6.1 Quality standards and assessment of condition

The quality of Barking and Dagenham’s parks needs to improve but these improvements need to be prioritised. So that we can make the right decisions about which parks need to be improved and when, we need to understand the current condition of all of our greenspaces. To prepare the strategy, we’ve assessed the quality of the borough’s 28 parks. We can use this information to:

- Develop a programme for investment and renewal over the 10 year period of the strategy in order that the most serious issues are addressed as soon as possible
- Target this investment programme in areas where the population is going to grow most significantly and where demand for parks is going to be greatest in future

The council last carried out an assessment of the quality of its parks and open spaces in 2003. We have used the same set of questions that were used in 2003 to assess quality in 2017. This will help us to understand whether parks have got better, got worse or stayed the same over this period. It will also help us to identify any sites where quality has declined significantly and that might be priorities for investment.

The following criteria have been used to assess quality:
- How good are the park’s entrances and are they accessible for people with disabilities?
- How good are the general facilities in the park (e.g. bins, benches, lighting, signage)
- How good is the overall quality of the park landscape?
- How safe and secure is the park?
- Is there a good range of play opportunities in the park?
- Does the park cater for people with disabilities or special needs?
- Does the park cater for older people?
- Is the park well maintained?
- Does the park include areas managed for wildlife and bio-diversity?
- Does the park offer initiatives to support health and education outcomes?
- Are staff present in the park and is information available about management, events and activities?

6.2 Recent changes and trends in quality

The scores for each component of the assessment were translated into scores of ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘average’, ‘poor’ and ‘bad’. Sites which achieved over 80% of the maximum points available were awarded ‘very good’, sites in the 60%-80% bracket awarded ‘good’, 40%-60% were awarded ‘average’, 20%-40% were awarded ‘poor’ and those sites scoring below 20% of the maximum points available scored ‘bad’.

As in 2003, the quality of parks across the borough varies considerably. Similarly to 2003 no parks have achieved a ‘very good’ ranking. In contrast with the 2003 assessment, the number of parks achieving scores of ‘good’ and ‘average’ has declined. More parks across the borough are now classified as ‘poor’. The number of parks classified as ‘bad’ hasn’t changed.

Across the entire portfolio, parks tend to score worst in terms of management and health and catering for people with disabilities and best in entrance information and landscape character. Since 2003 there has been a considerable decline in terms of how well parks are managed and how secure they are. In common with the 2003 study, the quality of Barking and Dagenham’s parks and open spaces varies considerably across the borough. The majority of parks are either of ‘average’ or ‘poor’ quality.

Only two parks are currently scored as ‘good’, in comparison to four parks in 2003. Between 2003 and 2017, the number of parks scored as ‘good’ fell from nine to seven. The number of parks scored as ‘poor’ increased from eight to seventeen. The overall average quality score has fallen from 42% to 36% since 2003.
Both parks are in the western part of the borough. Parks classified as “good” decline towards the eastern edge of the borough.

There is an even more considerable decline in quality within natural green spaces since 2003. Overall quality score for the Chase Nature Reserve has fallen by almost 50% and in the case of Eastbrookend Country Park by 38%.

### QUALITY SCORES/TRENDS - KEY FINDINGS

- The overall average quality score of parks has fallen from 42% to 36% since 2003
- Similarly to 2003 no parks have achieved ‘very good’ ranking
- The number of parks achieving scores of ‘good’ and ‘average’ has declined from thirteen to nine since 2003
- The number of parks classified as ‘poor quality’ increased from eight to seventeen.

#### Worst average scores in:
- Management (23%)
- Providing for disabled people (28%)

#### Best average scores:
- Entrance information (56%)
- Landscape character (50%)

#### Biggest decline since 2003:
- Management (42% to 23%)
- Security and vandalism (53% to 36%)

#### Biggest improvement since 2003:
- Ecology, education and health (29% to 39%)

Some of the findings include:
- Only two parks (Mayesbrook Park and Barking Park) are currently scored as ‘good’, in comparison to four parks in 2003
- Better quality parks to the west of the borough, quality scores decline to the east
- Quality of natural green spaces decreased most considerably (Chase Nature Reserve’s quality score has fallen by 50%)
- Mayesbrook Park’s score has improved the most (from 36% to 70%), achieving best quality score in the borough

### QUALITY SCORES/TRENDS - KEY FINDINGS

#### Overall average quality score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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### Number of parks achieving ‘good’ and ‘average’ score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
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</table>

### Biggest improvement in parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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</table>

6.3 Capturing natural capital value

Barking and Dagenham’s parks deliver a range of outcomes for the local economy, for health, education and neighbourhood and for the environment. The value of these benefits does not currently appear in the council’s balance sheet.

In order to capture these values, we have gathered on the quality of the borough’s parks to create a Corporate Natural Capital Account (CNCA) for Barking and Dagenham. The CNCA estimates the value of the benefits delivered by the borough’s parks and open spaces and the current cost of delivering these services. The CNCA also estimates the cost of sustaining these benefits over the strategy period.

The CNCA suggests that £1 invested in parks and open spaces in Barking and Dagenham will bring a return of £27.

By developing the CNCA, we can demonstrate why future investment in the borough’s parks and open spaces makes economic sense.
Fig.6.2 - Parks and Open Spaces Quality Trend Map

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As part of the strategy, we have developed masterplans for 10 of the borough’s most important parks. These masterplans will give us a template for future development so that we can strengthen the outcomes that each site delivers as funds become available. We’ve also devised a programme of immediate work across all of the borough’s parks so that we can get under way with delivering improvements straight away.
7.1 - Abbey Green Masterplan Proposals

**What is distinctive about Abbey Green?**
- Central location
- High pedestrian footfall
- Rich heritage (Barking Abbey Ruins)
- Proximity to the Town Quay and the River Roding
- Adjacent to Barking’s main High Street
- Playground
- Mature trees

**Main Interventions**
- Improved connection to the Town Quay
- Viewing structure over Barking Abbey Ruin, that improves accessibility to site
- Relocated and enlarged play area
- Interface with Townscape Heritage Scheme
- New civic space
- Improved connections to surrounding new development areas
- Improved planting strategy throughout

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**Diagram Details**

- Enhanced and improved planted buffer
- Improved signage and interpretation boards around site
- Improved connection to Town Quay
- Existing old mill building
- Enhanced viewing platform overlooking Town Quay
- Improved connection to proposed new development area
- Proposed pathway with wall lighting, seating and low perennial planting
- Relocated and enlarged play area
- Pop-up power and water
- Lightwight viewing structure over ruins with pedestrian access
- Rationalised pathways throughout site
- Extended pavement and shared surface
- Reconfigured car parking
- Proposed civic space with seating
- Townscape Heritage Scheme proposals by East
- Enhanced connection to proposed new development area
- Improved planting strategy throughout site
- Enlarged paved area next to existing bus stops

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7.2 - Barking Park Masterplan Proposals

What is distinctive about Barking Park?

- Central location
- Long and linear boating lake
- Historic ornamental gardens
- Restored 1930s light railway
- Splash park
- Bowling green, tennis courts and skate park
- Café and playground
- Playing fields

Main interventions

- Amphitheatre shaped mounds with adjacent events space
- Orchard planting
- New playground for older children
- New cricket pitch and two adult football pitches
- Food growing area on the former bowling green
- Bridge to Loxford Park
- Integrated basketball and skate park
- Improved access to War Memorial