilities including a café, toilets and an education centre and the newer West Park is set around a hill top environment with a sculpture park, orienteering trails and a downhill cycle track. The linear Brinkburn Denes along Cocker Beck provides for informal recreation and children's play

while North Park is a welcome space in the densely populated north of the urban area providing a range of children’s facilities and sports provision for local residents.

Local parks

4.1.4 Local parks are smaller in scale and generally provide informal open space, children and young people’s facilities as well as outdoor sports provision. The seven parks are evenly distributed across the urban area and many provide valuable spaces for biodiversity within the urban environment. The Middleton St George Water Park provides a unique water based environment set around three reservoirs for informal recreation, fishing and biodiversity.

Doorstep parks

4.1.5 The Borough has three doorstep parks identified because of their size and functions offered. All provide valuable space for residents in the immediate locality.

OSS Policy 8: Standards for Parks Provision

By 2017 public parks and gardens will be provided so that there is 0.85ha/1000 population within 15 minutes (1000m) walk of a park and so that all sites are at least 4* quality.

4.1.6 OSS2007 identified that there was no strategic park to the east of the main railway line. To address this deficiency, the OSS proposed improving the quality of a range of smaller spaces in the South East to provide a variety of park type functions for the local community. Eastbourne Park and Lascelles Park have been enhanced to 4* quality; new facilities for children and young people, improved footpaths/cyclepaths and new street furniture now provide park functions in these spaces.

4.1.7 The overall quantity of parks provision is 0.89ha/1000 people slightly above the policy target. But there are parts of some wards (Harrowgate Hill, Central, Haughton East and West and Hummersknott) that are not within a 1000m of a park. However the community in these wards do have access to significant, high quality, multifunctional spaces like along the River Tees and River Skerne Corridors that perform a range of ‘park’ functions. In the long term new parks created as part of the Lingfield Point and Central Park developments would also help address these gaps in provision.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	3	3*: 2 5*: 1	2: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington Central	2	3*: 1 4*: 1	2: High value
Darlington South West	5	2*: 1 3*: 3 5*: 1	4: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington South East	2	3*: 1 4*: 1	2: High value
Darlington North East	1	3*: 1	1: High value
Rural	1	3*: 1	1: High value

4.1.8 Reflecting intensity and variation of use, the quality standard for parks were set much higher than for other types of open space; the long term aspiration is that all spaces are at least 4* quality. West Park, South Park, North Lodge Park and Eastbourne Park meet this standard. Only Green Park is below average quality (2*) as a result of the lack of facilities that exist. Improving the quality of the parks, particularly the lower quality spaces, will continue to be a priority to ensure that they are all welcoming, safe, clean and well maintained with a range of facilities to meet community needs.

4.1.9 Only Sugar Hill Park and Green Park were not high value; both have limited facilities which affects use. New play equipment at Green Park should help improve its value and quality.

Actions

In 2010-2011 to help meet the quality standards the following will take place:

- A programme of improvements will continue at Brinkburn Denes to improve accessibility, safety, play provision and biodiversity;
 - New children’s play provision at Green Park will improve multifunctionality and the value of the space;
- In the long term:
- The overall quality of the parks will continue to be improved particularly Sugar Hill Park;
 - By 2026, new provision may be incorporated as part of the development proposals at Central Park and Lingfield Point.

4.2 Cemeteries, Disused Churchyards and Burial Grounds

4.2.1 The Borough’s cemeteries, disused churchyards and burial grounds provide space for burial, quiet contemplation and informal recreation but are becoming increasingly valuable as a biodiversity resource. Many contain well established trees and shrubs, within semi wild areas for wildlife to breed.

4.2.2 All nine publicly accessible spaces make a notable contribution to the character of the Borough; West Cemetery is a registered historic park, while a further six spaces like St Andrews Churchyard, Holy Trinity Church, Church View Burial Ground and St Michael’s Churchyard lie within Conservation Areas, creating a distinctive sense of place within the urban area and the villages.

Quantity and Type

4.2.3 Provision remains constant across the Borough; seven spaces are within the urban area and two are found in Hurworth and Heighington. Distribution is uneven reflecting historic associations with churches, religious buildings and land. Only three cemeteries are still in active use; West Cemetery, North Cemetery and East Cemetery.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	2	19.1
Local	3	11.81
Doorstep	4	1.94
TOTAL	9	32.86

Strategic cemeteries

4.2.4 The strategic spaces have significant value; West Cemetery is an active cemetery and accounts for 46% of the total area in this category. St Cuthbert’s Churchyard is smaller but is a prominent landmark situated in the town centre and has a high level of use by the community for informal recreation.

Local and doorstep cemeteries

4.2.5 The three local spaces include the other two active facilities at North Cemetery and East Cemetery as well as St Andrew’s Church, Haughton; smaller in scale but providing a publicly accessible, high quality space in an historic location. The doorstep spaces include both village churchyards; all provide valuable space for biodiversity with many varieties of established trees and plants.

OSS Policy 18 Provision Standards By Open Space Type

By 2017 within the main urban area, the overall provision of specific types of all publicly accessible cemeteries will be maintained and improved to 4* quality or above

4.2.6 No accessibility or quantity standard has been identified for this type of space as the factors that control provision will vary. The high quality standard recognises that these are cherished high quality spaces and a focus of community pride. West Cemetery, St Cuthbert’s Churchyard and St Michael’s Churchyard meet the quality target. Only one space falls below average quality; Holy Trinity Church is 2* quality as a result of limited street furniture and limited access for all across the space. The creation of a Memorial Garden next to St Andrews Churchyard with associated car parking could help improve the quality of this space. All the spaces are high value as a result of their heritage and biodiversity value as well as their importance to the community.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	-	-	-

Darlington Central	3	4*: 1 3*: 2	All: High value
Darlington South West	2	4*: 1 2*: 1	All: High value
Darlington South East	1	3*	All: High value
Darlington North East	1	3*	All: High value
Villages	2	4*: 1 3*: 1	All: High value

- 4.2.7 As the population grows it may be necessary to provide more space; in the long term an extension site has been allocated in the Local Plan next to West Cemetery. In the meantime it is essential that the potential of the existing resource is enhanced and maximised.

Actions

In 2010-2011 to help enhance provision the following is expected to take place:

- A Memorial Garden may be created next to St Andrews Churchyard, Haughton offering a space for quiet reflection enhancing overall quality;
 - The level of cemetery provision will be assessed and appropriate new provision incorporated in the LDF;
- In the long term:
- The overall quality of the cemeteries/churchyards will continue to be improved particularly Holy Trinity Church.

4.3 Children and Young People's Provision

- 4.3.1 Traditionally children's play areas included equipped play spaces but increasingly adventure play and natural play areas are considered important alternatives. Promoting creative play and managed risk is a key part of a child's development helping them interact with others as well as helping to reduce obesity and anti social behaviour.

- 4.3.2 Considerable work has taken place since 2007 to improve play spaces in Darlington to meet these aspirations and to ensure that appropriate provision is available for all toddlers and children close to home. Provision for young people is equally important; facilities like skate parks, basketball hoops, kickabout areas, fishing and teenage shelters are increasingly common in open spaces.

Quantity and Type

- 4.3.3 22 spaces primarily provide for children's play including four spaces in the main villages of Heighington and Middleton St George. But to provide a comprehensive analysis of provision all spaces that provide facilities for children and young people will be assessed. A further 25 facilities are found on another type of open space, like a park or an informal open space to enhance its multifunctionality. Since OSS 2007 nine spaces have been created significantly improving access to quality facilities for children and young people across the Borough.

- 4.3.4 Of the 47 spaces 67% have equipped play facilities for children aged up to 12, while 67% provide facilities for young people; 18% provide facilities for both like Pensbury Street and the Auckland Oval. Since 2007 an additional two equipped play spaces have been provided (33 in total) but young people's provision has more than doubled to 33 spaces (realising a key action of OSS2007. The type of young people's provision has become more varied, in addition to kickabout areas and fishing, most spaces include basketball hoops while skate parks, bike ramps, teenage shelters and multi use games areas (MUGAs) also exist in each locality.

Hierarchy	No
Strategic	6
Local	23
Doorstep	20
TOTAL	49

Strategic play spaces

- 4.3.5 A range of provision catering for large numbers of children of different age groups at any time is found in the six larger multifunctional spaces. All have been enhanced since 2007 and provide adventurous

play for children up to 12. In addition South Park also has a skate park and MUGA, West Park has a downhill cycle track and North Park has a BMX track and a MUGA. Distribution is uneven; strategic spaces are only found in the North West, Central and South West areas.

Local play spaces

- 4.3.6 23 local spaces like Springfield Park, Brinkburn Pond and McMullen Road provide a range of facilities for children and young people at a neighbourhood level as well as providing space for informal recreation so children can enjoy unstructured play. Local spaces are evenly distributed across the urban area and villages; the areas without strategic spaces have more local spaces to balance provision.

Doorstep play spaces

- 4.3.7 20 doorstep spaces like Louisa Street and Dodsworth Street provide valuable playspace for children up to 12 years old close to home particularly within the more densely developed parts of the urban area. Doorstep provision is appropriately located to complement the hierarchy of provision in each locality area.

Policy 9 Equipped Children's Play Areas

A two tier hierarchy of equipped play provision will be established as follows:

- Strategic play sites: South Park and North Park
- Local play sites: all other equipped sites

The Council will seek to provide one equipped play site for every 450 children under 12 years old and to locate the sites so that 85% of children under 12 years old are within 10 minutes walk (666m) of a site.

- 4.3.8 OSS 2007 identified a need for an additional two equipped play spaces to address gaps in local provision in the Faverdale, Skerne Park, Harrowgate Hill, Haughton South, College and Hummersknott wards. Several of these gaps have been addressed; new spaces have been provided at Bensham Park and Cocker Beck Valley while others have had their facilities extended to be able to accommodate a larger number of children and young people of different age groups like Lascelles Park and Red Hall.
- 4.3.9 The majority of children in the urban area are now within 666m of a play space although small gaps exist in the Haughton, Central and Hummersknott wards. The Council will continue to work with partners to address this need.

Policy 10: Recreation Areas for Young People

The Council will seek to provide 1 recreation area of at least 3 star quality for every 500 young people under 17 and to bring 99% of the population within 15 minutes walk (or 1000m) of a young people's recreation area.

- 4.3.10 The standards for young people are slightly different to those for children reflecting the distance young people are able to travel to reach a facility. OSS2007 identified the need for four additional spaces within existing open spaces to address gaps in provision in Faverdale, Skerne Park, Harrowgate Hill, Haughton South, College/Hummersknott wards complemented by quality improvements at existing spaces.
- 4.3.11 Since OSS2007 the Council has worked with Durham and Darlington Groundwork Trust and the local community to double and extensively broaden the range of young people's provision available. The West Park cycle track, South Park MUGA and skate park, Lascelles Park zip line and basketball hoop have all helped reduce gaps in provision. The Council will continue to work with partners to address the small gaps in the Hummersknott/College wards.
- 4.3.12 In the Rural area children's play spaces have doubled since 2007 with two new playspaces being provided in Heighington and Middleton St George. There is one space in Hurworth providing for both children and young people; there is scope to accommodate another equipped playspace in this village as well as Middleton St George. Young people's provision exists in each village although the range is more limited than in the urban area.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	8	5*: 1 4*: 2 3*: 5	7: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington Central	9	4*: 3 3*: 5 2*: 1	9: High value
Darlington South West	5	5*: 1 4*: 2 3*: 1 2*: 1	4: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington South East	11	4*: 4 3*: 4 2*: 3	11: High value
Darlington North East	6	4*: 2 3*: 4	5: High value 1: Medium value
Villages	8	4*: 2 3*: 5 2*: 1	7: High value 1: Medium value

- 4.3.13 Overall there has been a considerable quality improvement from 2007; 85% of spaces are now above average quality. As a result of significant investment from the Playbuilder scheme and developer contributions spaces like Bensham Park have improved from 3* to a higher quality 4* space with equipped facilities for children up to 12 and a kickabout area and basketball hoop for young people. The two 5* quality spaces are part of South Park and West Park while there is a relatively even split between 3* and 4* spaces across the Borough. Only six spaces are below average quality. Many are kickabout areas with poor grass cover in goalmouths while others could benefit from equipment improvements like at Buxton Moor Crescent.
- 4.3.14 92% are high value spaces as a result of the high level of use by children and young people. Only four spaces are medium value; three are also spaces that would benefit from equipment improvements while others are not prominent which limits use. Only one equipped play area was in need of improvement; Green Park is identified for further investment over the next year which should help improve its quality and value rating.

Actions

To help meet the identified 2017 standards the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Play provision at Green Park, Red Hall and Brinkburn Denes will be improved;
- The quality of all spaces will be maintained and improved to ensure that all are welcoming, safe, secure, clean and well maintained;

In the long term:

- Gaps in provision will continue to be addressed particularly in the Haughton, College, Hummersknott wards and the Rural area;
- Consideration will be given to improving the value of the medium value spaces, either through design/function review for children's play or for another open space function.

4.4 Green Corridors

- 4.4.1 Green corridors have become the basis of the Borough's green infrastructure network since 2007 as a result of the emphasis placed upon them by the Tees Valley Green Infrastructure Strategy. Significant investment, management and maintenance have been undertaken by the Council and its partners to provide an extensive network of attractive green linear corridors. Many provide sustainable transport routes for the community to walk and cycle between the different localities and neighbourhoods in the urban area and between the urban area and the villages. Some follow water courses like the River Skerne and Cocker Beck or major roads like the Eastern Transport Corridor, while several are found

along historic routes like Cemetery Lane or former railway lines like the former Barnard Castle trackbed. All are valuable wildlife movement corridors allowing species to move between spaces.

Quantity and Type

- 4.4.2 The amount of publicly accessible green corridors has remained constant since OSS2007; 20 exist although these cover a slightly larger area than previously. This is as a result of the enlargement of several corridors; the River Skerne Corridor now incorporates several smaller, adjoining spaces. A further eight spaces have green corridor as a secondary use.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	9	79.19
Local	7	26.12
Doorstep	4	5.55
TOTAL	20	110.86

Strategic Spaces

- 4.4.3 By definition many green corridors like the Skerne Corridor and the former Barnard Castle trackbed are extensive spaces which cross ward and locality boundaries providing safe, sustainable green access routes around the Borough. These spaces also link many different types of smaller open spaces including informal open space and natural and semi natural greenspace allowing the community the opportunity to experience a variety of open space benefits in one journey.

Local and Doorstep Spaces

- 4.4.4 The eight local spaces are well established but cover shorter distances, all like Green Lane have the potential to be extended to incorporate other open spaces. The three doorstep spaces, like Clowbeck Court provide short attractive green routes within housing areas. Provision complements strategic spaces.

OSS Policy 18 Provision Standards By Open Space Type

By 2017, within the main urban area, the overall provision of specific types of open space will be maintained and improved to achieve the following standards:

- Green corridors: All primary sites to be 3* quality or above

- 4.4.5 It is not appropriate to provide quantity standards for green corridors as they cross locality areas and wards and the factors that control the appropriate quantity of provision will vary within the urban area. However accessibility and quality of these spaces is important particularly to encourage greater use by pedestrians and cyclists.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	6	4*: 1 3*: 3 2*: 2	All: High value
Darlington Central	3	4*: 2 2*: 1	All: High value
Darlington South West	6	4*: 2 3*: 4	All: High value
Darlington South East	2	3*: 2	All: High value
Darlington North East	1*	3*: 1	All: High value
Villages	2	3*: 2	All: High value

*3 are counted in other locality areas

- 4.4.6 All green corridors are high value spaces as they provide valuable multifunctional sustainable transport and recreational spaces for the community as well as being movement corridors for wildlife. 90% of spaces are 3* quality or above. These include five well established 4* quality spaces that have benefited from long term investment and management like Nunnery Lane and the River Skerne Corridor. The three 2* spaces are either:

- new provision like the West Park Corridor where planting and grass are not fully established; or
- spaces that have been reclassified as a green corridor at Green Lane and Faverdale Bridleway. They would benefit from improvements to surface treatment and lighting to meet the green corridor quality assessment criteria.

Actions

To maintain and help improve quality and value the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Extension of the Baydale Beck green corridor to Merrybent Community Woodland;
- Improvements to lighting and surfaces along Green Lane;

In the long term

- The Council will continue to work with partners to assess the potential for a proposed green corridor alongside the River Skerne in the Town Centre Fringe.

4.5 Natural and semi natural greenspace

4.5.1 The importance of many natural and semi natural greenspaces are recognised through their national and local designations like ancient woodland, the Borough's seven Local Nature Reserves and twenty five Local Wildlife Sites. But many other spaces have wildlife value, providing a range of priority habitats and also providing for informal recreation. Collectively these spaces are distinguished by their primary focus on wildlife conservation and migration, biodiversity and environmental education.

Quantity and Type

4.5.2 There are 25 predominantly natural and semi natural greenspaces in the urban area and main villages. A further 21 spaces provide some form of natural and semi natural greenspace as a secondary or tertiary purpose.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	2	128.01
Local	13	75.03
Doorstep	10	26.14
TOTAL	25	229.18

Strategic spaces

4.5.3 Two extensive spaces are found at Skerningham (37.89ha) and South Burdon community woodlands (90.12ha) which provide quality easy access to the urban fringe for the community in the North East and South East localities. These are unevenly distributed but both are also a valuable resource for the wider community; the value of South Burdon has increased as a result of improved connectivity via the new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the A66(T).

Local spaces

4.5.4 Thirteen local spaces include the seven designated Local Nature Reserves at Rockwell, Geneva Woods, Brankin Moor, Brinkburn, Maidendale and The Whinnies. Others are part of wildlife corridors like West View/Edinburgh Drive or are found next to watercourses like Baydale Beck. These spaces are evenly distributed, although the Central locality has a lower level of provision. But in this locality other larger spaces like the Skerne Corridor and St Cuthberts Churchyard also provide natural and semi natural greenspace benefits to compensate for the lack of primary provision.

Doorstep Spaces

4.5.5 These spaces provide valuable areas for biodiversity in housing areas or close to other built development. Distribution is relatively evenly distributed complementing the provision of local spaces except in the North East which benefits from access to Skerningham and the quality urban fringe which biodiversity is more prevalent than in other parts of the Borough.

Policy 15 Standards for the provision of natural and semi natural greenspace

The Council will work towards a standard of natural and semi natural greenspace provision of 5ha per 1000 population so that 60% of the urban population is within 9 minutes (600m) walk of at least one accessible site.

The quality of sites with a primary purpose of natural and semi natural greenspace will be raised so that 75% of sites are 3* quality or above and 20% are 4* quality or above.

- 4.5.6 Provision varies across the urban area and the villages. The South West and North West have the most spaces (seven) whereas the South East has the most space covering 124.37ha (five spaces) as a result of several large spaces like Maidendale Nature Reserve and South Burdon Community Woodland being in this locality. The villages have a limited resource; The Whinnies LNR is found in Middleton St George. However, all of the villages have easy access to the wider countryside and its many natural and semi natural greenspace benefits.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	7	4*: 2 3*: 3 2*: 2	6: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington Central	2	4*: 2	2: High value
Darlington South West	7	3*: 4 2*: 3	6: High value 1: Medium value
Darlington South East	5	4*: 1 3*: 1 2*: 3	5: High value
Darlington North East	3	4*: 1 3*: 2	3: High value
Villages	1	3*: 1	1: High value

- 4.5.7 68% are 3* quality and above, a significant increase from 11% in OSS2007. An example is Redhall Wetland; formerly two below average quality spaces these now form one 3* quality space. Of the seven Local Nature Reserves only Geneva Woods is below average quality (2*) as a result of needing arboricultural management and improved signage. The other spaces that are below average quality are newer spaces like Merrybent Community Woodland which require time for their biodiversity features to establish.
- 4.5.8 92% are high value spaces including all designated spaces because of their importance for biodiversity and education. Importantly, unlike OSS2007 there are no low value spaces in the Borough suggesting improvements or the redesign of spaces has taken place to improve value for the community and wildlife.
- 4.5.9 To accurately assess access to natural and semi natural greenspace the standards will consider all spaces that perform that function. An additional 20 spaces (136.62ha) including many parks, cemeteries and green corridors also provide valuable habitats for wildlife, this helps to reduce gaps in provision across the urban area. Overall there is 4.01ha of publicly accessible natural and semi natural greenspace/1000 population. While this is below the target of 5ha/1000 it is a significant increase since 2007 as a result of several new spaces being created like Merrybent Community Woodland (13.89ha) and the enlargement of others like Redhall Wetland (7.27ha).
- 4.5.10 In the long term there is significant potential for other types of open space like parks, allotments and informal space to fulfil natural and semi natural greenspace requirements by incorporating 'semi wild' areas, trees, plants and hedgerows to provide valuable habitats for biodiversity. For example the biodiversity value of Brinkburn Denes will be enhanced through the planned works. This will provide valuable natural and semi natural greenspace in a part of the urban area with little provision.

Actions

To help meet identified 2017 targets the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Quality improvements to the environment, biodiversity and access will continue with partners at Maidendale Nature Reserve;
- A programme of improvements will continue at Brinkburn Denes to improve accessibility and biodiversity value;

In the long term:

- The number of designated Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites will be increased which should see quality and value improvements.

4.6 Informal Open Space

4.6.1 Informal open space provides opportunities for informal recreation like informal play, dog walking and jogging close to home or work. Many larger spaces now incorporate other types of provision like children's play, semi wild areas or landscape amenity and act as the focus for recreation in the area. Other smaller spaces are found within housing areas and provide recreation space near home, usually with a secondary purpose as landscape amenity space.

Quantity and Type

4.6.2 Comprising the majority of all open space; 88 accessible spaces (121.18ha) are primarily used as informal space, a decrease from OSS2007 (108 spaces). This reflects the change of primary purpose of several spaces to other types of open space as well as the loss of a small amount of low value/low quality spaces to development. Many other spaces like parks also incorporate informal space; there are another 82 spaces that provide this type of space.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	2	14.52
Local	26	70.47
Doorstep	60	36.19
TOTAL	88	121.18

Strategic spaces

4.6.3 Appropriately for this use only Cocker Beck Valley (13.54ha) and Hurworth Place Riverside (0.98ha) fall within this category. Both contrast in size but have an important strategic role. The latter is part of the Tees Way footpath while Cocker Beck Valley is a large quality multifunctional space. Provision is uneven but informal recreation opportunities exist in all the other strategic spaces providing an even distribution across the urban area.

Local and Doorstep Spaces

4.6.4 The 26 local spaces include larger informal spaces of 1ha and above, many of which have a secondary purpose for children and young people including Baydale Beck and Fitzwilliam Drive. Others provide a high quality setting within Conservation Areas like the village greens of Hurworth and Middleton One Row. Several incorporate publicly accessible playing pitches that can also be used for informal recreation including land to the south of Tommy Crooks Park and Hall Lane, Heighington. 68% are doorstep spaces providing valuable informal recreation space and green relief within housing areas close to home. Provision of local and doorstep spaces complement each other ensuring there is a mix of high quality informal spaces of different sizes within each locality.

Policy 17 Informal open space standards

The Council will sustain informal recreation space at a level of 6.0ha/1000 population such that there is at least one accessible informal recreation space within 300m of 99% of all homes in the main urban area. The quality of spaces should be at least 3* with 20% being at least 4* quality.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of primary spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	16	4*: 2 3*: 4 2*: 9 1*: 1	8: High value 6: Medium value 2: Low value
Darlington Central	13	3*: 5 2*: 8	7: High value 3: Medium value 3: Low value
Darlington South West	11	4*: 1 3*: 9	7: High 4: Medium

		2*: 1	
Darlington South East	17	4*: 1 3*: 6 2*: 7 1*: 3	10: High value 5: Medium 2: Low value
Darlington North East	17	3*: 13 2*: 4	10: High value 5: Medium value 2: Low value
Villages	14	4*: 5 3*: 8 2*: 1	12: High value 2: Medium value

- 4.6.7 61% are high value spaces reflecting their high use by the community for everyday recreation needs. 61% are 3* quality and above, but only 10% are 4* quality and above. Although both are below the standards identified in policy 17 all actions identified in the Action Plan for this typology have been completed demonstrating that there has been significant improvements to informal recreation space over the last three years. The extent of 4* informal spaces varies; some provide valuable village green settings for Conservation Areas including Cockerton Green, Heighington Village Green and Hurworth Green while others provide a high quality environment to cater for the demands of local informal recreation like Holgate Moor Green.
- 4.6.8 39% of spaces are below 3* quality including four 1* spaces at Whitby Way, Shearwater Avenue, East Haven and Barden Moor Road. At the time of survey all required maintenance to improve fencing and surfaces while access to East Haven and Barden Moor Road is difficult to find which reduced their rating. Seven spaces were low value/below average quality which are unlikely to be making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life. Improved maintenance and management or the redesign of a space for an alternative function could lead to improvements in the medium to long term.
- 4.6.9 To provide an accurate assessment of informal recreation provision all spaces that provide for this use have been assessed. Overall there are 170 spaces (570.13) providing informal recreation opportunities equivalent to 6.11ha per 1000 population for all informal space, slightly above the standard identified in the OSS. This standard means that most of the community are within 300m of an informal recreation space but small gaps exist in the South West, Central and South East locality areas.
- 4.6.10 Where appropriate the redesign of existing spaces to encourage informal recreation will be considered. Opportunities may exist to improve provision in the Central ward through development in the long term. It is also anticipated that the amount of space will fluctuate over the next few years; parts of several former school sites are expected to be developed while other informal open spaces may be provided as part of new development.

Actions

To help meet the identified 2017 standards the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Opportunities will be taken to secure improvements to existing spaces, particularly low quality/low value spaces through funding opportunities and s106 agreements;
- The disposal of low quality/low value informal open space will be considered in exceptional circumstances which could help prioritise investment in spaces that are valued by the community to improve their quality.

4.7 Landscape amenity

- 4.7.1 Landscape amenity is an important but underutilised resource helping to enhance the environmental qualities of the urban environment. While within the more densely developed parts of the urban area it can contribute to the character of the neighbourhood providing more ornamental features like on roundabouts many of these spaces have limited biodiversity value. They can also provide important spaces for informal recreation close to where people live and work particularly where access to a larger space may not be available. Others provide a buffer between infrastructure like roads and railway lines and the built area.

Quantity and Type

- 4.7.2 There are 30 primarily landscape amenity spaces in the Borough (15.21ha) an increase of eight spaces since 2007. Many are new spaces like at Darlington College and the Coleridge Centre or have resulted from a change in open space typology particularly from informal recreation.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	0	0
Local	5	6.87
Doorstep	25	8.34
TOTAL	30	15.21

Local Spaces and Doorstep Spaces

- 4.7.3 Local spaces include all larger, multifunctional landscape amenity spaces like the Darlington Train and land between Skerne Park and the railway line. The majority (83%) are doorstep spaces which are primarily landscape buffers between residential areas and infrastructure which although providing greenery in the urban environment have limited multifunctionality.
- 4.7.4 Landscape amenity spaces are reasonably well distributed across the urban area; all five locality areas have at least one local space complemented by a range of smaller doorstep spaces. While the North West has the most limited accessible provision it does benefit from significant areas of private landscape amenity space which helps buffer residential areas from non residential uses and infrastructure.

Policy 18: Provision Standards by Open Space Type

Within the main urban area the overall provision of specific types of open space will be maintained and improved to achieve the following standards:

Landscape amenity: 70% of sites to be 3* quality or above

- 4.7.5 It is not appropriate to provide quantity standards for landscape amenity as the factors that control the appropriate quantity of provision will vary. The relatively low standards for landscape amenity space are because traditionally the features expected from primarily landscape amenity space are more limited.

Quality and Value

Area	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	1	3*: 1	1: High value
Darlington Central	6	3*: 6	3: High value 2: Medium value 1: Low value
Darlington South West	5	4*: 1 3*: 3 2*: 1	2: High 2: Medium 1: Low
Darlington South East	6	3*: 3 2*: 3	3: High value 2: Medium 1: Low
Darlington North East	8	4*: 3 3*: 5	5: High 2: Medium 1: Low
Villages	4	4*: 1 3*: 3	4: High value

- 4.7.6 Currently 87% of spaces are above 3* quality, significantly above the OSS standard. Of the four spaces that fall below average quality all have limited natural features which reduces the overall rating while at the time of survey two spaces required maintenance. The Council will continue to work with partners to enhance the lower than average quality spaces.

- 4.6.11 39% of spaces are below 3* quality including four 1* spaces at Whitby Way, Shearwater Avenue, East Haven and Barden Moor Road. At the time of survey all required maintenance to improve fencing and surfaces while access to East Haven and Barden Moor Road is difficult to find which reduced their rating. Seven spaces were low value/below average quality which are unlikely to be making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life. Improved maintenance and management or the redesign of a space for an alternative function could lead to improvements in the medium to long term.
- 4.7.9 60% are high value as a result of the importance attributed to these spaces as welcome greenery and breathing space in the urban environment, particularly surrounding larger scale buildings and car parks. Three spaces are below average value as a result of the presence of other better quality landscape amenity spaces in the locality or spaces which can also perform this function.

Actions

To help meet the identified 2017 standards the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Ongoing working with partners to seek improvements to existing spaces where appropriate.

4.8 Civic Space

- 4.8.1 Darlington's three accessible civic spaces cover 0.52ha and provide a setting for civic buildings and community events. Although most are hard surfaces, many provide planting and grassed areas, spaces for movement, relaxation, social interaction particularly in café bars. Importantly all provide a sense of place and local distinctiveness by enhancing the quality of the Town Centre and West End Conservation Areas.

Quantity and Type

- 4.8.2 By definition these prominent spaces tend to be found in highly accessible locations like the town centre where there are high levels of use by the community and visitors. Greenery within the spaces varies; High Row and the Market Place contain ornamental planting and shrubs and are pedestrianised being regularly used as thoroughfares by residents and visitors alike as well as providing valuable spaces for markets and community events. The Arts Centre Garden is a hard surfaced space with the Threshold water feature being its central feature.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	2	0.4
Local	1	0.12
Doorstep	0	0
TOTAL	3	0.52

Strategic spaces

- 4.8.3 The Market Place and High Row are strategic spaces as a result of their contribution to local distinctiveness, their ability to host community events and their high level of public use. Both are found in the Central locality and although not evenly distributed they are found in highly accessible locations providing opportunities for use by the wider community and visitors.

Local spaces

- 4.8.4 The Arts Centre Garden is a local space as a result of its size and more limited functions. However this space has significantly improved since 2007 providing a high quality setting for the Arts Centre as well as providing space for the community and visitors to sit and relax and enjoy the facilities of the café bar.

Policy 18: Provision Standards by Open Space Type

Within the main urban area the overall provision of specific types of open space will be maintained and improved to achieve the following standards:

Civic Spaces: All sites to be 5* quality

- 4.8.5 It is not appropriate to set accessibility standards for civic spaces as the factors that control provision will vary. The high quality standards for civic spaces recognise that these areas are a focus of civic pride and may form the basis of the initial impressions of visitors and potential investors.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington Central	2	4*: 2	2: High value
Darlington South West	1	3*: 1	1: High value

- 4.8.6 The Market Place and High Row are both 4* quality, well maintained, well used and attractive spaces, an increase from 3* quality in 2007. The Arts Centre Garden is classed as 3* quality. All are classed as high value because they are well used everyday by the community but also are a valuable resource for hosting community events as well as those which attract visitors to the Borough.

Actions

To help achieve the 2017 standards the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Ongoing management and maintenance will seek to improve the quality of these spaces to meet the 5* quality rating.
- In the long term:
- Opportunities to secure new civic spaces will be identified through the creation of new significant development.

4.9 Allotments

- 4.9.1 Allotments provide sustainable opportunities for the community to grow their own food as well as promoting outdoor exercise and community interaction. 'Grow your own food' is becoming increasingly popular; the Council currently has approximately 300 people on its waiting list for an allotment site.
- 4.9.2 Management and maintenance responsibilities vary; nine spaces are owned by the Council including Arnold Road and Lascelles, a further six like Glebe Road and Smithfield Road are owned by the Council and a self management association who take care of the day to day management of the spaces. All of the spaces in the villages are owned and managed by their respective Parish Councils. Others retain close associations with working men's clubs and private organisations. All are only accessible to allotment holders but as a valuable, unique type of open space the ongoing quantity, quality and value is monitored.

Quantity and Type

- 4.9.3 27 allotment spaces (28.2ha) exist; twenty in the urban area and seven in the main villages. Provision remains constant across the Borough but is unevenly distributed partly reflecting historic associations with working men's clubs, railway and industrial buildings and land like Harrowgate Club and Killinghall Row, Middleton St George. The majority of provision (23%) is in the South West, in contrast the Central locality has the lowest provision (9%). At a more detailed level, there are no allotments in the Central, Cockerton West, College, Eastbourne, Haughton East, Mowden, Park West and Pierremont wards.

Hierarchy	Number	Site Area
Strategic	-	-
Local	22	27.74
Doorstep	5	0.46
TOTAL	27	28.2

Local and doorstep allotments

- 4.9.4 81% are local spaces attracting plot holders from a wide area. Site size and the corresponding number of plots varies significantly; West Cemetery Allotments is the largest (3.51ha) while Lascelles Allotments is smaller (0.32ha). Allotments within the villages may be smaller but are classified as local spaces as a result of their village catchment. Five doorstep spaces exist in the urban area, all are very

small spaces (less than 0.2ha); Bowen Road (0.06ha) and Parkside are the smallest (0.06ha) each providing 2 plots but are still an important resource for the local community.

OSS Policy 18 Provision Standards By Open Space Type

By 2017, within the main urban area, the overall provision of specific types of open space will be maintained and improved to achieve the following standards:

- Allotments: 95% population within 15 minutes walk (1000m) of at least 1 allotment site

4.9.5 It is not appropriate to have quantity and quality standards for allotments as the factors that control provision vary across the urban area. Although the majority of the population is within 1000m of an allotment site the Council is aware that supply does not meet demand at present. The Council will continue to work with partners particularly the self management associations and Parish Councils to improve the provision of allotments. This may include changing management to encourage better use of existing stock as well as identifying new spaces for allotment provision.

Quality and Value

Locality	No of spaces	Quality	Value
Darlington North West	4	4*: 2 3*: 1 1*: 1	All: High value
Darlington Central	5	4*: 4 3*: 1	All: High value
Darlington South West	5	4*: 4 3*: 1	All: High value
Darlington South East	3	4*: 2 3*: 1	All: High value
Darlington North East	3	4*: 2 3*: 1	All: High value
Villages	7	4*: 2 3*: 4 2*: 1	All: High value

4.9.6 By nature, allotments are managed more intensively than other spaces, but their overall quality contributes to the Borough's landscape and 'sense of place'. So, new quality surveys were specifically designed to assess the qualities important to creating a high quality allotment space. 74% of spaces were classified as 4* quality including the largest West Cemetery and the smallest Bowen Road as well as several in the villages like Hurworth Grange.

4.9.7 Only two spaces are below average quality; Station Road, Middleton St George as a result of limited parking and difficult access and Honeypot Lane because of its poor overall condition as a result of misuse. The Council will work with partners to consider the long term approach to the management of Honeypot Lane. All of the allotment spaces are high value reflecting the high demand for plots and the limited allotment spaces within the Borough.

Actions

To help meet the 2017 standards of provision the following will take place in 2010-2011:

- Investigations will continue to help provide a new allotment at The Ridgeway, Harrowgate Hill;
- Through the Local Development Framework a new quantity standard of provision will be considered for allotments;

In the long term:

- Opportunities will be taken to increase the number of spaces and/or to extend existing spaces to enhance provision;
- The management and maintenance arrangements of Honeypot Lane will be reconsidered;
- By 2026 a new allotments space may be incorporated in the new development at Lingfield Point.

5.0 LOCALITY PROFILES

5.1 DARLINGTON NORTH WEST

5.1.1 Darlington North West is a growing area. It has expanded over time from the traditional densely populated inner housing area in Pierremont to the suburban style housing in the newer West Park and the large scale employment development found in Faverdale. The former Barnard Castle green corridor crosses through the middle of the locality connecting a mix of informal open spaces and natural and semi natural spaces. Several large open spaces are ideally placed to serve the needs of the community in each ward; West Park provides a large space for wildlife, sport, children's play and informal recreation for the residents of Faverdale/Cockerton West and East, Cocker Beck Valley provides informal open space, wildlife and children's play facilities in Cockerton West, while Brinkburn Denes provides formal and informal open space, sport and facilities for children and young people for those who live in Cockerton East and Pierremont.

Characteristics

- Population: 17,035
- Wards: Faverdale, Cockerton East, Cockerton West, Pierremont
- % of population under 16: 3728 (22%)
- Total Area of Open Space: 106.96ha of which 84.43ha is accessible
- No of Spaces: 48 of which 36 are accessible

Primary Open Space Type	Amount	Area (ha)
Parks	3	25.66
Children and young people*	8	44.27
Green Corridor	6	14.57
Informal recreation	16	28.76
Landscape amenity	1	0.24
Natural and semi natural greenspace	7	12.99
Civic Space	1	1.3
TOTAL	42	127.79
Allotments	4	6.12

* includes all spaces

What changes have been made since 2007?

- OSS2007 identified a low amount of open space per person in the North West. While it is difficult to provide new spaces in some of the more densely developed parts of the area, new development has led to the creation of the West Park corridor (0.82ha) and the balancing ponds, West Auckland Road (0.72ha);
- OSS2007 also identified a deficit in children's play provision in the North West. This has been addressed through significant investment into high quality, adventurous play equipment at Cocker Beck Valley, West Park and at Auckland Oval;
- In 2007 West Park was identified as a natural and semi natural greenspace. Over the last three years work has continued to create a quality hilltop park with downhill cycling track, orienteering courses, sculpture park and most recently a new children's play area;
- Significant improvements have been made to the locality's natural and semi natural greenspace; a network of wetlands and interpretation features has enhanced Brinkburn Nature Reserve.

Quality and value ratings

Value	Quality				
	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	1	1	0	0	0
Medium	0	5	4	0	0
High	1	6	14	7	1

5.1.2 73% of spaces are high value while 55% are also 3* quality and above including Cocker Beck Valley, Brinkburn Pond and the 5* West Park. This represents a considerable change since OSS2007 when a high proportion of spaces in the locality were lower value with fewer higher quality spaces.

- 5.1.3 Two informal spaces (behind Whitby Way and Woburn Avenue/Malvern Crescent) are lower quality/low value partly because of the amount of other higher quality informal recreation spaces in the locality. The 1* quality/high value space is Honeypot Lane Allotments where misuse has reduced the quality of this space. The Council will continue to work with partners to consider options to improve these spaces.

Accessibility of provision

- 5.1.4 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:
- An acceptable level of provision for parks and space for children and young people in this locality;
 - A small gap in provision for informal recreation space in the north east of Faverdale;
 - A gap in provision to natural and semi natural greenspace in Pierremont, Cockerton West and the north east part of Faverdale although this is expected to be improved through projects identified in 5.1.5 below; and
 - A small gap in provision to allotments in the north east of Faverdale;

Future projects

- 5.1.5 Where appropriate schemes will be identified to reduce these deficits. To address this several projects are underway which will also help improve quality and value in this locality:
- An extensive renewal of Brinkburn Denes is taking place in partnership with Groundwork and Friends groups. Quality improvements will be made to:
 - All 26 entrances to incorporate new artistic features;
 - Street lighting across routes in three of the Denes;
 - All street furniture with new seats, bins, directional signage and notice boards to be provided;
 - Eight footbridges;
 - Biodiversity to enhance the quantity of natural and semi natural greenspace in this ward;
 - Play area provision.
 - New backwaters and better water quality will be incorporated in Cocker Beck to help improve the quality of the natural and semi natural greenspace;
 - Development proposals on part of the former Alderman Leach School site will add natural and semi natural greenspace as well as securing quality improvements to the West Beck green corridor;
 - It is also anticipated that ongoing development at West Park will see the addition of informal recreation and landscape amenity space.

5.2 DARLINGTON CENTRAL

- 5.2.1 Darlington Central expands north from the town centre to the northern urban fringe taking in some densely developed C18 housing before reaching the C20 suburban areas on the northern periphery. Typically the town centre and outlying fringe area is a mix of uses; shops and offices are predominantly found in the centre with more business and industrial uses found in the outlying Town Centre Fringe. The Skerne Valley green corridor helps connect the Central locality to the North East as well as connecting smaller spaces within the area. The area is dominated by several large multifunctional spaces including North Lodge Park, North Park, North Cemetery and Drinkfield Nature Reserve. These provide the focus of activity within each neighbourhood complemented by smaller spaces at a local level. In the Town Centre greenspace provision is limited to St Cuthbert's Churchyard and the Quakers Burial Ground with complementary civic space provision. Open space particularly in the Town Centre Fringe is unevenly distributed and limited.

Characteristics

- Population: 20,165
- Wards: Central, Northgate, North Road, Harrowgate Hill
- % of population under 16: 4059 (20%)
- Total Area of Open Space: 86.75ha of which 73.55ha is accessible
- No of Spaces: 50 spaces of which 34 are accessible

Open Space Type	Amount	Area (ha)
-----------------	--------	-----------

Parks	2	13.09
Children and young people*	9	24.55
Green Corridor	3	28.66
Informal recreation	13	10.52
Landscape amenity	6	1.08
Natural and semi natural greenspace	2	9.26
Civic Space	2	0.4
Cemeteries	3	9.09
TOTAL	40	96.65
Allotments	5	2.65

*All spaces

What changes have been made since 2007?

- OSS2007 identified this locality as having the lowest amount of open space per person. While it is difficult to provide new spaces in the more densely developed parts of the locality some new landscape amenity spaces like Haughton Road/Dundee Street (0.14ha) have been added while the former Beaumont Hill School sites collectively provide 3.43ha of informal recreation space;
- The lack of quality children's play provision in Harrowgate Hill was identified as a key issue previously. Since 2007 a new equipped children's play area has been installed at Bensham Park alongside a basketball hoop and a kickabout area for young people. The Tintagel Close play area has also been enhanced and is now accessible to the community. This addresses the deficit in the Central locality in terms of quantity and quality of children's play provision;
- Through work with partners and Friends groups, North Lodge Park has continued to be improved; new play equipment and the restoration of the bandstand have added quality features to a valuable space in this densely populated part of town;
- As recommended by OSS2007 the strategic potential of North Park continues to be realised; new facilities for children and young people have been recently installed including a new bike track. Improvements to pedestrian and cycle ways as well as provision of new street furniture have helped make this space more accessible, attractive and well used by the local community improving quality and value.

Quality and value ratings

Value	Quality				
	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	0	3	1	0	0
Medium	0	3	4	0	0
High	0	2	16	13	0

- 5.2.2 74% of the spaces are high value while quality standards are extremely high in the Central locality; 81% are 3* quality and above. While the amount of high value spaces has remained broadly the same the redesign and improved management of similar types of space within an area has significantly increased multifunctionality and the quality of spaces since 2007.
- 5.2.3 There are no 1* quality spaces in the Central locality. However there are six spaces that are below average value and quality:
- James Street/Grass Street and land East of Fitzwilliam Drive are both 2* quality/low value as a result of the amount of higher quality informal recreation space that exists in the area;
 - Alexander Street (2*/medium value) and Lime Avenue Recreation Ground (2*/medium value) lack multifunctionality which has reduced the quality rating and its value to the community;
- These spaces would benefit from redesign or being managed as an alternative type of open space.
- Glebe Road/Green Lane and Mayfair Road/Glebe Road are 2* quality/medium value; it is expected that these spaces will be developed which should see improvements to the remaining open space.

Accessibility of provision

- 5.2.4 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:
- An acceptable level of provision for children and young people in this locality to meet identified standards;

- A small gap in informal recreation provision in the Albert Hill area;
- Access to parks is limited in the Albert Hill area;
- A small gap in provision in natural and semi natural greenspace in Harrowgate Hill.

Future projects

5.2.5 Where appropriate schemes will be identified to reduce these deficits. To help this and improve quality and value standards the following are planned:

- In the short term development proposals for the former Beaumont Hill school sites will help make quality improvements to the remaining informal open space, to the quality of Green Lane and help improve access to Skertingham Community Woodland;
- The Council will continue to work with partners to assess the feasibility of creating a green corridor along the River Skerne in the Town Centre Fringe which should improve the quantity, quality and access to multifunctional space in this locality and at a local level in the Albert Hill area.

5.3 DARLINGTON SOUTH WEST

5.3.1 Darlington South West is primarily a residential area. Open space provision varies across the area; it is limited in the high quality, distinctive Victorian West End and the densely developed C18 terraced housing close to the Town Centre and Bank Top Station while the C20 suburbs are connected by green corridors to informal open space. Landscape and historic connections have seen a network of natural and semi natural greenspaces, informal recreation spaces and children and young people's facilities evolve next to Baydale Beck, the River Tees and the River Skerne while other well established green corridors run along the former trade routes of Cemetery Lane and Nunnery Lane. Many spaces are in historic; South Park alongwith West Cemetery is a Registered Historic Park and Garden while Stanhope Park and The Avenue provide impressive settings within the West End Conservation Area.

Characteristics

- Population: 20,020
- Wards: College, Hummersknott, Mowden, Park East, Park West
- % of population under 16: 4102 (20%)
- Total Area of Open Space: 163.42ha of which 137.87ha is accessible
- No of Spaces: 56 spaces of which 37 are accessible

Open Space Type	Amount	Area (ha)
Parks	5	30.4
Children and young people*	5	45.5
Green Corridor	5	34.61
Informal recreation	10	12.23
Landscape amenity	5	5.4
Natural and semi natural greenspace	8	25.08
Civic Space	1	0.12
Cemeteries	2	18.44
TOTAL	41	171.78
Allotments	5	6.51

*All spaces

What changes have been made?

- Access between Merrybent Community Woodland and the urban area has improved providing a valuable accessible natural and semi natural space for the community;
- Several small additions have been created as a result of development; a landscape amenity space had been created at the entrance to the Coleridge Centre (0.31ha) while the new civic space in front of the Arts Centre (0.12ha) provides a pleasant seating area for residents and visitors;
- Nunnery Lane and Cemetery Lane green corridors and the track alongside Baydale Beck have seen quality improvements to surfacing for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Access to and through South Park from adjoining housing areas has been improved while its play provision has been significantly improved to cater for toddlers, children and young people;

- Play provision for children and young people has been significantly enhanced at Bushell Hill Park while Broken Scar has recently seen the addition of a new adventurous, high risk play area.

Quality and value ratings

	Quality				
Value	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	0	0	1	0	0
Medium	0	2	6	0	0
High	0	5	17	9	1

- 5.3.2 The South West has retained an extremely high proportion of high value (80%) and above average quality (85%) spaces including one 5* quality space at South Park. This represents a slight increase in the number of high quality and high value spaces over the last three years.
- 5.3.3 This locality does not have any low value/low quality spaces although there are seven 2* quality spaces:
- Merrybent Community Woodland (high value): a relatively new space that requires time for biodiversity features to establish which would improve its quality rating;
 - Green Park (medium value), land west of ECML, Skerne Park (medium value), Hall View, Mowden (high value): all lack multifunctionality which reduces quality and the lower value spaces are found in areas where there are similar types of spaces of higher quality;
 - Holy Trinity Church (high value), Baydale Beck/Mowden Bridge (high value), West View/Edinburgh Drive (high value); all have limited access for all and/or require improvements to footpaths.

Accessibility of provision

- 5.3.4 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:
- A gap in parks provision in Hummersknot and Park West although these areas have access to the strategic Tees Corridor so this is not as much of a concern as other gaps in provision;
 - A small deficit in provision of natural and semi natural greenspace in the College ward;
 - A small gap in provision for children's play, particularly for young people in Hummersknot;
 - Limited access to informal recreation space in parts of the College and Park West wards.

Future Projects

- 5.3.5 Where appropriate schemes will be identified to reduce these deficits. To help with this and improve quality and value standards the following are planned in the next year:
- Access to Merrybent Community Woodland will be enhanced through improving the Baydale Beck corridor with new footpaths and a bridge proposed to link the South West locality with the wider countryside;
 - New play provision will be installed at Green Park which will help enhance the overall quality of the park and help increase use.

5.4 DARLINGTON SOUTH EAST

- 5.4.1 Darlington South East is a mixed area; the inner area comprises some of the urban area's most densely terraced 18th century houses with C20 housing, schools, local shops and sports facilities found in the suburbs. The urban fringe contains a mix of large scale employment and retail uses like offices, retail parks, supermarkets and car showrooms. The inner areas have limited open space while the most significant areas of open space are found around the urban fringe like Tommy Crooks Park and Maidendale Nature Reserve while the Eastern Transport Green Corridor helps connect the South East to the adjoining localities. Several smaller spaces like Eastbourne Park and Lascelles Park provide valuable multifunctional spaces within housing areas for people and wildlife.

Characteristics

- Population: 16,770
- Wards: Bank Top, Lascelles, Lingfield, Eastbourne
- % of population under 16: 3744 (22%)
- Total Area of Open Space: 213ha of which 192.17ha is accessible

- No of Spaces: 53 spaces of which 39 are accessible

Open Space Primary Type	Amount	Area (ha)
Parks	2	5.22
Children and young people*	11	33.21
Green Corridor	2	16.48
Informal recreation	17	32
Landscape amenity	6	4.27
Natural and semi natural greenspace	5	124.37
Cemeteries	1	3.28
TOTAL	44	218.83
Allotments	3	3.36

*includes all spaces

What changes have been made since 2007?

- The Eastern Transport Green Corridor provides a high quality connection to adjoining locality areas as well as via a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the A66(T) to South Burdon Community Woodland and the wider countryside;
- Several spaces have been included that form valuable landscape amenity buffers around large employment and retail uses like the Darlington Train and at the entrance to the Yarm Road Industrial Estate;
- OSS2007 noted a deficit of greenspace in the inner area; a new greenspace has been provided at the entrance to Darlington College and as a buffer along the railway line;
- OSS2007 noted that there was a lack of a strategic park in this locality; several local spaces like Eastbourne Park and Lascelles Park have been enhanced and their multifunctionality increased. Both have seen significant improvements to play areas for children and young people while improvements to street furniture, access and lighting has increased use and improved the value for the local community.

Quality and value ratings

Value	Quality				
	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	1	1	1	0	0
Medium	1	5	1	0	0
High	1	11	13	8	0

- 5.4.2 Although the amount of space is the highest in the Borough quality standards are average. 54% of spaces are classed as 3* quality and above, a slight increase since 2007. However the amount of high value spaces (77%) has almost doubled since OSS2007 as a result of increased multifunctionality and use.
- 5.4.3 46% of spaces are below average quality including three 1* quality informal recreation spaces which would benefit from redesign or change to an alternative type of open space:
- East Haven (high value) and Barden Moor Road (low value): both have hidden access and would benefit from improved multifunctionality;
 - Shearwater Avenue (medium value): at the time of survey the boundary treatment was in disrepair and there were several potholes in the grass which should be resolved at the 2011 survey.
- 5.4.4 There are a further six spaces that are 2* quality/below average value:
- South of Edgemoor Road (low value), Geneva Lane south, Fenby Avenue, The Broadway (medium value): all are incidental open space within housing areas offering limited functionality, with better quality spaces of a higher quality found nearby;
 - Lingfield Way, Darlington College (medium value): are newly identified spaces requiring time for natural features to establish which should improve quality.

The Council will continue to work with partners to help address these issues.

Accessibility of provision

- 5.4.5 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:
- An acceptable level of provision of children and young people's to meet access standards;
 - A small gap in access to parks in the northern part of the locality;
 - A significant deficit to natural and semi natural greenspace in the Bank Top and Lingfield wards;
 - A small gap in provision of informal recreation space in the Bank Top and Lingfield wards.

Future Projects

- 5.4.6 Where appropriate schemes will be identified to reduce these deficits. To help with this and improve quality and value standards the following are planned:
- Maidendale Nature Reserve is experiencing ongoing improvements to biodiversity as well as to access which should continue to have an impact on its quality and value ratings;
 - In the long term, it is anticipated that new developments at Central Park and Lingfield Point will provide an appropriate quantity, type and mix of open space to meet the needs of new development which should help address some of the gaps in provision that exist in this locality.

5.5 DARLINGTON NORTH EAST

- 5.5.1 A predominantly suburban area, Darlington North East provides a mix of modern executive housing, family homes and bungalows next to the urban fringe interspersed with pockets of C19 terraced properties. Green corridors provide the basis of the network; the River Skerne green corridor runs along the southern and eastern boundary providing a quality environment for the community to move around, the Eastern Transport Corridor provides access to adjoining localities and the countryside while the smaller Green Lane corridor provides off road access for residents along the northern boundary and to Skertingham Community Woodland. Set within the wider area are a range of smaller spaces providing informal recreation, allotments, spaces for children and young people as well as the historic St Andrews Churchyard and Haughton village green.

Characteristics

- Population: 12,810
- Wards: Haughton North, Haughton West, Haughton East
- % of population under 16: 2,571 (20%)
- Total Area of Open Space: 124ha of which 116.14ha is accessible
- No of Spaces: 44 spaces of which 37 spaces are accessible

Open Space Type	Amount	Area (ha)
Parks	1	2.48
Children and young people*	6	16.26
Green Corridor	4	50.94
Informal recreation	17	18.06
Landscape amenity	8	3.56
Natural and semi natural greenspace	3	47.41
Cemeteries	1	1.01
TOTAL	40	139.72
Allotments	3	4.08

*All spaces

What changes have been made since 2007?

- Red Hall Wetland has been created from several existing smaller spaces which has improved the overall quality and value of the space generating more positive use;
- OSS2007 recognised the need for further investment in children's play areas; all the equipped play areas in the locality have benefitted from investment, new footpaths/cycleways have been provided at White Hart Crescent, while this space and Red Hall play area have been provided with new street furniture and lighting improving quality and level of use;
- The movement network along the Skerne Corridor has been improved so that the community can easily move around this part of the Borough.

Quality and value ratings

	Quality				
Value	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	0	0	3	0	0
Medium	0	3	5	0	0
High	0	2	18	8	0

5.5.2 72% of spaces are high value while 72% of spaces are classed as 3* quality and above. OSS2007 recognised that there was a high proportion of low value spaces and few high quality spaces (4* and above). This has improved over the last three years as now there are only three lower than average value spaces while 20% of spaces are 4* quality and above.

5.5.3 There are no low value/1* quality spaces in the North East although five spaces are below average quality:

- Green Lane (high value): this space has changed its primary purpose and requires some improvements to surfacing and lighting to meet the quality standards for green corridors;
- Former Springfield School (high value): part of this space is expected to be developed with improvements expected to the remaining open space;
- South of Former Springfield School, Salters Close/Lyonette Road, Belsay Walk (medium value): all are incidental open space within housing areas and offer little functionality. These would benefit from redesign or change to an alternative type of open space.

Accessibility of provision

5.5.4 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:

- An acceptable level of informal recreation space in the North East;
- Gaps in access to parks although the three green corridors provide an appropriate alternative function;
- A gap in provision of natural and semi natural greenspace in Haughton West/Haughton North but these areas have relatively easy access to quality countryside and the public rights of way network so the deficit is not as much of a concern there as in the other localities;
- A small gap in provision for children's play provision in this locality.

Future Projects

5.5.5 Where appropriate schemes will be identified to reduce these deficits. To help with this and improve quality and value standards the following are planned:

- Improvements will be made to surfacing, ducting and lighting on Green Lane to enhance quality and encourage more use;
- Access to Skerningham will be improved and additional planting will enhance the biodiversity value of this space;
- As part of the redevelopment of the former Springfield School the quality and value of the remaining space will be improved;
- The Council is continuing to work with partners to secure an additional play area in this locality.

5.6 RURAL AREA

5.6.1 The main villages of Middleton St George/Middleton One Row, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Heighington provide distinctive attractive environments for the community to live within easy access to the countryside. Each village has a unique character and sense of place; Middleton St George/Middleton One Row has evolved into the largest village, with the largest amount of open space, Hurworth/Hurworth Place lies next to the River Tees providing easy access to the Tees Way long distance footpath while Heighington has the lowest amount of provision and mix of open space types. The majority of all spaces are managed by each respective Parish Council.

5.6.2 There continues to be a range of open spaces within or on the edge of the villages to meet residents needs though variety and access can be more limited than in the urban area. Provision in Middleton St George is similar to the urban area while Hurworth and Heighington have lower levels of provision but it remains higher than some wards within the urban area.

Characteristics

- Total Population: 11265
- Wards: Middleton St George/Middleton One Row, Hurworth/Hurworth Place and Heighington
- % of population under 16:
- Total Area of Open Space: 47.59ha of which 40.36ha is accessible
- No of Spaces: 37 spaces of which 28 are accessible

Open Space Type	Amount	Area (ha)
Parks	1	5.75
Children and young people*	8	15.94
Green Corridor	2	2.28
Informal recreation	14	19.61
Landscape amenity	4	0.66
Natural and semi natural greenspace	1	10.07
Cemeteries	2	1.03
TOTAL	32	55.34
Allotments	7	5.48

*includes all spaces

What changes have been made?

- OSS2007 identified a lack of children's play space in the Rural area. Two new equipped play areas have been provided at Hall Lane, Heighington and Woodlands Green, Middleton St George next to playing pitches allowing children and young people the opportunity to have a focal space within the community;
- The Water Park, Middleton St George has been reclassified as a park; much potential exists to enhance this space further.

Quality and value ratings

	Quality				
Value	*	**	***	****	*****
Low	0	0	0	0	0
Medium	0	1	1	1	0
High	0	2	21	10	0

5.6.3 92% of the spaces are high value and 92% of spaces are classed as 3* quality and above. The number of both the high quality and high value spaces has remained constant since OSS2007 reflecting the importance placed upon open spaces in the village communities.

5.6.4 There are no 1* quality/low value spaces in the Rural area although there are three spaces that are 2* quality:

- Station Road Allotments (high value): the access to this space was difficult to find and car parking was limited which reduced the rating;
- Hopelands (high value): this space is primarily grass and has limited multifunctionality;
- Alexandra Drive (medium value): access to this space is difficult to find and the surface and equipment may benefit from improvement.

Accessibility of provision

5.6.5 Based on OSS2007 standards of provision there is:

- A small gap in provision for children and young people in Hurworth and Middleton St George;
- Limited provision of natural and semi natural greenspace but proximity to the countryside via an improved Rights of Way Network means that this type of space may be less of a priority in the villages;
- A higher provision of allotments than the urban area and this continues to be a popular resource.

6. RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The resources for delivering this Strategy come from several sources:

- The Council's Capital Programme will be used to supplement other grants and funding secured;
- As opportunities arise the Council will bid for additional capital resources from external funding pots like the Big Lottery Fund;
- Spaces that are low value/low quality and are not required to meet any identified local needs will be considered for disposal with any money from sales helping to support the management and maintenance of remaining valued spaces;
- Developer contributions secured from new development will be used for the provision, maintenance and enhancement of open spaces to mitigate the impact of new development.

6.2 Apart from these identified sources funding for implementation will vary through the lifetime of the Strategy depending on the Council's own resources, the availability and extent of external grants and the amount of new development that comes forward. So the achievement of the Strategy is a long term objective taking until at least 2017 to be realised. Several projects will be delivered on a short to medium term basis reflecting the availability of resources; these are identified in the actions boxes at the end of each open space type section and in the future projects section for each locality.

6.3 Implementation will continue over the next six years driven by the annual management and monitoring of the OSS Action Plan. Responsibility for this sits with the Council's Assistant Director (Environmental Services) and will be achieved through the Council's Street Scene teams, the Parks and Countryside and Planning sections, other Council departments and the local community.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The delivery of the OSS continues to make year on year improvements to quantity, quality and accessibility of Darlington's open spaces. Only a minority of spaces (13%) are lower than average quality and value. Of these only 3% are low value/below average quality and are unlikely to be making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life or providing a valuable habitat for wildlife. Improved maintenance and management or their redesign to an alternative open space function could lead to improvements in the medium-long term.

7.2 In the long term some gaps in provision may be addressed through new development while increasing the amount of multifunctional spaces will help provide greater access to a range of open space functions in those parts of the urban area where specific types of space is limited.

7.3 Funding for open spaces comes from the Council's Capital Programme, external funding, land disposal and new development. This is likely to be more challenging in the current economic climate so meeting the objectives of the OSS, its Action Plan and this Update Report will be long term initiatives taking until at least 2017 to be delivered, although improvements are expected year on year through committed projects identified.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 It is intended that this Strategy will remain in place until 2017 with annual surveys providing an update to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces accompanied by an annual update to the Action Plan. Monitoring reports will be presented to the Council's Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee and headline indicators will be fed into other monitoring reports like those for the Local Development Framework.

8.2 The planning policies in the Open Space Strategy have been used to successfully secure open space provision and financial contributions from developers in lieu of open space provision on site. This approach will continue until the appropriate document policies are adopted in the Council's Local Development Framework.

INSERT MAPS 1-9 HERE

Below average quality/low value spaces in the urban area

Site Ref	Site Name	Area (ha)	Primary Purpose	Quality Rating
North West				
361	Rear of Whitby Way	0.22	Informal Recreation	1*
362	Woburn Avenue/Malvern Crescent	0.49	Informal Recreation	2*
TOTAL		0.71		
Central				
76	Land East of Fitzwilliam Drive	0.23	Informal Recreation	2*
92	Alexander Street	1.06	Informal Recreation	2*
149	James Street/Grass Street	0.32	Informal Recreation	2*
TOTAL		1.61		
South West				
None				
South East				
226	Barden Moor Road	0.34	Informal Recreation	1*
398	Land South of Edgemoor Road	0.26	Informal Recreation	2*
TOTAL		0.6		
North East				
None				
OVERALL TOTAL		2.92		

Medium or better quality spaces/low value spaces in the urban area

Site Ref	Site Name	Area (ha)	Primary Purpose	Quality Rating
North West				
None				
Central				
264	Throstlenest Ave/Haughton Road	0.14	Landscape amenity	3*
TOTAL		0.14		
South West				
221	Humber Place N & S	0.26	Landscape amenity	3*
TOTAL		0.26		
South East				
229	Shops, Fenby Avenue	0.13	Landscape amenity	3*
TOTAL		0.13		
North East				
412	Rear of Edinburgh Place/Alnwick Place	0.3	Informal Recreation	3*
402	East of Muirkirk Close	0.11	Informal Recreation	3*
405	Junction of Thompson Street East/Salters Lane North	0.13	Landscape amenity	3*
TOTAL		0.54		
OVERALL TOTAL		1.07		