4.1 What parks can deliver for Barking and Dagenham

In the Borough’s manifesto the council has identified a clear set of priorities for the future development of the borough.

- A much cleaner borough, and particularly its streets, parks and front gardens
- A borough of cohesive communities with a renewed sense of community spirit
- A great place to live and work and for businesses to settle and grow
- More facilities for young people
- More services for older people to keep them active

In the Strategy, we have described ways in which good quality parks and greenspaces can deliver benefits for people, for communities and for the borough as a whole. In the Action Plan, we’ll consider how we can deliver these benefits through detailed programmes and initiatives across the borough. In this section, we’ll consider the most important targets for the strategy:

4.2 Community health and wellbeing

Barking and Dagenham has some very challenging health statistics. The borough has significantly higher levels of childhood and adult obesity than both regional and national averages. The number of people diagnosed with diabetes was higher than the average for England. The prevalence of smoking in the borough is worse than the average for England and is rising.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By making parks more attractive and distinctive to encourage more people to use outdoor space and adopt a healthy lifestyle;
- Through a programme of investment in playgrounds across the borough to encourage children to play outdoors;
- Through a programme of investment in sports facilities to encourage people to be fit and active;
- By designing out crime hotspots to make parks more secure and to encourage out greater use;
- By supporting food growing opportunities across the borough helping people to get fit and eat healthily;
- By giving people an opportunity to volunteer and help to maintain parks;
- By working with GP’s and health providers to develop health related programmes in parks to protect residents’ health; and
- By improving accessibility for people with disabilities and special needs.
4.3 Placemaking and housing growth

The population of the borough is set to increase by 48% over the next 20 years. The borough’s new residents will be accommodated mainly in high rise high density accommodation with little or no private space. The provision of new greenspace will form an integral element of emerging masterplans for these regeneration areas, but an increased population will place increased pressure on the borough’s existing greenspace assets. The borough’s parks need to be ready to face this challenge.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By developing and adopting new masterplans for 10 of the borough’s most important parks. These masterplans will give us a framework for the future development of these sites that we can bring into effect as resources become available
- By developing a quick wins programme to address some of the most urgent issues facing our parks – how to make individual parks more attractive and distinctive, how to improve connections between parks and how to improve playgrounds
- By identifying short, medium and long term funding opportunities to deliver improvements to parks
- By getting started on major projects for Parsloes Park and Central Park
- By looking at how parks are paid for and how they are managed and by considering different ways of doing this in future to make sure that the parks service is improving in response to an increased level of demand

Barking Park case study, LB Barking and Dagenham

Barking Park is a very successful, well-designed, highest-quality play space. Its location is ideal, in the de facto hub of the park. It is close to the splashpark (a popular family destination), cafe, toilets and boat hire. It is also relatively near to the main sports facilities and skatepark.

The design is attractive, welcoming and offers a wide range of play opportunities for children of different ages and abilities, while allowing family groups of different compositions to visit together. The area has a strong spirit of place and identity. Exemplary design features include:

- Distinctive and thoughtfully chosen equipment. The bespoke sunken ship structure is eye-catching and memorable. The sand and water features are popular with families with young children. There are several challenging items such as the basket swing and slide, and several items that have good accessibility.
- Naturalistic features, landform and ground modelling that enhance the play offers and adds new ones.
- The long bench-wall: a design element that adds play value as a climbing/balancing item, offers generous seating to make the space more sociable, and divides the area into ‘rooms’ while allowing parents to keep an eye on children of different ages.

The lack of hard boundaries, while perhaps not universally appreciated, is a bold decision that brings several benefits:

- The area feels part of the wider park rather than a segregated ‘play ghetto’, solely for use by children and their adult carers. This enhances the degree of casual social contact with - and informal supervision by - other park users.
- The play area and features are easy to access from any direction.
- Children’s active play – especially chase games - can easily flow around and well beyond the features.
- The site can cope with high visitor numbers in a flexible way.
- Responsible dog owners are more likely to keep their dog under control nearby the play area and possibly in the wider park.
- It is not possible for the play area to be dominated by small numbers of aggressive or anti-social users, and it is unattractive to anti-social dog owners in search of places where they can bring/train their dogs (unlike a gated play area).

4.4 Children, learning and spaces to play

The opportunity to play is central to a healthy, happy childhood and the provision of good play facilities is a principal of the Borough Manifesto. Good play opportunities and time spent in green outdoor environments are good for children, for families and for communities.

Play facilities are evenly distributed across the borough but there are gaps in provision, notably within adjoining areas of Longbridge and Eastbury Wards, on the western edges of Becontree and Valence Wards, on the eastern fringes of Whalebone and Chadwell Heath Wards, in Albion and Heath Wards and the eastern edge of Eastbrook Ward.

An area of deficiency in Thames and River Wards is likely to be addressed by new play provision in Barking Riverside.

The borough’s current playgrounds are often in poor condition and in need of repair. These playgrounds do not offer children opportunities for imaginative and adventurous play or opportunities for children to socialise. Barking Park is the most successful, highest-quality play space and sets a standard for play facilities in other parks.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By initiating a programme for the repair and renewal of playgrounds across the borough
- By providing new play facilities in the borough’s housing regeneration areas
- By making new and existing playgrounds inclusive, attractive and a distinctive part of the neighbourhood
- By building these design principles into playground designs for the 10 masterplan sites
- By encouraging children and families to be part of the design process for playgrounds
- By encouraging children to define risk for themselves
- By making playgrounds robust and easy to maintain and by carrying out repairs when these are needed
4.5 Programming and events

Many of Barking and Dagenham’s parks already act as venues for events and celebrations and there are great opportunities to develop more. The existing programme of events is popular and well attended mainly by local residents. The borough has a very young age profile, challenging health statistics and a very low engagement with the arts. An exciting and innovative events programme can help in all of these areas.

How will the strategy address these issues?
• By identifying what is distinctive about each park and encouraging events that will complement this distinctiveness.
• By developing a balanced programme of events across the borough.
• Where possible, to promote events that will generate revenue for the borough that can be ploughed back into park maintenance.
• By identifying key parks to host large events and making sure that these parks can support events without causing long term impacts.
• By setting up a clear booking system to ensure that a simple and straightforward process is in place for both commercial and community event organisers.
• By encouraging commercial event organisers to share infrastructure with the organiser of community events to promote a diverse and inclusive programme.
• By ensuring that event organisers immediately address any physical impacts of events on parks.

4.6 Food and productivity

Growing food in parks has become commonplace over the last 10 years. While traditional allotments are still in high demand, provision of food growing within community settings is increasingly recognised as a way to give people more opportunity to get outside, get active, learn new skills and create a sense of place.

Within Barking and Dagenham, 42 community food growing projects have been initiated in schools, care homes, housing estates and communal areas during the last eight years. Around 20 of these are currently active.

There is huge scope for more food growing in Barking and Dagenham with land being more abundant than in many other urban areas. A number of successful local projects are already operating but there is potential to do much more.

How will the strategy address these issues?
• By building initiatives for food growing into the 10 park masterplans; planting design will include orchard trees and plants that can be foraged.
• By supporting current food growing partners, allowing them to re-purpose areas of parks that are currently under-used.
• By seeking new partners to develop new health, education and skills initiatives linked to food growing.
• By encouraging social enterprise as a means of growing the food growing sector.
Growing Communities’ Dagenham Farm

Growing Communities’ Dagenham Farm produces about five tonnes of organic veg and fruit every year, in glasshouses and polytunnels and outdoors for sale locally and through Growing Communities’ fruit and veg bag scheme.

The farm opened in 2012 on the former council nursery site. The aim is to produce excellent, organic food closer to where people actually live as well as helping local residents to gain skills in food growing, preparation and selling.

Dagenham Farm shows the potential for growing- and selling- significant amounts of produce from farms on the outskirts of London. With funding from the Big Lottery they currently run a community outreach programme that includes:

- A volunteer programme on Wednesdays and Sundays where local residents can come and learn new skills, take gentle exercise and buy fresh farm produce and learn about healthy eating via a free volunteers’ lunch.
- A Grow in Dagenham young people’s programme for over 130 young people a year as well as a free Growing on Holiday club and after schools club.
- A 9 month paid Food Worker training programme, for unemployed local residents and lone parents.
- A weekly food growing and skills session for residents in recovery from alcohol and substance abuse.

In 2016 they recorded considerable success with 384 visitors to the farm including 42 regular volunteers, contributing 2205 volunteer hours and engaged 179 pupils. In addition they recruited 4 lone parent on a paid traineeship.

4.8 Environmental sustainability

Barking and Dagenham is facing a number of key environmental issues and parks and green spaces can help to address these.

GLOBAL WARMING

The impact of global warming on the climate of the UK over the next century is difficult to predict but an increased frequency of extreme weather events with increased level of rainfall is likely. These weather patterns are likely to increase flood risk. Significant areas of the borough close to the Thames fall within “Flood Zone 3” but are protected by flood defences. Areas of the borough along Loxford Water, the Goresbrook, Mayesbrook, the River Beam and the River Ingrebourne are flood risk zones.

How will the strategy address these issues?

- By looking at ways in which parks can provide flood storage capacity
- By naturalising river valleys and allowing rivers to flood parkland intermittently
- By sustaining and increasing tree cover and minimising hard surfacing to help to absorb rainfall
- By developing sustainable urban drainage systems for parks to reduce the loading on mains drainage

Average summer temperatures are predicted to rise between 2 and 4 degrees Celsius over the next 60 years. In combination with localised temperature rises in cities (caused by higher levels of pollutants) and a general rise in temperature across the borough caused by increased development, global warming will impact significantly in Barking and Dagenham.

4.7 Sports provision

The provision of high quality outdoor sports facilities is an important priority for the borough. Working with local sports clubs, the council has adopted an Outdoor Playing Pitch Strategy (OPPS) that has looked at current provision and what future demand for pitches will be. Having adopted the OPPS, the council can approach national governing bodies for sports to seek funding for improved facilities across the borough.

How will the strategy support this?

- The OPPS suggests where playing opportunities for different sports should be created across the borough.
- These recommendations have been incorporated into the masterplans for the borough’s major parks that have been developed as part of the strategy
- By talking to sports clubs about how the strategy will help to deliver new and improved sports facilities across the borough
- By adding proposals for funding applications for specific projects to the strategy action plan

4.9 Funding and governance

In common with other local authorities, Barking and Dagenham has managed parks and greenspaces as a local authority service since it was created. Funding for parks is under pressure as never before and many councils are having make significant cuts to budgets. Almost half of local authorities (46%) are considering selling parks and green spaces or transferring their management to others.

In the Strategy, we are looking at new ways to fund and manage parks to make sure that the benefits they can deliver are secured for future generations. The options we are considering include:

The options we are considering include:

- Creating parks trusts with endowments to help fund their future maintenance
- Business Improvement Districts and Neighbourhood Improvement Districts where residents pay a small levy to pay for their local parks
- Working with external providers to develop new ideas for parks to make them self-funding
- Managing parks and open spaces in new housing growth areas separately through housing service charges

These options are discussed in more detail in Section 8 of the Strategy.
5.1 Summary of baseline characteristics

The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is situated on the North bank of the River Thames to the East of London, nine miles from the centre of the city. The borough has a population of some 201,000 and a total land area of 3,611 hectares.

TOPOGRAPHY, GEOLOGY AND HABITATS

Barking and Dagenham lies on the eastern edge of the Thames Basin and the topography of the area is characterised by gentle undulations shelving steadily to the south and the valley of the Thames. The valleys of the River Roding and Beam River define the western and eastern boundaries of the borough. Both valleys converge on the River Thames. A small plateau to the north of the borough, within Marks Gate, marks the highest point at 32-36m AOD.

The geology of the borough consists predominantly of made ground, alluvium (clay and silt, with some peat), Thames gravels and London Clay of variable thickness.

Barking and Dagenham includes a wide range of habitats that have been influenced by the underlying landscape and by human activities. Industry and housing in the 20th century shaped large parts of the borough and many greenspace sites are recovering from these influences.

The London Regional Landscape Framework (May 2009) defined four landscape character types within Barking and Dagenham:

- Essex Plateau
- North Thames Terraces
- Lower Thames Floodplain
- Wide tidal Thames

RIVERS AND WETLANDS

Three of the four Borough boundaries are watercourses. To the East is the River Roding, to the West is the River Beam and to the South is the River Thames. In addition the Borough has some further tributary watercourses including the Rivers Mayesbrook, Beam and Wantz, the Goresbrook, Cran Brook and Loxford Water. Flood risk across the borough is entirely confined to these river valleys.

Extensive gravel extraction has, and continues to occur, in the Borough. Where gravel pits have not been infilled they now form attractive water features, such as those found at Mayesbrook Park and Eastbrookend Country Park.

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND LAND USE

Until the 19th Century, the Borough was predominantly rural, dominated by agricultural uses, contained in the north by Hainault Forest, to the south by the River Thames, in the west by the River Roding and to the east by the River Beam.

As London expanded in the late nineteenth century, pressure intensified on agricultural land use and development expanded eastwards, principally in the aftermath of the development of rail and road transport corridors.

Intensive development followed WW1. The Housing Act of 1919 permitted the London County Council to build housing outside the County of London and the Becontree Estate was constructed between 1921 and 1935 on ‘cottage estate’ principles. Upon its completion the estate was the largest public housing estate in the world.

In parallel, the borough developed a distinctive industrial landscape, dominated by the Ford Motor Company assembly plant in the south-east of the borough. Industrial development expanded and intensified after WW2 and remains the dominant built form in substantial parts of the south and west of the borough.

The 1960’s and 1970’s saw the construction of some higher density high rise housing but low rise suburban housing remained the dominant form of housing, as it does today. The future development of Barking Riverside, Castle Green and other housing regeneration sites will introduce new variety into the quality of the built environment across the borough.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Barking and Dagenham has been becoming an increasingly young borough over the past 20 years. There are now twice as many teenagers in the borough as there are people over 65. Only 10% of the borough’s population falls into this age group (for the UK as a whole, 18% are over 65). One in four people in the borough is 14 or under.

Population distribution across the borough is determined by town centres, settlement patterns and proximity to areas of economic activity and transport hubs. Density intensifies towards the south and the west of the borough. Population growth is also projected to be greatest in the south and the west with greatest growth being projected in Valence, Mayesbrook and Longbridge Wards. The higher density housing planned for Barking Riverside, Castle Green, Thames Road, Chadwell and Creekmouth will impact on future densities in Thames, Gascoigne and Abbey Wards.

ETHNICITY

Barking and Dagenham has been becoming an increasingly diverse borough over the past twenty years. In 2015, the proportion of those living in the borough who identified as ‘white’ had fallen to 47%. 10% of people who identified as white were born outside the UK. By contrast, the majority (53%) of BME residents in Barking and Dagenham in 2015 were born in the UK. Across the borough particular areas are favoured by different ethnicities. The Becontree Estate, Rush Green and Rylands Estate areas remain more strongly White British. Barking, the Leftley Estate, Longbridge Road area and the western edge of the Borough have significant Asian communities. Barking town centre, particularly the Gascoigne Estate, and the southern residential areas of the borough have extensive Black African and Afro-Caribbean communities.

CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Crime rates across the borough have declined over the past four years. Despite this, fear of crime is high by London standards. The proportion of people worrying about crime (36%) is well above the London average (25%).
Crime levels in parks are relatively low but fear of crime in parks and open spaces is also higher than crime statistics justify. Barking Park, Mayesbrook Park, St Chads Park recorded the highest crime figures of all parks with respectively 70, 80 and 53 TNO offences. These parks are amongst the most popular in the borough so higher rates of reported crime could be expected to be higher than those for smaller or less popular sites.

5.2 The distribution of parks and open spaces

Barking and Dagenham has a portfolio of 28 park and open spaces providing 463 hectares of public open space and these are distributed fairly evenly across the borough but with a concentration of provision in a central belt running from Barking town centre in the west to Central Park and Eastbrookend Country Park in the east. In the context of the GLA’s 2011 Public Open Space categorisation, the borough portfolio consists of eight ‘District Parks’, 11 ‘Local Park’ and nine ‘Small Open Spaces.’ (Refer to Table 5.1)

GREENSPACE PROVISION

Through its planned regeneration programmes, a further 80 hectares of public space will be added over the next twenty years at Barking Riverside, Creekmouth, Thames Road, Castle Green and Chadwell Heath, giving a total provision of 544 hectares.

Given the borough’s population of 206,056, greenspace provision of 544 hectares equates to 2.64 hectares per 1,000 head of population. By 2027, the borough’s population will have grown to 229,047, resulting in a rate of greenspace provision of 2.38 hectares per 1,000 head of population.

Open space provision across all types of green space, (parks, playgrounds, sports sites, natural and semi-natural greenspaces) is 888.76 Hectares (approximately 25% of the area of the borough). This equates to 4.3 hectares per 1,000 head of population. The addition of a further 80 hectares of greenspace will increase overall provision to 968 hectares, equivalent to 4.69 hectares per 1,000 head of population.

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 Provision of parks and open spaces is evenly distributed across the borough with a significant concentration of district and local parks across the central belt of the borough. The council is planning further public open space initiatives within the Creekmouth, Castle Green, Thames Road and Chadwell Heath regeneration areas but as these projects are at an early stage of development, their impact on overall provision and accessibility cannot currently be quantified in detail.

There is currently a deficiency of district and local parks in both the northern and southern areas of the borough but in the latter area, this is likely to be addressed by new park provision at Barking Riverside. This will leave a deficiency in local and district park provision in the north of the Borough which will in part be addressed by the new park provision at Chadwell Heath.

The borough does not currently have any metropolitan parks (parks over 60 hectares), although Parsloes Park at 59.5 hectares is very close to this standard. Metropolitan parks in neighbouring boroughs (Wanstead Flats, Fairlop Waters and Britton Playing Fields) all have catchments covering areas of Barking and Dagenham.

Barking and Dagenham has 25 sites designated as being of importance of nature conservation. Three of these sites (River Thames, Ripple Nature Reserve and The Chase and Eastbrookend) are designated as being of Metropolitan Importance. A further 15 sites are designated as being of Borough Significance and a further seven as locally important. In the context of the 2017 Local Plan Review, a further site of Borough Importance will be designated and a site currently designated as being of Local Importance will be upgraded to Borough Importance. 10 new sites are proposed for designation as sites of Local Importance.

ACCESS TO SITES OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

The borough is fortunate to enjoy a significant level of provision of sites of Metropolitan and Borough Significance to Nature Conservation and access to these sites is evenly distributed across the borough. There are two small areas of deficiency (in Becontree, Valence and Parsloes Wards).

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**Table 5.1 - The distribution of parks and open spaces**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Neighbourhood Area (refer to 9.1)</th>
<th>Typology</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
<th>Designations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 Abbey Green-Abbey Ruins</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>NC, REGEN. AREA, CONS. AREA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 Barking Park</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>29.80</td>
<td>SINC, MOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 Beam Parklands</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>38.75</td>
<td>SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 Beam Valley Country Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>26.99</td>
<td>SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 Castle Green Park</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>10.41</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Central Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>50.17</td>
<td>GREEN BELT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Chase Nature Reserve</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>42.22</td>
<td>SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 Eastbrookend Country Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>55.45</td>
<td>SINC, GREEN BELT, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 Essex Road Gardens</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Goresbrook Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>14.71</td>
<td>SINC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Greatfields Park</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Heath Park Open Space</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Mayesbrook Park</td>
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<td>Local</td>
<td>48.95</td>
<td>SINC, MOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Newlands Park</td>
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<td>Small OS</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Old Dagenham Park</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>13.38</td>
<td>GREEN BELT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Padnall Open Space</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Parsloes Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>59.57</td>
<td>MOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Pondfield Park</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>SINC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Ripple Nature Reserve</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>SINC, REGEN. AREA, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Scrattons Farm Ecopark</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>SINC, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 St Chads Park</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>14.44</td>
<td>SINC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 St Peter &amp; St Paul’s Churchyard</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>SINC, LNR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Tantony Green</td>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 The Leys</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>GREEN BELT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Valence Park</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>SINC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Quaker Burial Ground</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Kingston Hill Rec. Ground</td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>GREEN BELT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 King George’s Fields</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Small OS</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Undesignated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

463.19
ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is an important factor to be considered when assessing the provision of parks and open spaces. A high quality open space can be of limited value if access to it is restricted by major barriers such as transport corridors and rivers.

In Barking and Dagenham, transport corridors are a major factor affecting the accessibility of both public open space and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. The A13 road corridor and the mainline rail lines running between central London and south Essex and the Underground line between central London and Upminster all significantly influence the potential catchments of parks. The catchments to the south of Mayesbrook Park and Parsloes Park are particularly affected by this restriction.

The creation of a new Overground railway link to Barking Riverside is likely to influence the catchment for greenspace within this proposed development. The proposal to tunnel sections of the A13 that form part of the Castle Green proposal are likely to significantly affect the accessibility of public open space within this regeneration area as well as its connectivity with Barking Riverside.

5.3 Public engagement and consultation findings

Parks are for people and it’s important that the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy responds to the needs and aspirations of the borough’s residents. There are a number of specific reasons for this:

- Satisfaction with the borough’s parks and opens spaces is currently low relative to other London boroughs. The implementation of the strategy should help to improve levels of satisfaction
- Parks and open spaces can deliver a variety of positive outcomes for residents but this can only happen if people use parks and open spaces. The strategy needs to address residents’ concerns to make parks more popular
- The council wants people to be more involved in day to day decisions about parks and wants to support volunteering opportunities in parks
- The consultation process has given us the following information:
  - Satisfaction with the borough’s parks and opens spaces is currently low relative to other London boroughs. The implementation of the strategy should help to improve levels of satisfaction
  - Parks and open spaces can deliver a variety of positive outcomes for residents but this can only happen if people use parks and open spaces. The strategy needs to address residents’ concerns to make parks more popular
  - The council wants people to be more involved in day to day decisions about parks and wants to support volunteering opportunities in parks

In order to meet these objectives, we have carried out a detailed consultation and engagement process to gather views on the boroughs parks and ideas for their future management and development.

We have gathered information in the following ways:

- An on-line questionnaire was available for a period of six weeks. 583 residents participated in the survey process, providing us with useful information on current use of parks and the main issues faced by residents using parks
- Two public meetings to discuss the different parts of the strategy
- Two public meetings to discuss masterplans for the borough’s most important parks
- A meeting with Barking and Dagenham’s Access and Planning Forum for people with disabilities
- A meeting with the BAD Youth Forum
- A workshop with Northbury Primary School
- Three presentations for local Councillors
- A meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader
- Meetings with council officers to coordinate the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy with other council initiatives in respect of parks, events, planning, health, education, environment, crime and anti-social behaviour
- A workshop to develop the strategy Action Plan
- Discussions with neighbouring boroughs to encourage best practice and cross-border working
- By using social media, gathering views on parks and open spaces through the council’s Facebook pages.

The consultation process has given us the following information:

- Cleanliness, safety and the quality of the facilities for parents and children in parks were identified as the most important issues affecting enjoyment and use of parks and open spaces (see Fig.5.2)
- The quality of facilities for families (including toilets and playspaces) and the cleanliness and maintenance of parks were identified as most in need of improvement in local parks and open spaces (see Fig.5.3).
- Respondents valued welcoming, accessible and inclusive spaces
- Opportunities should be developed for older children
- Opportunities for volunteering should be developed
- Dog fouling and control are seen as major issues
- Anti-social behaviour affects the use and enjoyment of parks
- The reintroduction of park wardens is seen as desirable
- A wide range of events in parks is seen as important
- People would also like to see more and better communication about events and volunteering opportunities in parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.5.2 - Looking at the list below, which three things are most important to you in your local parks and open spaces? (Please tick only three categories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of respondents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with the quality of the cafe facilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of facilities for parents and children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of signage in the park</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of seating and places to rest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The appearance of the park</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The cleanliness of the park</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other - Please specify</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.5.3 - Which three things need most improving in your local parks and open spaces?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of respondents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cleanliness, safety and the quality of the facilities for parents and children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of facilities for families (including toilets and playspaces)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The cleanliness of the park</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.5.1 - Public meeting in Dagenham Library, 25th March 2017

Fig.5.1 - Public meeting in Dagenham Library, 25th March 2017
Fig. 5.4 - Barking and Dagenham’s Parks and Open Spaces by planning designation