

# Open Space Strategy 2020 - 2025



by

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## Foreword

The Council is pleased to announce the publication of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's first Open Space Strategy.

The Open Space Strategy has been endorsed by Members of the Development and Leisure and Community Development Committees and by the full City Council.

This marks the first step in shaping the future direction of our open space for all of our community to enjoy. It builds on the open space audit undertaken by the Council as part of the Local Development Plan process, and its focus is on a planned and managed network of multi-functional open spaces, which can deliver a range of environmental, economic and social benefits for local communities. It feeds into a 5 year Action Plan which identifies priorities and projects to build and enhance our open space where a need has been identified.

The Council recognises the importance of creating a healthy, active and accessible environment connecting places and people, where biodiversity, conservation and adapting to climate change are key.



## Executive Summary

Lisburn & Castlereagh stretches from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to Dromara in the south. The Council covers an area of almost 200 square miles (520 square km). The heart of the area is the City of Lisburn, which has a history of Irish linen production during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and a number of historic parks and gardens.

The towns and villages have a rich built and natural environment, including the landscapes and architecture of Hillsborough Castle and village and the rolling drumlin topography, woodlands and farmland of the Lagan Valley Regional Park. The area is characterised by the strong urban core of Lisburn and a diverse and rich rural hinterland of scenic landscape and villages rich in heritage.

The Council has a wealth of parks, gardens, outdoor sports facilities and other open spaces. There are also in excess of 50 equipped children’s playgrounds spread across the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area providing children with the opportunities to learn and play in a safe environment. Each year the Council implements a rolling programme of playground refurbishments and often adds to this stock of purpose built play areas across the council area, an example being the new multi-purpose play facility River Road Play Park at Seymour Hill, Lisburn, developed in consultation with local community groups and housing association.

In 2019 we carried out an open space audit which assessed open space provision, accessibility and future actions. The findings were used to develop this Open Space Strategy and to set a vision for our open spaces.

The vision for open spaces in Lisburn & Castlereagh is that ...

*“The city, towns, villages and rural areas of Lisburn & Castlereagh, will provide for its residents and visitors, a range of attractive and accessible parks and open spaces. “Flagship” parks, greenspaces and play areas will draw local residents and visitors to town and village centres, providing places for social interaction, play, sport, recreation and quality of life for all.*

*Existing open spaces will be protected and enhanced to diversify urban habitats and improve connectivity of the green network. Where possible, open spaces will be linked by a network of paths and green corridors to encourage active travel, healthier lifestyles and exploration of the outdoors.”*

To ensure that parks and open spaces are fit for the future, six guiding strategic principles have been set out to help achieve the vision for open space:

1. Protect and enhance open space recognising its value in promoting health and well-being
2. Provide exciting and active places for children and young people’s play, recreation and education in both equipped and natural settings
3. Support and encourage access to high quality open space close to where people live
4. Safeguard key tourism, heritage and recreation assets, reinforcing local identity and civic pride
5. Protect and enhance the natural environment, helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change
6. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel through greater connectivity of open spaces





## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Open Space Strategy

The Open Space Strategy for Lisburn and Castlereagh has been prepared on behalf of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC). In 2019 an Open Space Audit was carried out, providing the evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP) Open Space Technical Supplement. An Open Space Strategy is the formally approved policy document defining a Local Authority's approach, commitment and management to protect, enhance and manage open space assets.

The Open Spaces Strategy seeks to secure best value and provide a prioritised framework for investment, maintenance, management and Best Value. The Strategy will provide clear and concise guidance on best value utilisation of the Council resources in order to provide allocation and future spend decisions.

The Council envisages that an Open Space Strategy will:

- reinforce local identity and civic pride
- enhance the physical character of an area
- improve physical and social inclusion, including accessibility
- protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological habitats
- provide for children and young people's play, recreation and education
- boost the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities
- help mitigate and adapt to climate change
- contribute to the creation of healthy places

The Council recognises that good quality and easily accessible open space can contribute to a better quality of life. The Council

owns and maintains a large variety of open space, sport and outdoor recreational areas throughout the Council area. There are also privately-owned areas of open space including private playing fields in sports clubs and the education sector and grassland areas, parks, walkways and amenity green space located within housing areas. The Strategy focusses on LCCC owned and managed open space but takes cognisance of privately owned open space.

### 1.2 The Council Area

The Strategy has included the City of Lisburn and the towns and villages in the wider Council area. The open space sites have been split into the District Electoral Areas of Killultagh, Downshire West, Downshire East, Lisburn South, Lisburn North, Castlereagh East and Castlereagh South.



### 1.3 Investment in Parks

The Council has invested in the development of its parks and open spaces to protect our environment, improve our biodiversity and make Lisburn & Castlereagh an attractive place to live in, visit and work in. For example, such improvement schemes in the past 2 years alone, include:

- Rebranding and creation of Billy Neill MBE Country Park – opening up kilometres of DDA accessible walking and cycling paths, access and car parking for the Comber Greenway and the establishment of a wetland meadow
- Creation of outdoor community event space at Moat Park and a new Garden of Reflection
- Provision of a 60m pedestrian and cycling bridge to create linkages between the Comber Greenway to Dundonald leisure park
- Provision of six new outdoor gym sites
- Creation of a sensory garden at Moira Demesne
- A complete refurbishment of Bells Lane Allotments and the creation of a community building with outdoor teaching space, DDA accessible raised beds, toilets, car parking and polytunnel
- Upgraded pathways throughout Hillsborough Park, along with lakeside viewpoints with seating, additional picnic benches, extra car parking facilities and a state-of-the-art woodland themed outdoor children's play area

### 1.4 Award Winning Parks

The standard of the Council parks has been independently judged and benchmarked by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, the environmental charity that runs the Green Flag Award scheme in Northern Ireland. The Green Flag Award is an internationally recognised certification for environmental quality management for

parks and open spaces. Parks and open spaces wishing to achieve Green Flag status must have a site management plan in place and be able to demonstrate they comply with a range of strict criteria including horticultural standards, cleanliness, environmental management, biodiversity, community involvement and safety standards. The Awards are judged annually by a panel of experts, who volunteer their time to assess the management plans and the applicant sites through a rigorous judging process.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council hold six such Green Flag awards for:

- Wallace Park, Lisburn
- Castle Gardens, Lisburn
- Bells Lane Allotments (including Bells Lane Park), Lisburn
- Moira Demesne
- Moat Park, Dundonald
- Billy Neill MBE Country Park, Dundonald

### 1.5 The Benefits of Open Space

Open space can enhance the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism and thereby contribute to the process of urban regeneration. Open space is not only used for exercise and relaxation purposes. It can also enhance the character of an area and improve the quality of urban life by providing important green lungs, health benefits, visual breaks from development, reducing flood risk and protecting wildlife habitats in built up areas.

The range of benefits associated with open space are dependent upon the way the resource is planned, designed and managed to secure spaces that are 'fit for purpose' and address the needs of communities and stakeholders. Open spaces contribute to a range of national and local commitments and policies, such as sustainable development, climate change adaptation, carbon management, outdoor learning, healthy living, sustainable transport, biodiversity and social equity policies.

Open spaces can perform multiple functions, including<sup>1</sup>:

- (i) **Strategic functions** - defining and separating urban areas; providing community greenways, 'green lungs' or landscape buffers within urban areas; better linking of town and country; and serving recreational needs over a wide area
- (ii) **Urban quality** - helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive green spaces close to where people live



Drumbeg Drive Green Space

- (iii) **Promoting health and well-being** - providing opportunities to people of all ages for informal recreation, or to walk or cycle within parks and open space or along paths, bridleways and canal banks. Allotments may provide physical exercise and other health benefits
- (iv) **Havens and habitats for flora and fauna** – sites may also have potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy



Moira Demesne

- (v) **Community resource** – a place for congregating and for holding community events
- (vi) **Visual amenity** – even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape

<sup>1</sup> Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation

## 2.0 Policy Context

### 2.1 Northern Ireland Regional Context

The significance of open space provision and management has become a key feature of planning policy over the last few decades. This is due to the recognised multiple benefits of open space, derived from the diverse range and type of open space available to communities. The Programme for Government (PfG) tasked the Executive with delivering improved wellbeing for all citizens. It acknowledges that the provision of open space can actively contribute to a range of health, economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits.

One of the key aims of the **Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035** is to 'Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake'. It states that protecting the environment is essential for enhancing the quality of life of current and future generations. Northern Ireland's environment is one of its greatest assets, with its stunning landscapes, an outstanding coastline, a complex variety of wildlife and a rich built and cultural heritage.

Regional planning policy as set out in the **Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS)** states that open space, whether or not there is public access to it, is important for its contribution to the quality of urban life by providing important green lungs, visual breaks and wildlife habitats in built-up areas. Open space can enhance the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism, stimulating the local economy and thereby contribute to the process of urban and rural regeneration.

There will be a policy presumption against the loss of open space to competing land uses in Local Development Plans (LDPs) irrespective of its physical condition and appearance. Further provision is required to provide adequate and well-designed open space as an integral part of new residential developments.

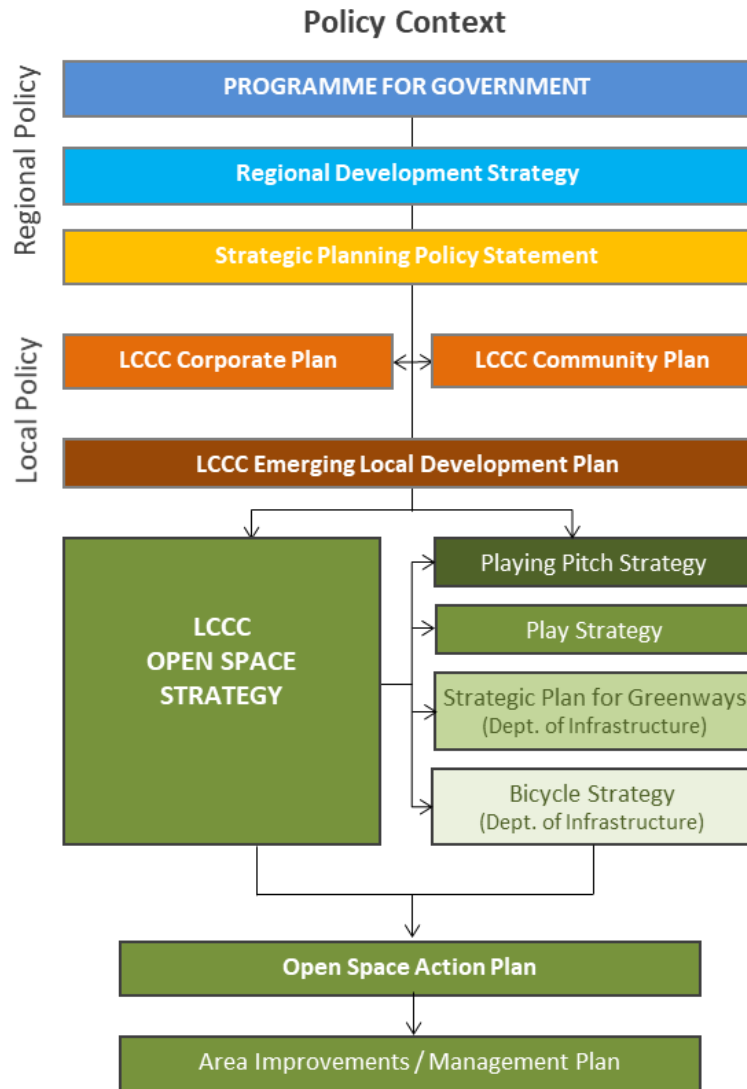
Currently supporting the regional policy approach are a suite of **Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)** which provide the operational detail around the implementation and interpretation of the regional aims and objectives for open space provision and protection. PPS 8 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation, refers to the assessment of open space as part of the preparation of a Local Development Plan.

### 2.2 Local Policy Context

This Open Space Strategy is supported by the Open Space Audit contained in the Local Development Plan (LDP) Technical Supplement 7 Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. This provides an evidence base which will support and influence the future policy direction, particularly at Local Policies Plan stage.

The publication of the **Lisburn and Castlereagh Community Plan** requires an integrated approach in the delivery of its aims and objectives in particular health, education, community safety the voluntary sector arts and leisure. The Community Plan includes three relevant primary outcomes with specific relevance to open space:

- Outcome 1: 'Children & young people have the best start in life.'
- Outcome 3: 'We live healthy, fulfilling and long lives.'
- Outcome 4: 'We live and work in attractive, resilient and environmentally-friendly places.'



Working within the policy framework set by the Executive’s RDS, the Lisburn and Castlereagh Corporate Plan, the Community Plan and the Local Development Plan set out policies to deliver the Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government. The **Local Development Plan** takes account of all regional policy and guidance and the policies contained with the draft Plan Strategy seek to deliver and reflect the spatial aspects of the Community Plan.

The Local Development Plan recognises the importance of our open space. Plan Objective D: An Attractive Place seeks to protect and enhance all open space, recognising its value in promoting health and well-being and resolving flood issues through the introduction of sustainable urban drainage infrastructure; and support and encourage accessibility to open space including the Lagan Valley Regional Park and Lagan Navigation as key assets within the Council area.

The Plan also recognises the importance of community and strategic greenways in contributing to open space provision and the health and well-being of residents. These utilise existing blue and green infrastructure which can facilitate opportunities for walking, cycling, connecting people and places with reduced reliance on the private car. Further details on the LDP can be found on the Council’s website at: [www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk](http://www.lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk).

The **Corporate Plan** contains the following strategic themes, which are the Council’s main priorities that:

- ‘We live healthier, more fulfilling and longer lives.’
- ‘We live in resilient and environmentally friendly places.’



The Council published its **Local Biodiversity Action Plan** in 2017, which recognises the importance of biodiversity linking to open spaces which support the range of habitats and species important to local communities. The Council has taken a holistic approach to fulfilling its obligations under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 Act, to ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity including actions and considerations in the 'Where we Live' section in the Council's Community Plan and in the Local Development Plan recognising that biodiversity is key to sustainable development.

There are many Natural Heritage designations including 9 Areas of Special Scientific Interest, six areas of High Scenic Value, 114 Sites of Local Nature Conservation, 118 Local Landscape Policy Areas and a proportion of the Lagan Valley area which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Beauty included in the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Area. Beyond these protected sites, in the wider countryside, land is managed for agriculture some of which will be under agri-environment scheme agreements. These are designed to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly management practices which can have great benefits for our biodiversity.

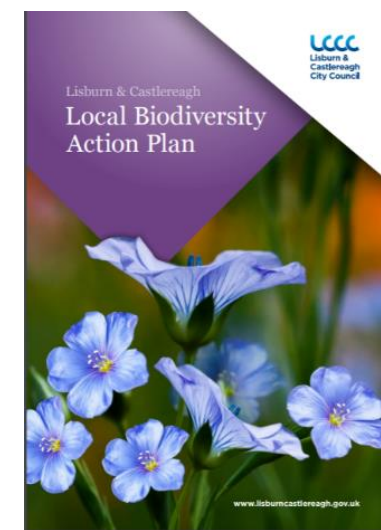
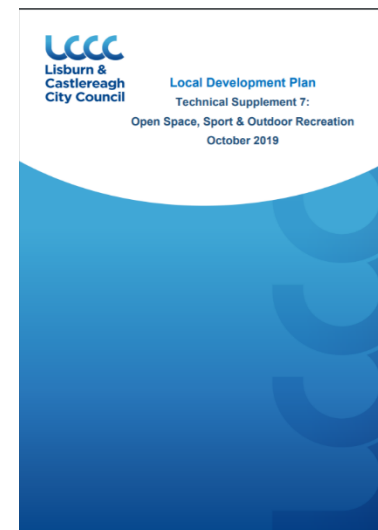
A Private Members Bill was submitted to the Speaker's Office in November 2020. The **Climate Change Bill** will provide a legislative basis for climate action in Northern Ireland. The Bill sets a target for Northern Ireland to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2045 and includes the establishment of a Northern Ireland Climate Office.

### 2.3 Regional & Local Green Infrastructure Context

The development of the Open Space Strategy has been progressed in line with the following regional and local green infrastructure plans and strategies.

In 2015, LCCC prepared a **Playing Pitch Strategy**<sup>2</sup> with the purpose of enabling the Council to make informed planning decisions regarding pitch provision and assists with the targeting of financial investment and the planning of the delivery of sports development programmes.

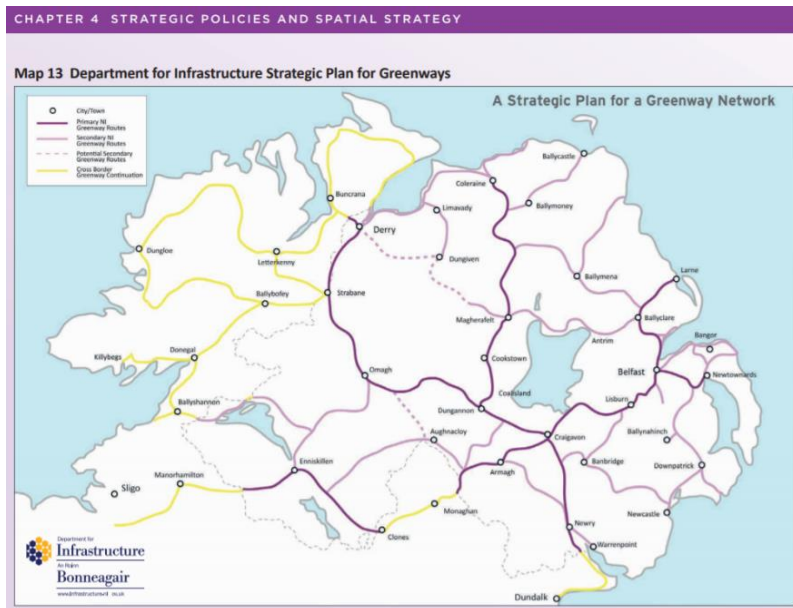
The Council commissioned a **Play Strategy**<sup>3</sup> in 2015, including playability audits for fixed play provision under the council's ownership, providing an overview of current and future potential levels of supply and demand.



<sup>2</sup> Playing Pitch Strategy and Audit of Pitch Provision (2015 / 16)

<sup>3</sup> Playability Audit of Existing Fixed Play Provision (2015)

In 2016, the Department for Infrastructure developed **Exercise Explore Enjoy: A Strategic Plan for Greenways**, setting out a series of greenways in Northern Ireland as traffic-free routes connecting communities to all kinds of destinations for commuting, everyday journeys or leisure and recreation. Three strategic greenways are proposed in the Council area: Primary route extending the existing Sustrans NCN9 from Sprucefield, through the Maze Lands to Moira and onwards towards Portadown; a Secondary Greenway connecting Carryduff to the Primary Belfast Greenway; and a secondary route connecting Lisburn to Banbridge.



The **Northern Ireland Changing Gear: Bicycle Strategy** aims to set out progressively how Northern Ireland can be transformed into a place where travelling by bicycle is a healthy, everyday activity. Measures will include improvements to cycling infrastructure in urban areas, rural routes and greenways.



The **Lagan Valley Regional Park** was established in 1967, and comprises an extensive area of high quality farmlands, attractive wooded parklands and forests, set along a meandering river. The park extends from Stranmillis, Belfast and the Union Canal locks in Lisburn, covering 4,200 acres of countryside and an 11 mile stretch of river. The park spans both Belfast City and LCCC Council areas. The aim is to protect and conserve its unique landscape character, enhance the Park’s biodiversity, cultural heritage and promote its benefit to visitors and the community.

## 3.0 Vision for Open Space

### 3.1 The Vision for Lisburn & Castlereagh's Open Space

It is widely recognised that open spaces, sport and outdoor recreation are essential to encouraging healthier life styles and for the protection of the natural environment in Northern Ireland. The provision of networks of good quality open space is considered to be of vital importance.

The Lisburn and Castlereagh area contains a wealth of parks, gardens, outdoor sports facilities and other open spaces. There are also numerous playgrounds spread across the City council area providing children with the opportunities to learn and play in a safe environment.

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council hold a number of family fun events in its parks including Moat Park, Dundonald, Wallace Park, Lisburn and Moira Demesne over the summer months with crafts, theatre, music and arts on offer. The 'Park Life' programme consists of events to suit all ages and range from a Natures Kingdom event, a pets farm to a Teddy Bears Picnic. The parks provide a perfect backdrop for events and are a hugely popular venue for families with annual events such as the Mayor's Family Fun Day and the Halloween Twilight by Fairy Light event and one off events such as the Northern Ireland Armed Forces Day 2019 which attracted in excess of 20,000 visitors to Wallace Park.

The benefits of open space to tourism and recreation are also recognised, and the LDP notes the potential of Hillsborough Forest Park as a valuable recreational space, working in tandem with the Historic Park, Garden and Demesne of Hillsborough Castle.

For those who desire a more active outdoor sporting activity, the Council provides a wide range of sports facilities and playing fields facilitating numerous sports, as well as bowling greens which are available for hire. The sports pitches include both grass and synthetic pitches and other popular facilities include tennis courts, a baseball / softball diamond and two 18 hole golf courses at Aberdelghy in Lisburn and Castlereagh Hills Golf Course.

The vision for open space is built upon the LDP spatial vision that will help deliver national priorities.

The vision for open spaces in Lisburn & Castlereagh is that ...

*"The city, towns, villages and rural areas of Lisburn & Castlereagh, will provide for its residents and visitors, a range of attractive and accessible parks and open spaces. "Flagship" parks, greenspaces and play areas will draw local residents and visitors to town and village centres, providing places for social interaction, play, sport, recreation and quality of life for all.*

*Existing open spaces will be protected and enhanced to diversify urban habitats and improve connectivity of the green network. Where possible, open spaces will be linked by a network of paths and green corridors to encourage active travel, healthier lifestyles and exploration of the outdoors."*



### 3.2 Strategic Principles and Aspirations

The LDP sets out six Plan Objectives to establish an appropriate balance between improving quality of life, economic prosperity for all, the protection of the Council's environmental assets, and to ensure that development is sustainable in the interests of future generations. The vision for Open Space is built upon the LDP spatial vision, and in particular objectives D, E and F.

- **Objective D: An Attractive Place:** Promoting Sustainable Tourism, Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation
- **Objective E: A Green Place:** Protecting and Enhancing the Historic and Natural Environment
- **Objective F: A Connected Place:** Supporting Sustainable Transport and Other Infrastructure

Evidence suggests that well designed, high quality open spaces are vital in creating healthy and liveable cities, towns and villages. It is recognised that a shared, strategic approach to open space maximises its potential to contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable future. Building on objectives D and E of the LDP, six guiding strategic principles have been set out to help achieve the vision for open space:

#### 1. Protect and enhance open space recognising its value in promoting health and well-being

The provision of easily accessible open spaces close to where we live is vital to encouraging healthier lifestyles and mental wellbeing. Open spaces offer a wide range of opportunities for sport and recreation (dog walking, running, cycling, active play etc.). The benefits of open spaces are also recognised to bring benefits in terms of mental health, wellbeing and happiness.

#### 2. Provide exciting and active places for children and young people's play, recreation and education in both equipped and natural settings

Everyone living in the Council's city, towns and villages should have access to attractive, good quality play space, providing opportunities for a wide range of users and abilities. A local network of well designed, useable, clean, safe and accessible play spaces that are fit for purpose, well-resourced / managed and meet the needs of the community.



#### 3. Improve access to high quality open space close to where people live

There is an increasing body of knowledge suggesting that the quality of civic places and open spaces has an impact on how people perceive their neighbourhoods. Higher quality open spaces lead to higher satisfaction levels, greater feelings of safety and higher levels of activity in the outdoors. Together with the built

environment, this helps create a sense of place and creates opportunities for social interaction and community events. Increased footfall in open spaces brings benefits with regard to the perception of safety and increases natural surveillance, which in turn helps to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour.



Dunbeg Park, Hillsborough

#### 4. Safeguard key tourism, heritage and recreation assets, reinforcing local identity and civic pride

The Council's Vision for Tourism aims to develop Hillsborough into a world-class tourist destination, which will increase tourism growth across the whole council area. High quality parks and open spaces, such as Lisburn Castle Gardens, Wallace Park, Moat Park and Hillsborough Forest are tourist attractions, helping retain visitors for longer and increasing visitor spending.

#### 5. Protect and enhance the natural environment, helping to mitigate and adapt to climate change

A connected network of diverse open spaces, extending from large woodland ecosystems to small pocket parks, helps sustain habitat networks and enhance biodiversity. Well managed open spaces provide opportunities for diversifying existing landscapes, such as woodlands, wetlands and grasslands and undertaking habitat management to support a variety of plant and animal species. The benefits of such landscapes are extensive, providing attractive and diverse places for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors.

#### 6. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel through greater connectivity of open spaces

Quality open space within or close to settlements plays a vital role in promoting healthy living and tackling inequality through facilitating play and sporting activities, leading to healthier more active lifestyles. Better connected places (e.g. strategic greenways) support walking, cycling and public transport use. Promote opportunities for sustainable travel through development of Active Travel Networks to improve health and well-being support by reducing the need to travel by private car.



Moira Demesne MUGA



## 4.0 Lisburn and Castlereagh Open Spaces

### 4.1 Overview of Council Area

Lisburn & Castlereagh stretches from the shores of Lough Neagh in the west to the hills above Dundonald in the east, and from the Belfast Hills in the north to Dromara in the south. The Council covers an area of almost 200 square miles (520 square km). The area is characterised the strong urban core of Lisburn and a diverse and rich rural hinterland of scenic landscape and villages, rich in heritage.

Lisburn and Hillsborough are growing tourism destinations, with the destinations of Hillsborough Forest, Lisburn Castle Gardens, Wallace Park, Moat Park in Dundonald, Moira Demesne and the Lagan Valley Regional Park contributing to the visitor numbers.



**Castle Gardens** was once the site of Lisburn Castle in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and recently restored by LCCC with grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund in June 2008.

The heart of the area is the City of Lisburn, which has a history of Irish linen production during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and a wealth of parks, gardens, outdoor sports facilities and other open spaces.



The 26 acre **Wallace Park** was gifted to the town by Sir Richard Wallace in 1884 and largely retains its original layout and Victorian character. The park was refurbished in 2012.



**Moat Park** is situated in the heart of Dundonald and contains a historic Motte and an attractive green oasis, close to the historic Church of St Elizabeth.

The council area has a rich built and natural environment, including the landscapes and architecture of the Historic Royal Palace in Hillsborough and the rolling drumlin topography, woodlands and farmland of the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

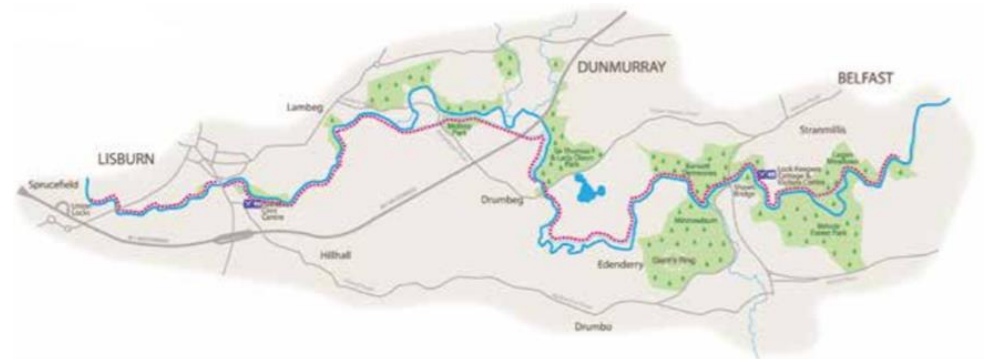


**Hillsborough Castle and Village** provide a heritage destination hub, providing access to the attractive house, gardens and castle, drawing visitors from across Northern Ireland and beyond.



**Hillsborough Forest** (200 acres) is adjacent to the Fort and has a network of waymarked routes around the forest.

The Lagan Valley Regional Park, Northern Ireland's only Regional Park, extends to the south of Lisburn with access links to the towpath running along the length of the river. Designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, there are attractive walks, open spaces and parks, heritage sites and farmland along its length.



**Moira Demesne** is located in the picturesque village of Moira, comprising of over 40 acres of parkland with beautiful walkways, play and sports facilities.



## 4.2 Type of Open Space

PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation defines open spaces as *“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also inland bodies of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunity for sports and outdoor recreation and can act as visual amenity”*. This strategy focuses on the open spaces that are on the land.

Eight open space typologies have been used, each having a variety of uses and secondary uses / characteristics.

Each open space audit site has been assigned an identification reference, a name, location, typology and type, as set out in the table below. A GIS shape file has been prepared for the open spaces included in the audit, to which the site survey data will be attached. Each open space audit site has been allocated a typology.

The types of open spaces are further expanded in Table 1.

**Parks & Gardens**



**Sports Facilities**



**Amenity Green Space**



**Equipped Play Areas**



**Community Greenway**



**Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace**



**Allotments & Community Gardens**



**Cemeteries**



**Table 1: Open Space Typology** The following categories have been allocated in the LCCC open space database:

Open Space Type	Sub-type	Description
<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	<b>Regional Park</b>	Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) is Northern Ireland's first and only Regional Park. The LVRP was established in 1967 as one of three unique semi-urban designations in the UK at that time. The Park is located between Stranmillis, Belfast and Union locks, Lisburn and covers some 4,200 acres of countryside and eleven miles of riverbank. Major leisure facility, with a wide catchment of users, often travelling long distances by car and or public transport for a 'family day out'.
	<b>City Park / Historic Park</b> <i>1.6km walking catchment (approx. 20min walk)</i>	Parks such as Moira Demesne which are large areas of parkland of significant size, offering a combination of facilities and heritage features at the sub-regional level. The parks draw visitors to the town / city, are accessible by public transport and contain superior quality of facilities.
	<b>Town Park</b> <i>1200m walking catchment (approx. 15min walk)</i>	Large to medium sized areas of open space that provide a variety of activities and natural features, including sports facilities, children's play for all ages, informal recreation, gardens and seating areas.
	<b>Local Park</b> <i>400m walking catchment (approx. 5min walk)</i>	These parks are small areas of open space, and may contain children's play, seating, courts or pitches and nature conservation areas. They are often well used parks within walking distance of the immediate residential area.
<b>Outdoor Sports Facilities</b>	<b>All Outdoor Sports</b>	Sports facilities with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned. Including tennis courts, bowling greens, sport pitches, golf courses, athletic tracks, school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas, which are generally bookable.
	<b>Indoor Facilities</b>	
	<b>Other Outdoor Provision</b>	
	<b>Playing Pitches</b>	
	<b>Golf Course</b>	
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>		Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses including informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, and village greens.
<b>Equipped / Designated Play Area</b>	<b>Flagship Play Areas</b> <i>1.6km walking catchment (approx. 20min walk)</i> <i>*SLD 1,000m</i>	Flagship play park, combining traditional play concepts with state of the art equipment for an easily accessible yet entertainingly challenging play experience. Containing, often themed equipment suitable for 2 to 10 years.
	<b>Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)</b> <i>1,000m walking catchment (approx. 13min walk)</i> <i>*SLD 600m</i>	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play are areas of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children (aged 12+ years), but also with play opportunities for younger children. May include kickabout areas, Multi Use Games Area, skateboard parks and outdoor basketball hoops).
	<b>Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)</b> <i>400m walking catchment (approx. 5min walk)</i> <i>*SLD 240m</i>	Local Equipped Area for Play, aimed at children who are beginning to go out to play independently (aged 5 – 12 years), close to where they live. May include opportunity for informal recreation.
<b>Community Greenway</b>		Designated segregated walking and cycling routes identified in the Regional Development Strategy 2035. They are primarily active travel corridors, but will play an increasingly important role, allowing people to move safely between open spaces, to destinations in the city and out to the countryside.
<b>Natural &amp; Semi Natural Greenspace</b>		Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodlands, urban forestry, grasslands (e.g. meadows), wetlands, open and running water.
<b>Allotments</b>	<b>Allotments and Community Gardens</b>	Allotments and areas of land for growing fruit and vegetables, or a community garden.
<b>Cemeteries</b>	<b>Cemeteries and Graveyards</b>	Includes cemeteries and graveyards.

\* SLD Straight Line Distance

### 4.3 Quantity and Distribution of Open Space

This section provides an analysis of different open space typologies across the council area. It has been generated by compiling spatial data primarily from the 2019 Open Space Audit, with additional information from LCCC mapping data for golf courses, Cemeteries and Community Greenways, which were not included in the Open Space Audit.

The LCCC area contains **1,209.85 ha** of open space. The table opposite summarises the supply of specific open space typologies across the LCCC Council area.

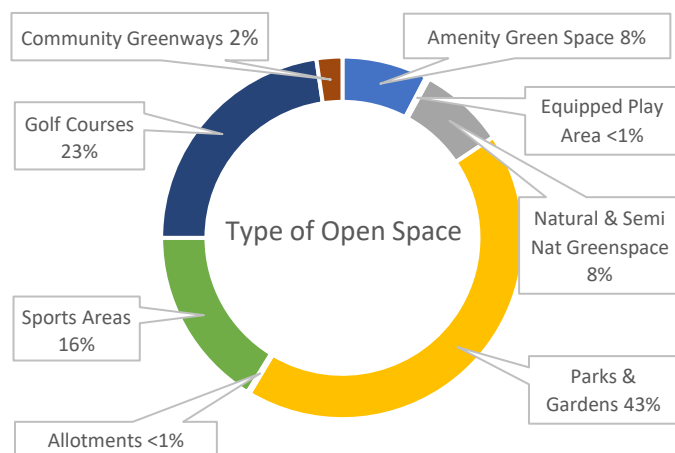


Chart 1: Different Types of Open Space (see table 2)

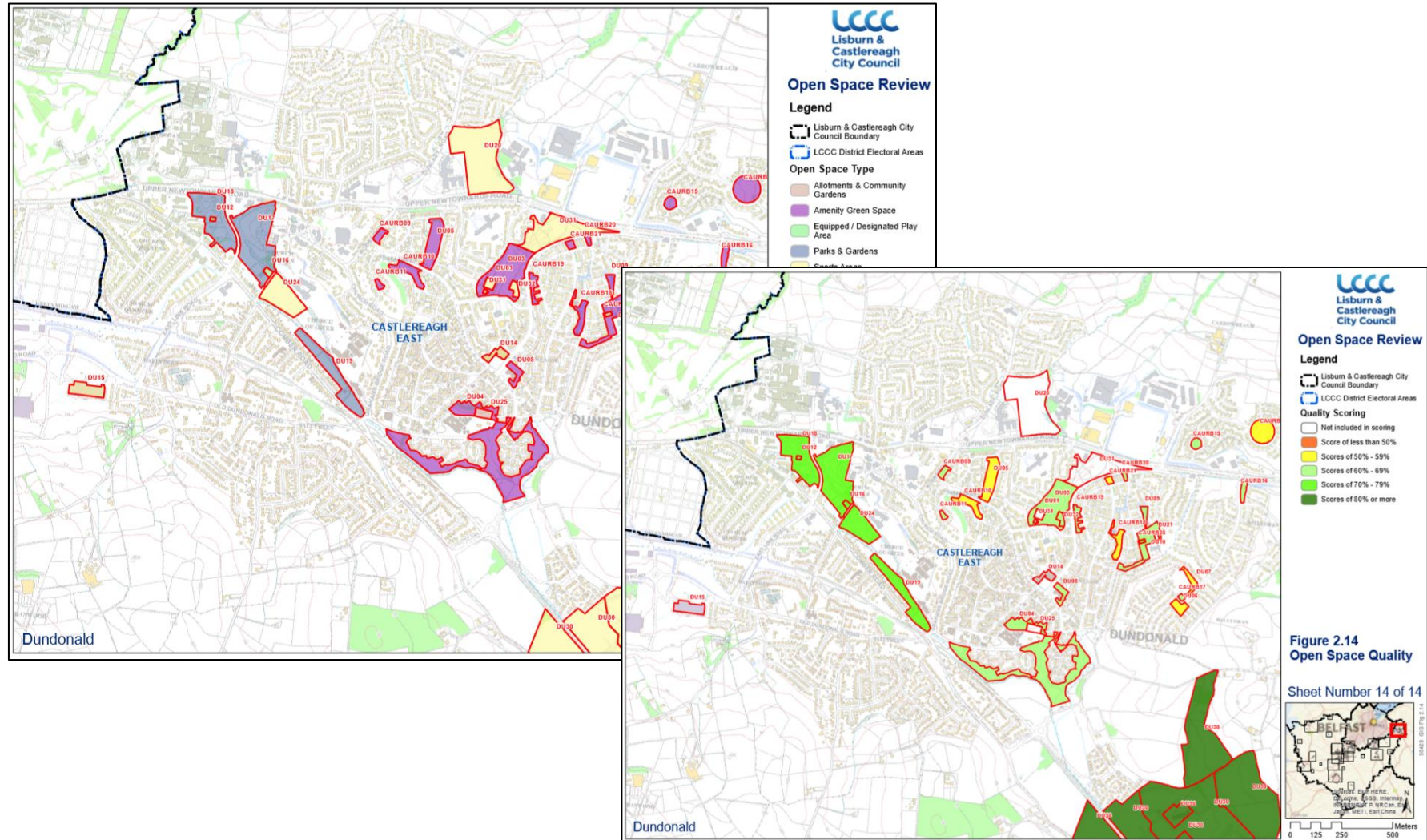
**Table 2: Existing Open Space included in the Open Space Audit**

Open Space Type	Sub-type	Number of sites	Area (ha)
<b>Parks &amp; Gardens</b>	City Park / Historic Park	3	16.11
	Town Park	11	441.83
	Local Park	12	18.05
<b>Total Parks</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>475.99</b>
<b>Outdoor Sports Facilities</b>	All Outdoor Sports	13	21.24
	Indoor Facilities	13	5.23
	Other Outdoor Provision	5	2.32
	Playing Pitches	63	150.81
<b>Total Outdoor Sports</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>179.60</b>
	Golf Courses	<b>6</b>	<b>251.46*</b>
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	Amenity Green Space	<b>162</b>	<b>84.69</b>
<b>Equipped / Designated Play Area</b>	Flagship Play Areas	5	0.80
	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)	8	0.49
	Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)	39	2.01
<b>Total Play Areas</b>		<b>52</b>	<b>3.30</b>
<b>Natural &amp; Semi Natural Greenspace</b>	Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace	<b>14</b>	<b>85.14</b>
<b>Community Greenways</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>25.61*</b>
<b>Allotments &amp; Community Gardens</b>	Allotments & Community Gardens	<b>3</b>	<b>2.55</b>
<b>Cemeteries</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>101.51*</b>
<b>Total Open Space</b>		<b>377</b>	<b>1,209.85 ha</b>

Note: The figures in the table above marked with a \* have been derived from LCCC Open Space database.



The maps below illustrate the provision of the various types of open space and the quality of provision in Dundonald.





### **Fields in Trust Standards**

The SPPS sets out a policy aspiration to meet the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) 'six-acre standard', **a target of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 people** comprising of 1.6 hectares suitable for outdoor sports and recreation and 0.8 hectares for children's play space. We are committed to protecting our existing open space and we will use benchmarking as a reference to help inform future investment and improvements in our open space network.

In 2015, FiT<sup>4</sup> replaced the 'six-acre standard' with more comprehensive metrics for open space typologies. Where appropriate a comparison has been outlined on Table 3. The FiT standard also sets out provision for 1.8 hectares per 1,000 people of natural and semi-natural spaces, which has not been assessed as part of this strategy.

A separate exercise was undertaken by LCCC to establish whether the council open space provision meets the FiT standards. Figures from the LCCC Open Space database, as illustrated in Table 3, demonstrate that Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's overall open space provision exceeds the FiT benchmark.

Publicly accessible playing field provision is lower than the benchmark. Play area provision, and other outdoor provision, particularly MUGAs, is lower than the FiT benchmark. 3 of the Council's 14 villages do not have a Council-owned playground (Drumbeg, Lower Ballinderry and Upper Ballinderry). However, it is important to note that this typology is not directly comparable, as the FiT benchmark also includes local areas for play (LAPs), which are accounted for in the amenity green space typology in Lisburn

and Castlereagh. It is also important to highlight that although not equipped, we provide significant areas of open space for informal play within our parks. Lisburn and Castlereagh's amenity space provision is also higher than the FiT benchmark and is likely to be higher still, as it has not been possible to map all amenity space in this assessment.

**Table 3: LCCC Open Space provision and the FiT benchmark**

<b>FiT Category</b>	<b>FiT Standard per 1000 people (ha)</b>	<b>LCCC Total (ha)</b>	<b>LCCC per 1000 people (ha)</b>
All Pitches	1.2	93.3 (Public)	0.69
		64.08 (Private/School)	0.47
		157.38 (Total)	<b>1.16 (Total)</b>
All Outdoor Sports	1.6	1.92	<b>0.01</b>
Equipped Play Areas	0.25	5.13	<b>0.04</b>
Other Outdoor Provision	0.3	20.66	<b>0.15</b>
Parks & Gardens	0.8	466.38*	<b>3.44</b>
Amenity Greenspace	0.6	81.21	<b>0.60</b>
Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace	1.8	221.85	<b>1.64</b>

Note: The figures in the table above have been derived from LCCC Open Space database. \* Figure includes Hillsborough Forest Park (388.1ha)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.fieldsintrust.org>

### 4.4 Quality of Open Space

Quality is a key component of open space. Open spaces need to be “fit for purpose” and serve local communities by providing a level of service and functional provision to meet informal leisure and recreational needs. The quality assessment was based on the recommendations included in the “Greenspace Quality: A Guide to Assessment, Planning and Strategic Development” (2008). Summary data is contained in the LCCC Open Space Audit.

The City of Lisburn, towns and villages currently have mostly good provision of open space, ranging from formal parks and playing fields to woodlands and green corridors associated with paths, cycleways and waterways. There are excellent examples of high quality historic parks, “flagship” play areas and attractive woodlands and riverside paths. A more detailed summary of the settlement statistics is contained in Chapter 5.

The DEA with the highest average quality score is Downshire West and the DEA with the lowest average quality score is Lisburn South. The average quality score was 65%.

Lisburn City and Lisburn Greater Urban Area contains 9 out of 20 of the worst scoring open space sites. However, Lisburn City also includes 12 out of the 20 top scoring open spaces. Moira, Hillsborough and Dundonald contain high scoring sites. The quality scores ranged from 44% (Willow Gardens, Lisburn North) to the highest score of 91% (both Moira Demesne and Wallace Park), with the majority of sites scoring in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

Calculating an average quality score for each settlement can give an indication of overall quality of open space in a settlement. The average quality score is 65%. The settlements of Moira, Stoneyford,

Moneyreagh, Ballyskeagh and Hillsborough have the highest average quality scores. Drumlough, Halftown, Upper Broomhedge, Lurganville and Ravernet are the settlements with the lowest average quality scores. The settlements with the lower scoring sites have been considered in more detail to identify which sites could be improved with regards to quality of the open space.

The chart below summarises the number of sites in each of the quality bands. Approximately half of the sites scored between 65% and 91% (136 out of 278 sites). There are 30 sites that scored between 50 and 54, and only 5 sites that scored between 44-49. This graph demonstrates that the majority of LCCC open spaces included in the open space audit scored 50% and above, with only 5 not considered fit for purpose. There is opportunity to improve the quality of these sites, and to improve the quality of some of the lower quality parks and amenity greenspaces.

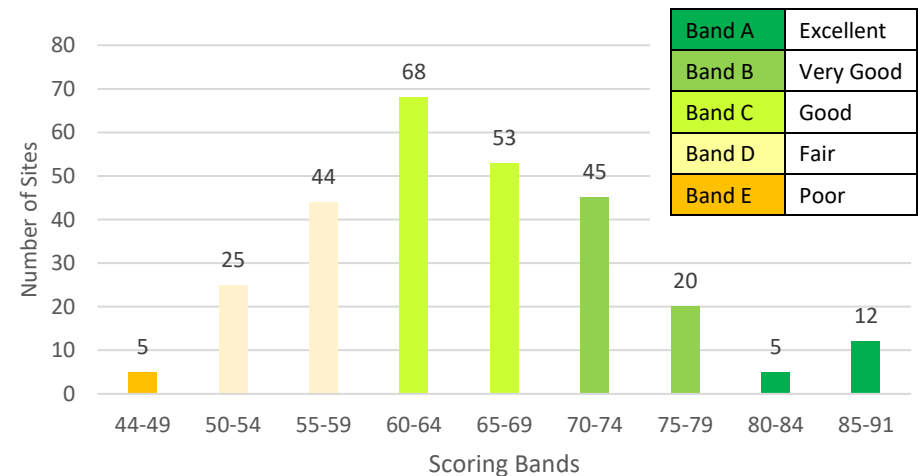


Chart 2: Quality Scores in the Bands

## 4.5 Open Space Accessibility

Access is a key component of open space. Open spaces need to serve local communities and deliver locally accessible open space providing a local resource that addresses daily needs, supports access by walking, cycling, horse riding and public transport, supports unsupervised use with safe accessibility and promotes informal recreation and exercise (dog walking, health walking or general passive use).

International research into the impacts of greenspace on health and on wider quality of life shows that having greenspace within a 5 minute walk of home is a strong indicator for health and quality of life benefits. 0.5 hectares is big enough for a 'kick about' pitch or other informal play. Generally, in urban design, a 5 minute walk is considered to equate to a distance of 400 metres 'door to space'.

The open spaces included in the Audit were mapped and the following accessibility standards applied:

**Table 4: Open Space Accessibility Standards**

Open Space Type	Accessibility Standard
<b>City Park / Historic Park</b>	1.6km walking catchment (approx. 20min walk)
<b>Town Park</b>	1200m walking catchment (approx. 15min walk)
<b>Local Park</b>	400m walking catchment (approx. 5min walk)
<b>Flagship Play Area</b>	1.6km walking catchment (approx. 20min walk)
<b>Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)</b>	1,000m walking catchment (approx. 13min walk)
<b>Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)</b>	400m walking catchment (approx. 5min walk)

### **Parks & Gardens**

#### *Lisburn City*

The City of Lisburn is well served in terms of City Parks / Historic Parks, which is dispersed throughout the residential areas. These City Parks include Wallace Park, Duncan's Park and Castle Gardens and provide a range of high quality recreational, sporting and play opportunities, set within a historic park setting. The urban open space is further enhanced by access to the countryside and the Belfast Hills to the north and the Lagan Valley Regional Park to the south, which connects the city to Castlereagh and Belfast.



There are also two Town Parks in the City, including Barbour Memorial Playing Fields and Magheralave Road Green Space. There are 5 Local Parks, including Lambeg Park, Tom Robinson Park, Hilden Play Park, Avonmore Play Park and Sir Milne Barbour Memorial Park. Many of these parks contain equipped children's play areas, providing formal and informal play space for children and young people. Wallace Park and the Queen Elizabeth II Playing Fields contain Flagship play areas, which combine traditional play

concepts with state of the art equipment for an easily accessible yet entertainingly challenging play experience. The park provision is supplemented by a range of sports areas, natural / semi-natural greenspace and amenity greenspace. Provision is well distributed throughout the city, with an overall high quality of provision.

### *Lisburn Greater Urban Area*

The Derriagh, Kilmakee and Dunmurry areas of the Lisburn Metropolitan area have a good spread of open space throughout the area. To the north, outwith the Council area, Colin Glen Linear Park forms a landscape wedge between Belfast and Lisburn Cities, providing opportunity for recreation. Derriagh contains a local park: Bell's Lane Park. The Derriagh, Kilmakee and Dunmurry areas of the Lisburn Metropolitan area have limited park space, with Bell's Lane Park being the only designated park. However, the area contains amenity greenspace, semi-natural space and play facilities, including Derriagh Glen, Killeaton Open Space, Deadwall Plantation and McIlroy Park.



Wallace Park, Lisburn

### *Castlereagh Greater Urban Area*

Castlereagh Greater Urban Area includes Dundonald and Newtownbreda. Newtownbreda has an under provision of park space, with Colby Park being the only local park. There is also limited play space in the surrounding residential areas, with only 2 LEAPs and 1 NEAP in the area. However, the area contains sports facilities and semi-natural space, including Billy Neill pitches and Cairnshill Park. There are planned residential developments in the south east of the settlement, which include play provision.

Dundonald is well served with regards to the accessibility of parks and play space in the town. Moat Park town park, with its flagship play area provides high quality well equipped open space.

### *Towns & Villages*

The three main towns within the Lisburn rural area, Hillsborough, Carryduff and Moira have good levels of very high-quality open space, providing a range of facilities for sport, recreation and play. There is a Town Park (Hillsborough Fort) and a Local Park (Hillsborough Park) in Hillsborough. There are a range of recreational opportunities at Hillsborough Forest Park and Hillsborough Fort, including a Flagship play area. Moira is well served with regard to open space provision, with a town and local park, a Flagship play area (LEAP) easily accessible from adjacent residential areas. Carryduff contains a Town Park (Carryduff Park) and Lough Moss Recreation Centre.

### *Sports Facilities*

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council owns and maintains a large variety of open space, sport and outdoor recreational areas throughout the Council area. Most of these are located within Lisburn City, the towns and villages and includes all council owned



and privately owned facilities that are open to the public. There are also privately-owned playing fields including those belonging to Lisnagarvey Hockey Club and Carryduff GAC and other areas of open space including private playing fields in the education sector and grassland areas, parks, walkways and casual play areas located within housing areas.

In 2015, LCCC commissioned an Audit of Pitch Provision and Preparation of a Playing Pitches Strategy, based on best practice guidance developed by Sport England and the Central Council for Physical Recreation. The Playing Pitch Model requires focused research on supply, demand and quality to assess adequacy of provision for matches. Supply of and demand for pitches was assessed for the Council area as a whole for each of the following five sports: Association football, Gaelic sports, Hockey, Rugby and Cricket.

The audit concluded there are 60 clubs operating 414 teams across the five sports in the Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council area during the period of the review. The project included the preparation of an inventory of all known pitches for the five sports in the Council area. The summary shows there are 108 pitches suited to competition at some level across the five sports. Adequacy of provision across the Council area for each sport is good overall.

Association football is well provided for with regards to SSG (U11, U12), Junior and adult pitches. There is an under-supply of Small Sided Games pitches for the younger age group, but this is mitigated by accessing junior pitches on a Saturday morning. Gaelic sports has an adequate supply of pitches for adults but an undersupply of 1No. pitch for Go Games & Junior Pitches. Hockey has an over supply of pitches for both adult and juniors. As does

Rugby. Cricket has an adequate supply for junior pitches but a shortfall of 2No. pitches for adults.



Maghaberry Road Play Area

### ***Equipped Play Areas***

The amalgamation of the two legacy councils in April 2015 brought with it an existing portfolio of outdoor, fixed equipment play areas which range in size from Local Areas for Play (LAP's), Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP's) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's). In total 46 fixed play areas transferred into the new LCCC area on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, with an additional play area opened in the autumn of 2015 at Killynure Park, Carryduff.

There are numerous playgrounds spread across the Lisburn and Castlereagh City council area providing children with the opportunities to learn and play in a safe environment. Over the last year the council has opened several new purpose built play areas across the council area, an example being the new multi-purpose play facility River Road Play Park at Seymour Hill, Lisburn, developed in consultation with local community groups and housing association. Three new play parks will be added in early 2021 at Hydebank, Tonagh and Dungoyne.

Flagship Play Areas include:

- Wallace Park, Lisburn
- Moira Demesne, Moira
- Hillsborough Forest Play Park
- Queen Elizabeth II Play Park
- Moat Park, Dundonald

### **Community Greenways**

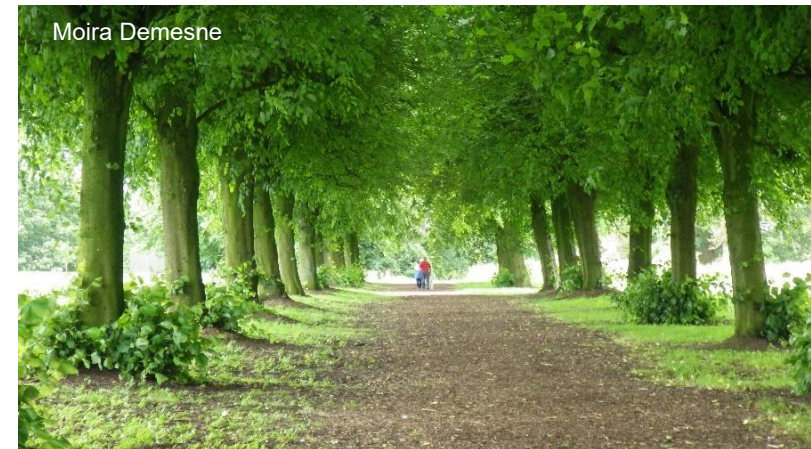
Greenways seek to re-establish links between the countryside and urban areas of open space such as parks, playing fields and natural areas to create a network of urban open spaces. These local-scale community greenways provide places for recreation and exercise alongside opportunities for pedestrian and cycle routes as well as wildlife habitats. Both publicly-owned open space and private land are included, even where public access is not permitted. Such green space can provide important linkages and visual amenity within the urban area. Community Greenways provide a recreational link; an ecological/ environmental linkage; or offer a source of visual/recreational amenity. These designations are carried forward from the existing development plan, however further work in reviewing existing and future community greenways will be undertaken as part of the Local Policies Plan.

### **Strategic Greenways**

The Council is supportive of the future provision of strategic greenways, and associated strategic path links, recognising their benefits, including reducing reliance on the private car, connecting communities with facilities, services, schools and places of work, promoting health and well-being, reducing pollution and congestion, increasing access and awareness of the natural and historic environment, along with the potential for tourism opportunities.

### **Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace**

Trees and Woodland Trees and woodland contribute significantly to the natural environment and green and blue infrastructure networks. They have a number of important benefits, including creating a varied and attractive landscape, and creating and defining a sense of place. Trees can help screen and integrate development, provide wildlife habitats, contribute to the health and well-being of society, reduce air pollution, provide shade and mitigate flood risk.



The Lagan Valley Regional Park is a significant recreational resource and has variable urban and rural character, mature woodland, agricultural fields and much grassland diversity. While the majority of the Regional Park within the Council area is in agricultural use, there are areas within the Settlement Development Limit of Lisburn City which consist of amenity parklands and casual recreation areas focused on the riverside corridor. These recreation areas make a major contribution to the enjoyment of the Park, as well as playing a vital role in sustaining the well-established parkland character.

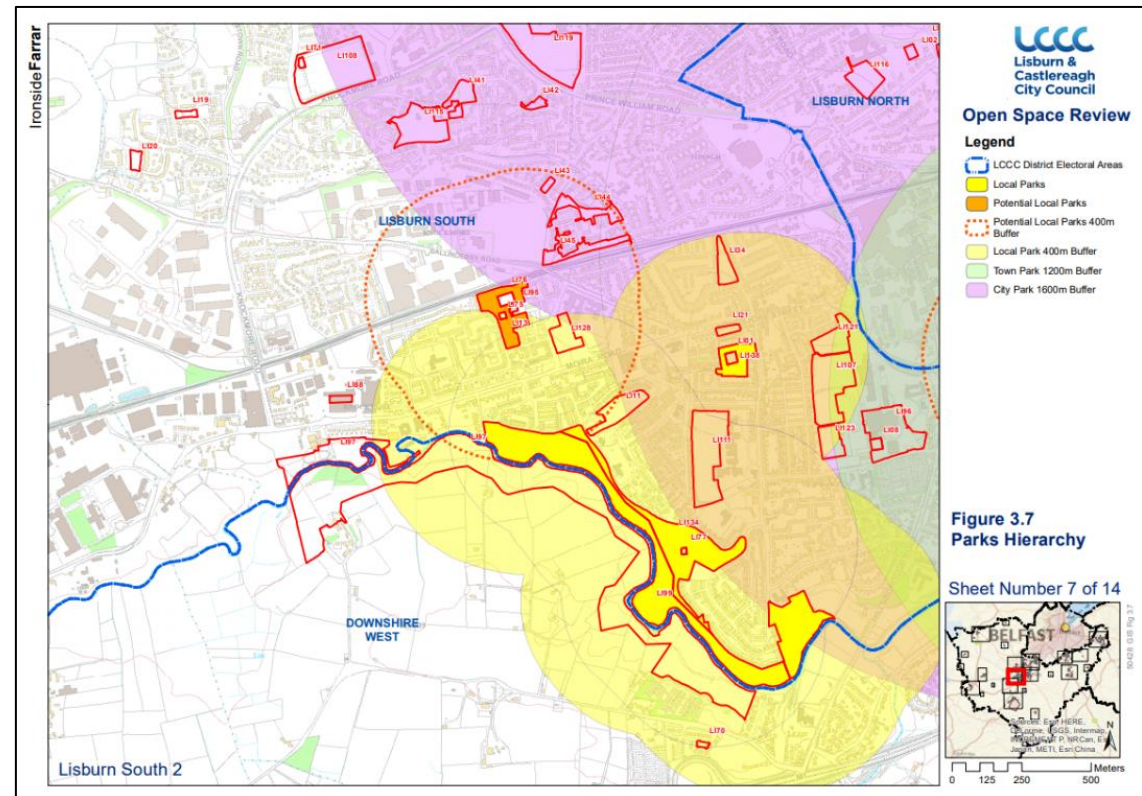
### Allotments & Community Gardens

There are currently 3 allotments in the LCCC area, including Bell's Lane Allotment Hub, Milltown Avenue and Jubilee Allotments, Ballybeen. There are several private allotments for hire e.g. Vista Allotments (Ballyhanwood Road). Future provision will be based on demand for provision of additional facilities. Further study is required to assess need and demand for facilities.

### Cemeteries

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council have a statutory responsibility to provide cemetery provision for Welfare Burials and the maintenance of any Council Cemeteries. The process of assessing Cemetery Provision falls with each individual Council. At present Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council is in the process of considering its long term future need for cemetery provision. This process will involve collaboration with neighbouring Councils to assess Cemetery provision on a wider scale, offering a more aligned and joined up approach.

The map below illustrates the provision of the various types of open space in the south of Lisburn City.



## **5.0 Open Space Priorities**

### **5.1 Open Space Priorities**

The detail of the open space priorities and actions will be developed alongside the Local Policies Plan, which is the next stage of Plan preparation.

The findings of the Open Space Audit and the analysis will be presented to Stakeholder Groups, and the findings included in Chapters 5.0 and 6.0 of the Open Space Strategy, following the consultation.



## **6.0 Implementation**

### **6.1 Action Plan for Delivering the Strategy**

### **6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation**

### **6.3 Partnership Projects**