

# South Derbyshire District Council

## Green Space Strategy Draft for Consultation

Green Space Supporting Healthy Places



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# Executive Summary

South Derbyshire District Council's Green Space Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for protecting, enhancing and promoting the district's valuable parks, open spaces and natural areas over the coming years.

## Context and Challenges

South Derbyshire is one of England's fastest-growing districts, with the population increasing by 20.5% since 2011 and forecast to reach 135,951 by 2043. This rapid growth presents both challenges and opportunities for green space provision. Whilst the district currently has 4.07 hectares of green space per 1,000 people (above the national average), significant deficiencies exist in certain areas, particularly in Stenson, Woodville, Midway, Repton, Melbourne and Etwall wards.

Despite the district's relative prosperity, health challenges persist. Around 22% of adults are inactive, whilst childhood obesity affects one in five reception children and one in three aged 10-11 years. The strategy recognises that green spaces are essential infrastructure that support physical and mental health, tackle climate change, enhance biodiversity and strengthen communities. Research shows that 98.3% of South Derbyshire residents value green spaces for improving wellbeing, with 85.2% visiting weekly or more often.

## Vision

The vision is:

*"To create and protect a resilient, connected network of green spaces that enhance health and wellbeing, strengthen climate resilience, and support nature recovery and biodiversity, ensuring all South Derbyshire communities can enjoy and participate in sustaining a flourishing natural environment for generations to come."*

## Key Themes



**1. Protecting and Planning for Green Space** Safeguarding existing green spaces through Fields in Trust designation and Local Green Space policies, whilst ensuring new development addresses deficiencies and delivers high-quality provision.



**2. Healthy and Active Green Spaces** Building on successful programmes like Parklife, Exercise by Referral and Green Social Prescribing to expand health-focused activities across more locations. The strategy prioritises targeted interventions in areas with the poorest health outcomes, particularly Swadlincote Central, Newhall and Stanton, Midway, Church Gresley and Woodville wards, where deprivation and health disadvantage are most pronounced.



**3. Partnerships, People and Communities** Working collaboratively with residents, businesses, parish councils and other organisations to manage and enhance green spaces, whilst addressing barriers to access and ensuring spaces are welcoming and inclusive.



**4. Sustainable Green Spaces** Managing 30% of council land to enhance biodiversity by 2030, adapting maintenance practices to support nature recovery and climate goals, and developing exemplar sites like Rosliston Forestry Centre.



**5. Promoting Green Spaces** Improving digital promotion and marketing, developing better signage and interpretation, and supporting communities to celebrate and care for their local green spaces.

## Investment and Sustainability

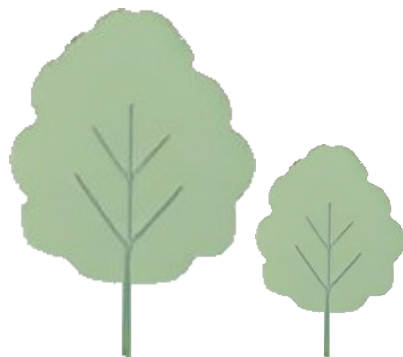
The strategy recognises that substantial capital investment is essential to improve visitor facilities including replacement pavilions with cafés, upgraded changing facilities, and new outdoor gyms and activity equipment. Adopting 'invest-to-save' principles, these improvements will create commercial partnership opportunities with local businesses whilst generating sustainable revenue streams through enhanced visitor offerings, facility management and event hosting. This approach supports both the council's financial resilience and the district's economic development priorities.

## Key Commitments

The strategy includes 12 policy statements and 42 specific objectives covering protection mechanisms, quality standards, expanded health programmes with focused targeting, community engagement, environmental management and promotion activities. Major commitments include achieving more Green Flag Awards, creating new country park provision, substantially expanding health and wellbeing programmes in priority areas, addressing barriers to access (particularly for women and girls), and developing sustainable funding approaches through strategic investment and commercial partnerships.

## Implementation

Success requires partnership working across council services and with external organisations, sustained investment in both revenue and capital funding, and ongoing community engagement. The strategy will be monitored through key performance indicators covering protection, health outcomes, community participation, biodiversity enhancement and promotional activities, ensuring green spaces continue to serve South Derbyshire's growing population whilst supporting environmental and health priorities.



## 1 Introduction



### 1.1. Purpose of the strategy

South Derbyshire District Council has developed this Green Space Strategy to maximise the benefits that parks and green spaces provide within the district. We know that our parks and green spaces already support a wide range of cross-cutting strategic priorities, including public health and wellbeing, the environment, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, education, regeneration, tourism, and community cohesion. However, we want to do more against these priorities and adopt a more strategic approach.

This strategy addresses the council's aspiration to conserve South Derbyshire's natural heritage by enhancing biodiversity and priority habitats, whilst enhancing the physical and mental wellbeing of all residents. It considers how parks and green spaces can mitigate the impacts of climate change and flooding, contribute to the economic success of the district by making South Derbyshire an attractive place to live, work, learn and play, and support cultural life whilst preserving and celebrating local heritage.

The strategy recognises the increased use of parks and green spaces during the coronavirus pandemic and addresses how green spaces can meet the 15 minutes to nature agenda. It builds an accurate picture of the quantity, ownership and locations of parks, semi-natural green spaces and nature reserves, cemeteries, allotments and play areas across the district.

### 1.2. Structure of the strategy

**Strategic Context** sets out the district's profile as one of England's fastest-growing areas, examining demographic trends, health challenges and the policy framework that supports green space investment at national and local levels.

**Green Spaces Context** defines what constitutes accessible green space and explores why these spaces are important to communities, presenting evidence from national research and local consultation about the multiple benefits green spaces provide.

**Vision and Aims** establishes the strategy's overarching vision and presents twelve policy statements organised under five key themes that will guide the council's approach to green space management and development.





**Protecting and Planning for Green Space** addresses how existing green spaces will be safeguarded through designation mechanisms, planning policies and quality standards, whilst ensuring new development responds to identified deficiencies and delivers high-quality provision.

**Healthy and Active Green Spaces** focuses on creating connected **Protecting and Planning for Green Space** addresses how existing green spaces will be safeguarded through designation mechanisms, planning policies and quality standards, whilst ensuring new development responds to identified deficiencies and delivers high-quality provision.

**Healthy and Active Green Spaces** focuses on creating connected networks that promote physical activity and wellbeing, building on existing programmes and developing new targeted interventions for communities with the poorest health outcomes.

**Partnerships, People and Communities** explores collaborative working with partners, parish councils, other landowners, businesses and residents, to manage and enhance green spaces, whilst addressing barriers to access and ensuring spaces are welcoming and inclusive.

**Sustainable Green Spaces** outlines approaches to biodiversity enhancement, climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmentally sustainable management practices that support the council's commitment to manage 30% of its land for biodiversity by 2030.

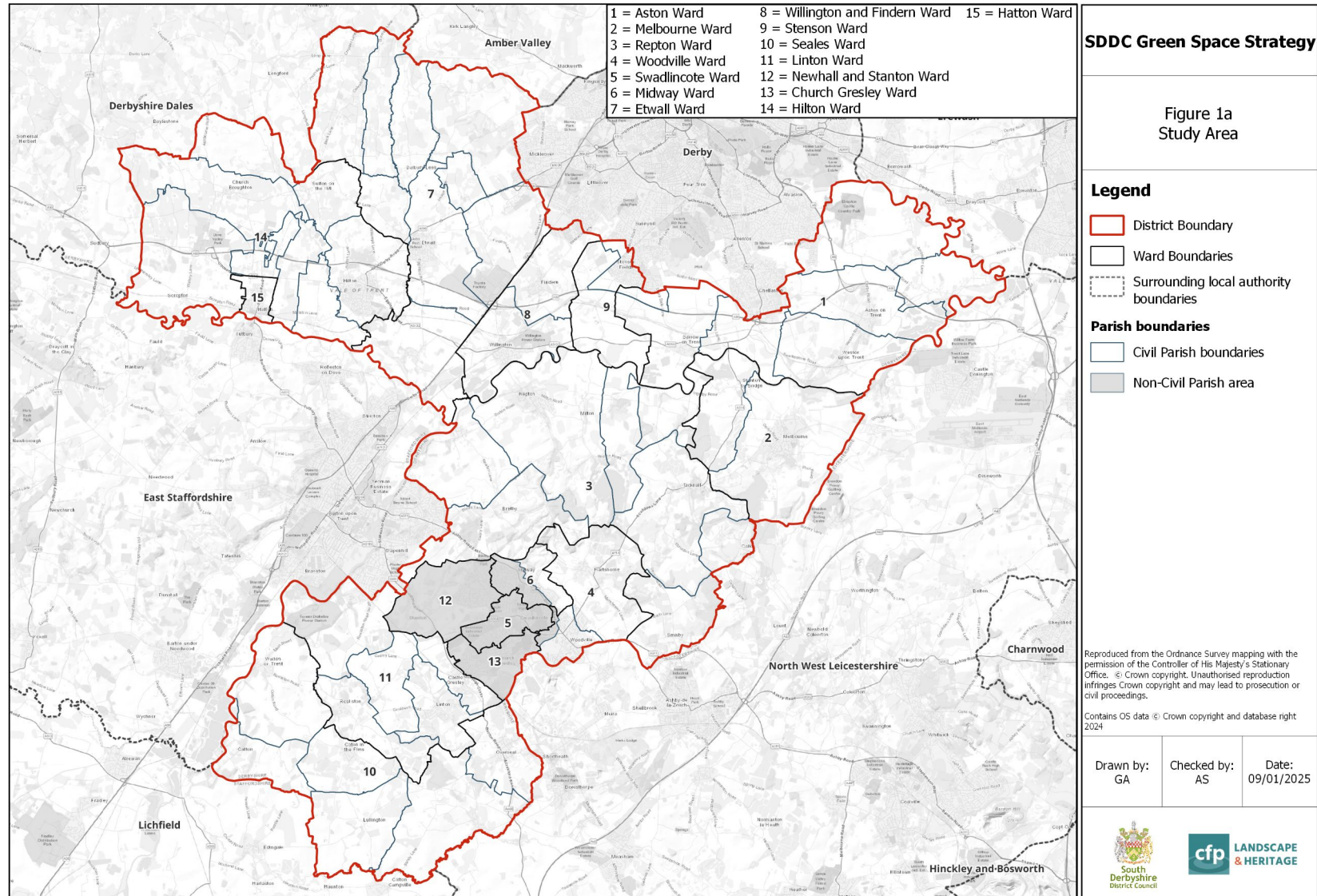
**Promoting Green Spaces** examines how improved communications and digital marketing, signage and interpretation can encourage greater use of green spaces and support community engagement and stewardship.

**Finally an Action Plan** brings together all strategic objectives into a comprehensive implementation framework with clear timescales, responsibilities and performance indicators for monitoring progress.



## 2 Strategic Context

### 2.1. About South Derbyshire





South Derbyshire is a rural district in central England covering over 112 square miles, strategically located between the major urban centres of Derby (north), Burton upon Trent (west), and Ashby-de-la-Zouch (east). It is bordered by Derby City, East Staffordshire Borough, Lichfield District, Derbyshire Dales, Amber Valley, Erewash and North West Leicestershire.

Based on mid-year estimates for 2023, the population of South Derbyshire is 114,050 people. The main urban centre is Swadlincote, in the south of the district, with a population of around 41,800 people.

Three-quarters of the district remains in agricultural use, characterised by compact villages set within farmland and historic estate parklands which play a major role in local distinctiveness and are often integral to village character.

The presence of coal and clay in the area led to urbanisation, as collieries, brickworks and potteries came to dominate in the period until the Second World War. Mineral extraction, including that along the Trent Valley, has had a significant impact on the landscape. The southern third of the district lies within The National Forest, contributing to landscape restoration where tree cover has increased dramatically from 6% (1990s) to 23% (2023) through planting 9.5 million trees. Further reclamation has taken place at the Former Drakelow and Willington Power Station sites and the transformation of former mineral works and vacant industrial premises in the Woodville Regeneration Area.

South Derbyshire District stands out as one of the fastest-growing local authority areas in England, seeing the population increase by 6.4% since 2021 and 20.5% since 2011. The district population is forecast to continue to grow and reach 135,951 by 2043. This presents significant challenges, but also opportunities to balance growth needs with conserving and enhancing landscape quality and restoring nature.

## 2.2 Demographic Headlines

South Derbyshire District enjoys relative prosperity, with high levels of economic activity and annual earnings and low levels of unemployment and deprivation. However, pockets of deprivation do exist which is often linked to education, skills, training and social mobility. Local workforce qualification levels have improved over the last decade but remain below average. The presence of Further and Higher Education institutions in Derby, Burton, Coalville and Swadlincote present an opportunity to address this.

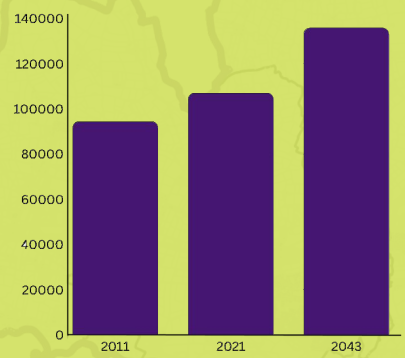
Employment in manufacturing is around three times the national average. Major inward investors and re-investors include global businesses engaged in the production of transport equipment, food & drink, and construction products. Much employment growth over the Local Plan period is expected to take place outside of the area's traditional sectors, for example in logistics, health & social care and the visitor economy, along with emerging significant new sectors such as digital and low carbon. This may provide opportunities for provide more 'green' jobs in the District.

Despite this positive overview there are some challenges with respect to physical activity and health and wellbeing outcomes. Whilst activity minutes are at an all-time high, showing people are becoming more active overall, around 22% of South Derbyshire adults (approximately 21,500 people) are currently inactive and around one-third of children and young people are less active. Childhood obesity rates have also got worse with one in five (20.6%) of reception children and one in three (34.5%) of children age 10 - 11 years being overweight / obese. In addition, the age profile of the district is changing with greater proportions of older people, which will put increased pressure on health services (expected to peak during the 2030s) and increase the significance of preventative strategies.



# Demographics

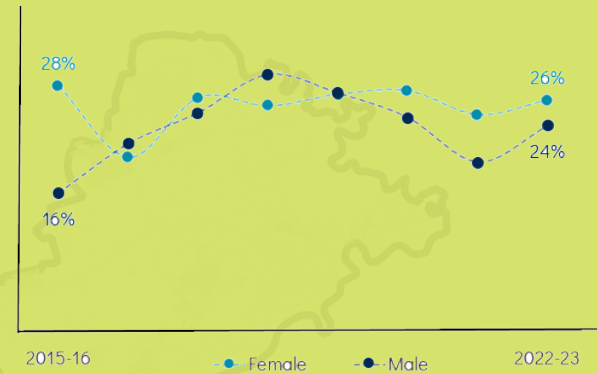
Since 2011, South Derbyshire has experienced a significant population increase of **6.4% - 5.6%** higher than increases in the East Midlands and **6.7%** higher than national increases



Life expectancy is more or less in line with national averages. Since 2023, the figures have been declining



**Women are more likely to be inactive compared to men**



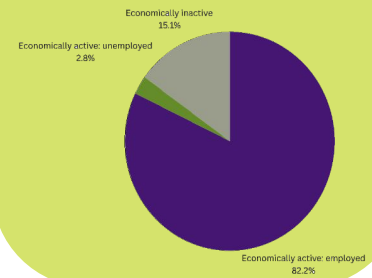
Population growth is predicted to continue increasing at the fastest rate outside of the South East



There are low levels of overall deprivation; South Derbyshire ranks **218** out of **326** local authority districts in England according to IMD 2019 (1 being most deprived and 326 least deprived). Deprivation ranking has increased **12** places since 2015.

Just under **one-third** of children and young people are less active

**Levels of economic activity are high**



South Derbyshire has an ageing population. Based on mid-year estimates for 2023, **18.7%** of the population are aged 65 and over, up from **16.4%** (9.2 million) in 2011.



**Nine in ten** residents are White British. However, the population is diversifying, with the proportion of global majority residents having increased by **3.9%** since 2011



Levels of health deprivation and disability are slightly higher; ranking **167** out of **326** local authorities. This has increased by **16** places since 2015.

**Least affluent** households are more likely to be inactive

**17.5%** of people have a limiting illness or disability, which is in line with national averages but lower than regional averages.

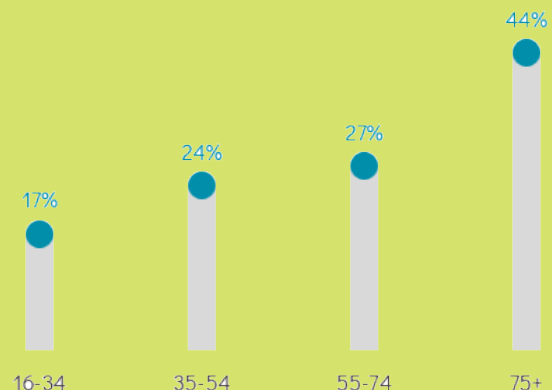


Adults with a limiting illness or disability are **more than twice** as likely to be inactive.

**One-quarter** of adult residents in South Derbyshire are physically inactive, of which **15%** do no activity at all



Inactivity increases with age, with a sharp increase at **75+**





## 2.3. Policy Context

Green Spaces within South Derbyshire are important for helping to create and sustain high quality environments for people to live, work and play. The case for continuing to investment in green spaces is strong, supported by evidence at the national level and locally within South Derbyshire, contributing to national and local priorities.

The **South Derbyshire District Council Plan (2024-2028)** sets out four priorities:

1. Shape our Environment (achieving net zero by 2030, improving biodiversity)
2. Drive our Economy (supporting business growth, enhancing Swadlincote)
3. Support our Communities (improving health and wellbeing, helping vulnerable residents)
4. Transform our Council (modernising services, financial resilience).

Green spaces directly deliver these priorities through carbon sequestration, managing our land for biodiversity, growing the visitor economy in partnership with The National Forest, delivering health improvements and service excellence through achieving national standards such as the Green Flag Award.

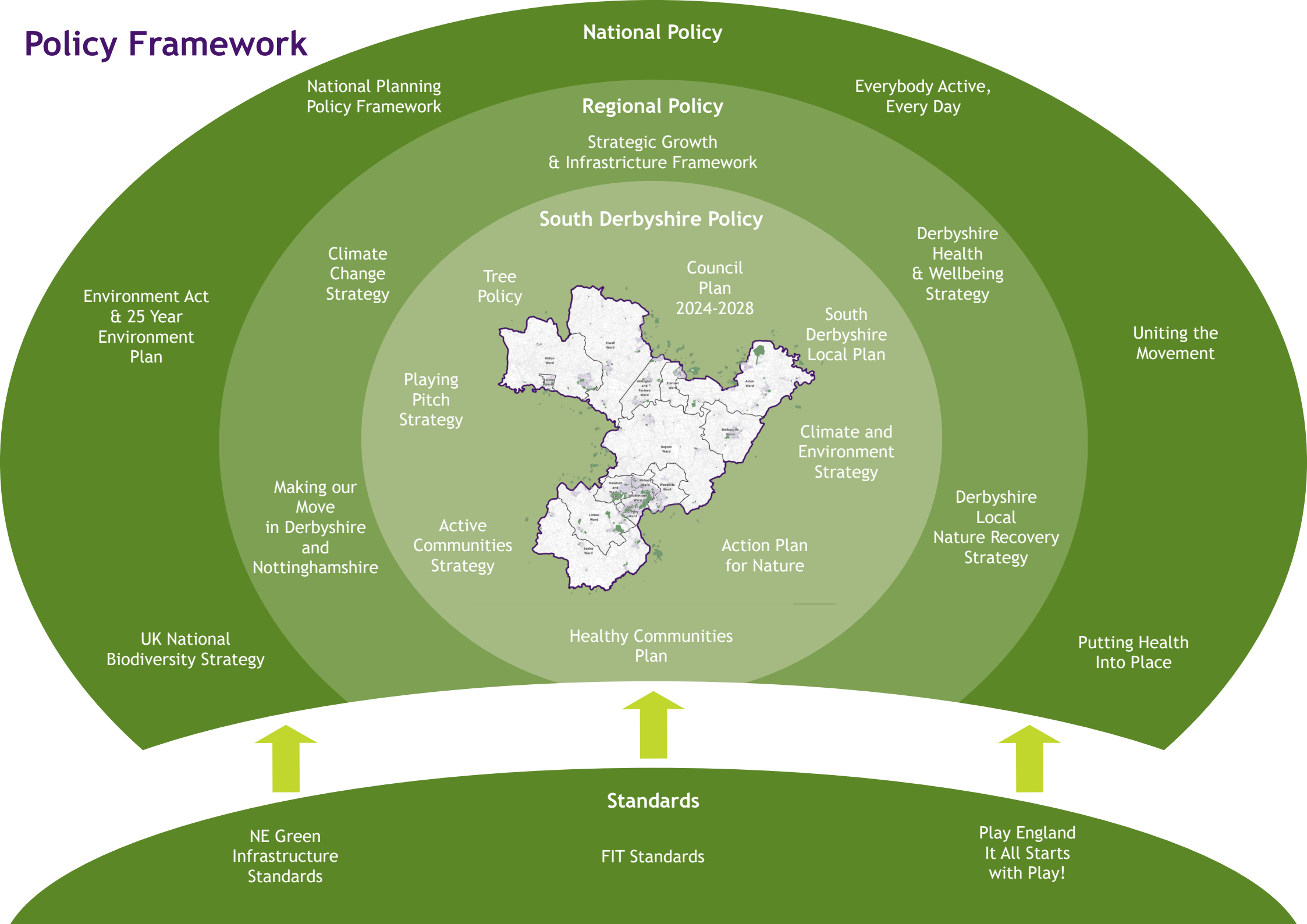
The **South Derbyshire Local Plan (2011-2028)** sets out policies for land use and future development and recognises the contribution of green spaces to the character of the district, its heritage and in climate change adaptation and mitigation and in responding to the ecological crisis and nature recovery. In developing this Green Space Strategy extensive research has provided an up to date evidence base to support planning policy and to help ensure that future development addresses deficiencies in access to high quality green space.

The **South Derbyshire District Council Action Plan for Nature (2022)** forms part of a strategic approach to nature recovery, to be used in conjunction with the Local Plan, the (emerging) Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to support the council's biodiversity duty.





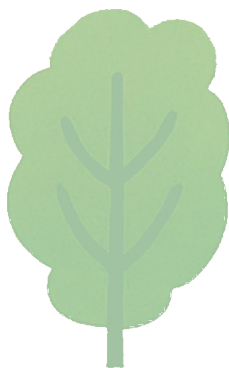
# Policy Framework





Accessible, safe and well managed green spaces can help deliver improved health outcomes and reduce inequalities in physical health, mental health and the healthy development of children and young people. This aligns with the **Derbyshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Making our Move in Derbyshire** and the **Nottinghamshire and the South Derbyshire Healthy Communities Plan**.

National research shows that The NHS could save between £8.50 and £30.30 for every £1.00 invested in parks and green spaces, which could reduce NHS costs by up to 30% (£57.6 billion at 2024 values).



## 3 Green Space Context

### 3.1 What is Green Space?

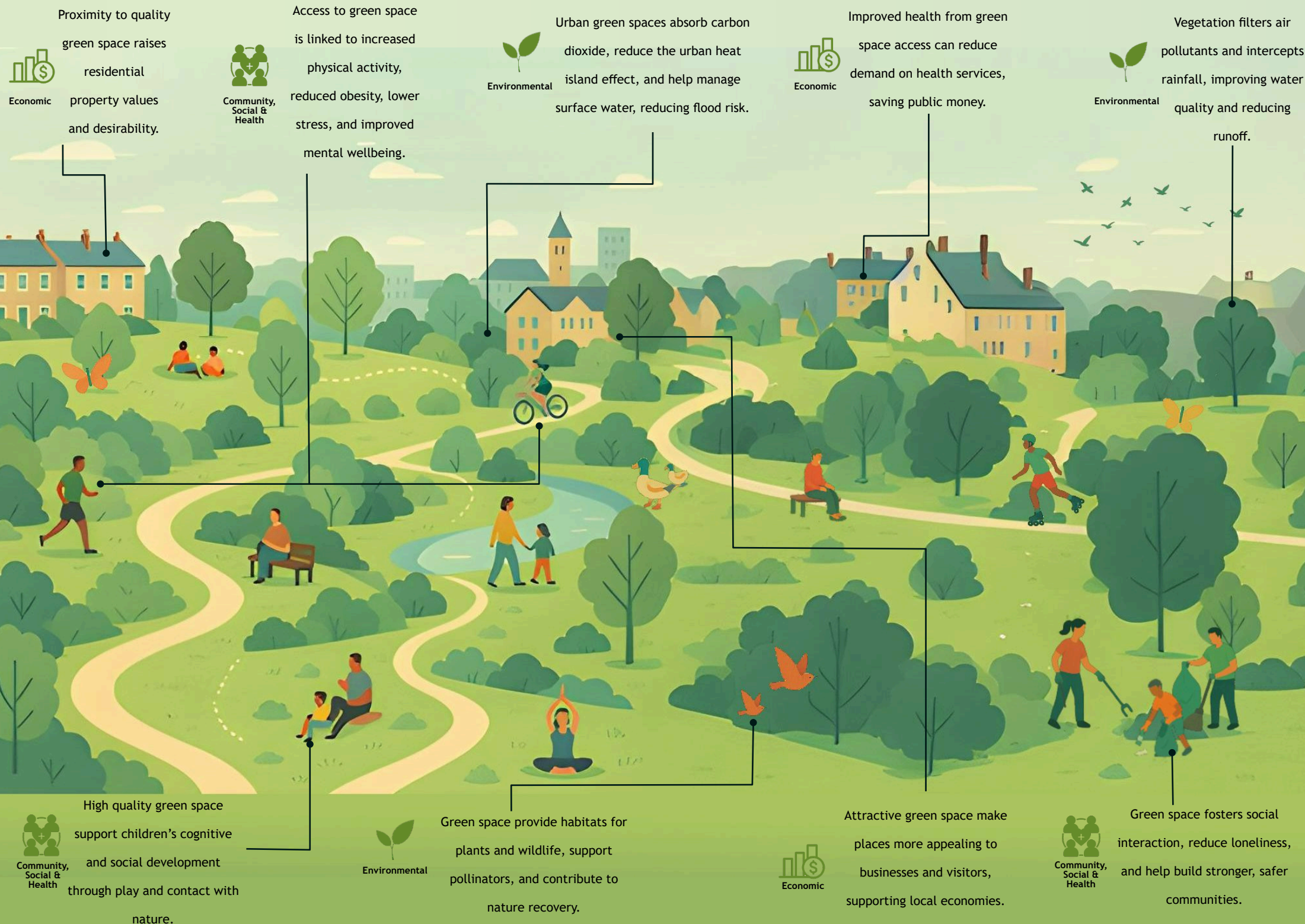
Accessible Green Space may be defined as areas of vegetated land within urban or rural setting: including parks and public gardens, playing fields, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands, and natural habitats that are publicly accessible and managed for recreation, health, biodiversity, climate resilience, and community wellbeing.

This strategy is informed by a detailed audit of green space across the district. This includes green space managed by South Derbyshire District Council, Parish Councils and other providers. Agricultural land, woodland, institutional land and infrastructure companies (including reservoirs) accessible only by Public Rights of Way and permissive routes has not been included since this does not meet the definition of accessible green space. Similarly, estates and parkland where entry charges apply has been excluded. Further details of the methodology are included in the separate Phase 1 Green Space Audit Report.

Accessible green space within neighbouring authorities (within 1200m of the South Derbyshire boundary) has also been captured and used in the accessibility assessment.

### 3.2 Why Green Space is Important

Green space is multi-functional providing a range of benefits for people, the environment and the economy:





### 3. 3 Green Space is Important to People

#### Natural England - People and Nature Survey (2023)

- 85% of adults in England reported that being in nature makes them very or fairly happy.
- 82% agree that "being in nature is important to my wellbeing."
- Visits to green and natural spaces remain higher than pre-pandemic levels.

#### Office for National Statistics (2023)

- 91% of adults in Great Britain said that access to local green spaces is "important" to them.
- 82% want to see more green spaces created in their local area.

#### Fields in Trust - Green Space Index (2024)

- 94% of people said it was important to have green space near home (2020).
- 87% used local parks for health and wellbeing during the pandemic (2020).
- 75% of people said parks and green spaces are "vital" for their quality of life.
- 70% believe local green spaces should be protected "forever."

#### State of UK Public Parks (2016)

- 90% of respondents agreed that parks and green spaces improve their quality of life.
- Three quarters of respondents said their local park was "very important" for relaxation, children's play, or exercise.

South Derbyshire Residents say that:

- 98.3% value green spaces for improving mental and physical wellbeing
- 98.3% appreciate contact with nature, wildlife, and seasonal change

- 96.7% value spaces for community gatherings
- 96.6% value environmental benefits like clean air, cooling, and flood alleviation
- 96.6% see them as safe places for children to develop independence

And

- **85.2% visit weekly or more**, with 34.4% visiting daily
- The top 5 uses of green spaces in South Derbyshire are walking (70%), experiencing wildlife and nature (56%), attending events and activities (49%), working or volunteering in green spaces, and playing football.
- The top 5 improvements residents want to see in South Derbyshire's green spaces are upgrading pathways and improved access (84.3%), improvements for nature (81.7%), provision of facilities such as toilets and cafes (80.7%), conservation of heritage features (76.3%), and additional play features for teenagers (70.7%).



### 3. 4 Recent Achievements

South Derbyshire District Council has delivered significant improvements across parks and green spaces over the last three year.



## Key facts and figures

Secured 1.5 million pounds for play area improvements over 5 years. Starting with the successful new play areas on Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Swadlincote Woodlands



Secured 360k for park infrastructure improvements over 4 years



Secured 200k for cemetery infrastructure improvements over 3 years



Secured 1 million pounds towards the revitalisation of Rosliston Forestry Centre



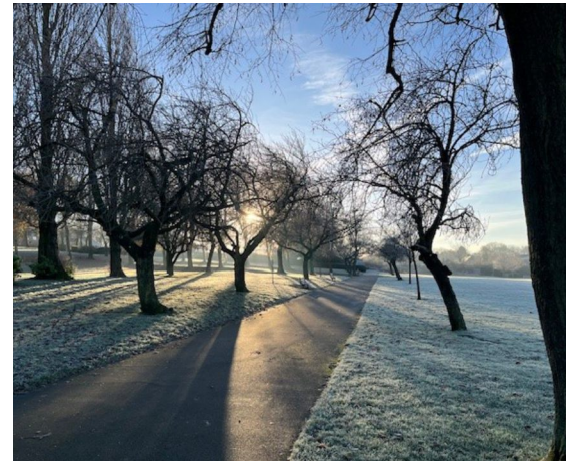
Awarded a Green Apple Award for the Purple Emperor Butterfly project alongside the Butterfly Conservation trust.



## Key facts and figures



Awarded a Silver CSR International Award for our Free Trees project.



Retained 4 Green Flag Awards in 2024 and have submitted a further 2 in 2025



Launched the letters to heaven project in Church Gresley Cemetery



Secured funding to produce a new Green Space Strategy



Delivered the Bevin Boys Miners Memorial Garden at Eureka Park in Swadlincote

Developed and opened the new Cadley Park in Swadlincote including a new pump track and learn to ride area

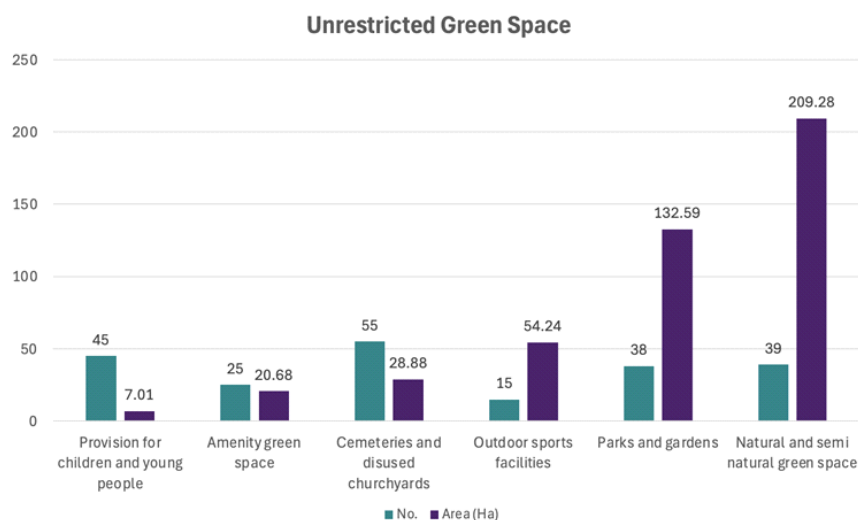




## 3. 5 South Derbyshire's Green Space

### 3.5.1. Overview

South Derbyshire District contains 217 green spaces with unrestricted access covering an area of nearly 453 hectares.



Natural and semi natural green space (including nature reserves, meadows, woodland and heathland) is the dominant green space type by area with 39 spaces covering nearly 209 hectares and making up 46.2% of the total supply of green space (by area). There are 38 Parks and Gardens covering nearly 133 hectares and making up 29.3% of the supply of unrestricted green space. In addition, there are 15 Outdoor Sports Facilities covering 54 hectares and a total of 51 sites classified as Provision for Children & Young People based on their primary purpose (other play spaces within other green space types, such as parks and gardens have also been recorded separately). There are a further 33 allotment sites covering 19.41 hectares which have 'limited' public access, restricted to allotment tenants / ploholders.

### 3.5.2. Managing Organisation

Approximately 35% of accessible green space (by area) is managed by South Derbyshire District Council, 16% by Derbyshire County Council, 15% by Parish Councils and the remaining one third by others (including management companies, churches and community based organisations / charities). This highlights the continuing need for a partnership approach to the management and maintenance of green space across the District.

### 3.5.3. Comparison against National Standards

A standardised measure of area per 1,000 population can be used to compare green space provision to national standards and across different areas. Overall, the District has 4.07 hectares per 1,000 population which is greater than the national average (and East Midlands average) of 3.00 hectares per 1,000 population<sup>1</sup>.

The overall figure for the supply of green space is skewed by the scale of Elvaston Country Park and Rosliston Forestry Centre and if these sites are excluded from the District wide calculation the level falls to 3.38 hectares per 1,000 which still exceeds the national average.

The Fields in Trust Green Space Standards (2015) set out a minimum recommendation that for every 1,000 people there should be approximately 3.2 hectares of accessible informal outdoor space (defined as Parks and Gardens, Amenity Green Space and Natural and Semi-natural Green Space). Against this standard, the District performs well with 3.26 hectares per 1,000 population.

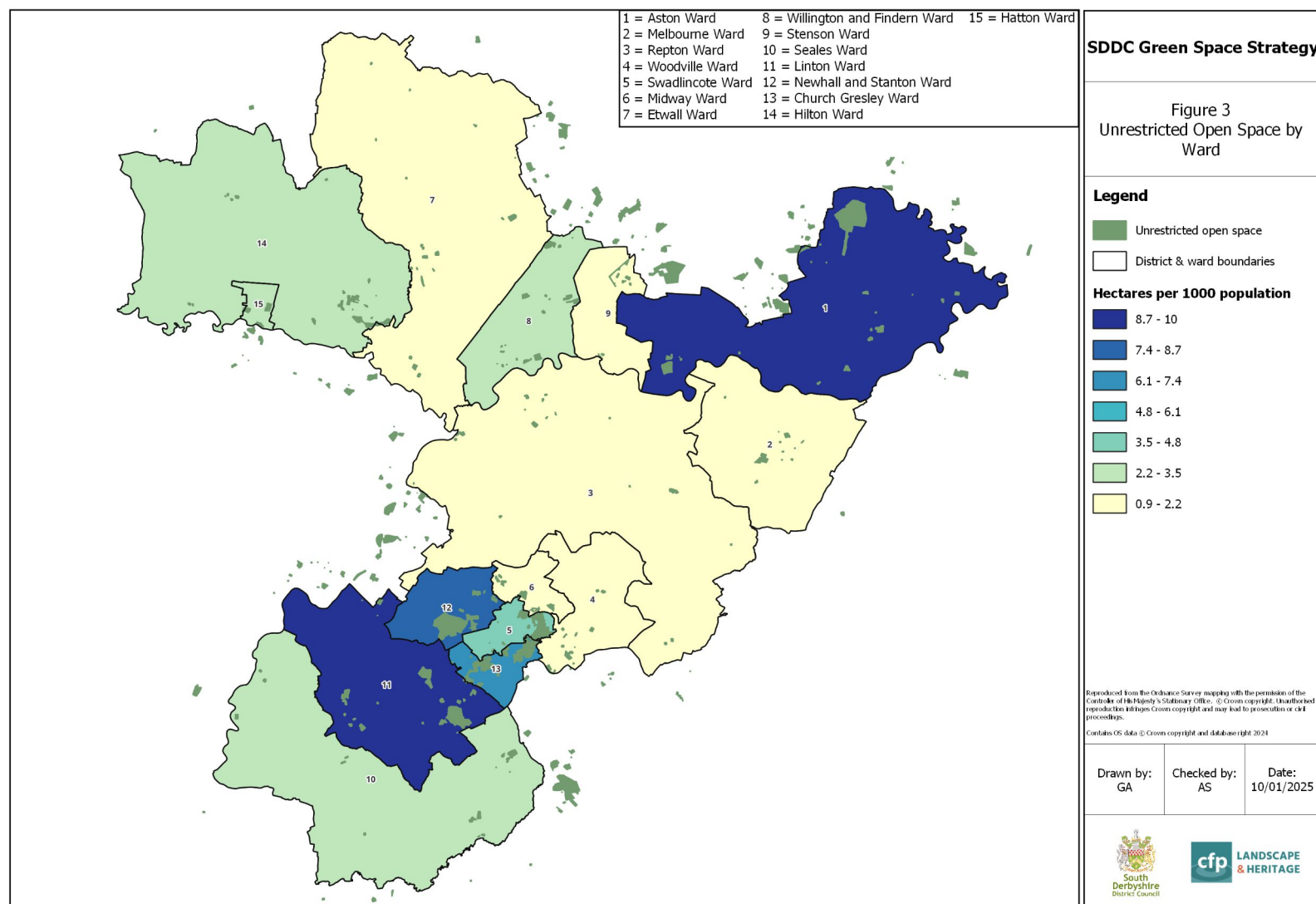
The National Allotment Society (NSALG) recommends that the minimum provision today should be 20 standard (250 m<sup>2</sup>) plots per 1,000 households, equivalent to 0.5 ha per 1000 population. The level of provision at 0.17 hectares per 1,000 for South Derbyshire District is significantly below this level.



<sup>1</sup> Fields in Trust (2024) – Green Space Index

### 3.5.4. Green Space Deficiencies

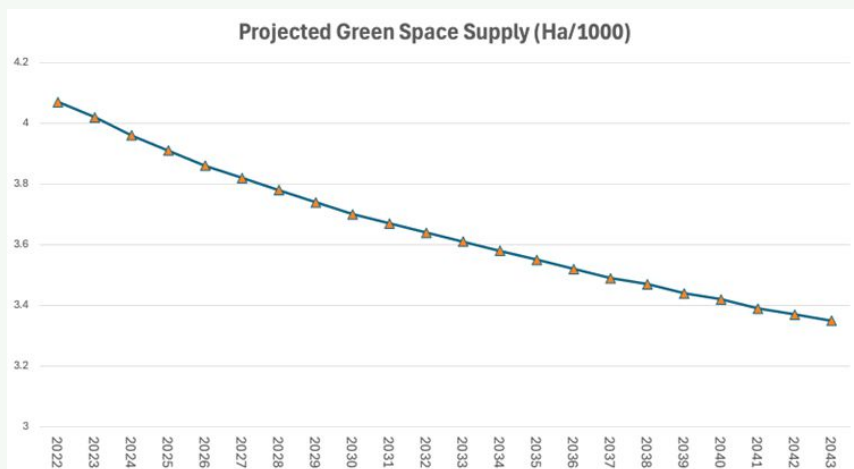
The distribution of green space is not uniform across the district. Linton ward has the greatest area of green space per people, with 9.96 hectares per 1000 population and has approximately 11 times the amount of green space per population than Stenson ward which has the smallest area of green space per people with 0.9 hectares per 1000 population. Just five of the wards are above the mean value of 4.07 hectares by ward per





### 3.5.5. Impact of Population Growth

Population projections (Office for National Statistics) for South Derbyshire shows that the population is predicted to grow consistently over the period to 2043. Based on these figures, if the amount of unrestricted green space remains static, a rising population will reduce the amount of green space from its current level of 4.07 hectares per 1,000 population to 3.35 in 2043 likely resulting in increased demand and visitor pressures. Population growth will further exacerbate deficiencies in the quantity of green space that are currently experienced at ward level.



### 3.5.6. Accessibility Mapping

Accessibility to unrestricted green space has been assessed based on modelling travel distances to local, neighbourhood and district level green spaces within South Derbyshire (and neighbouring authorities) at 400 metres, 800 metres and 1200 metres respectively as set out in the green space hierarchy. This represents walking times of approximately 5, 10 and 15 minutes consistent with good practice guidance.

Overall, there is a good level of accessibility with 89.5% of all residential households having access to unrestricted green space using this model. Beneath this headline, proximity to unrestricted green space is much more varied at ward

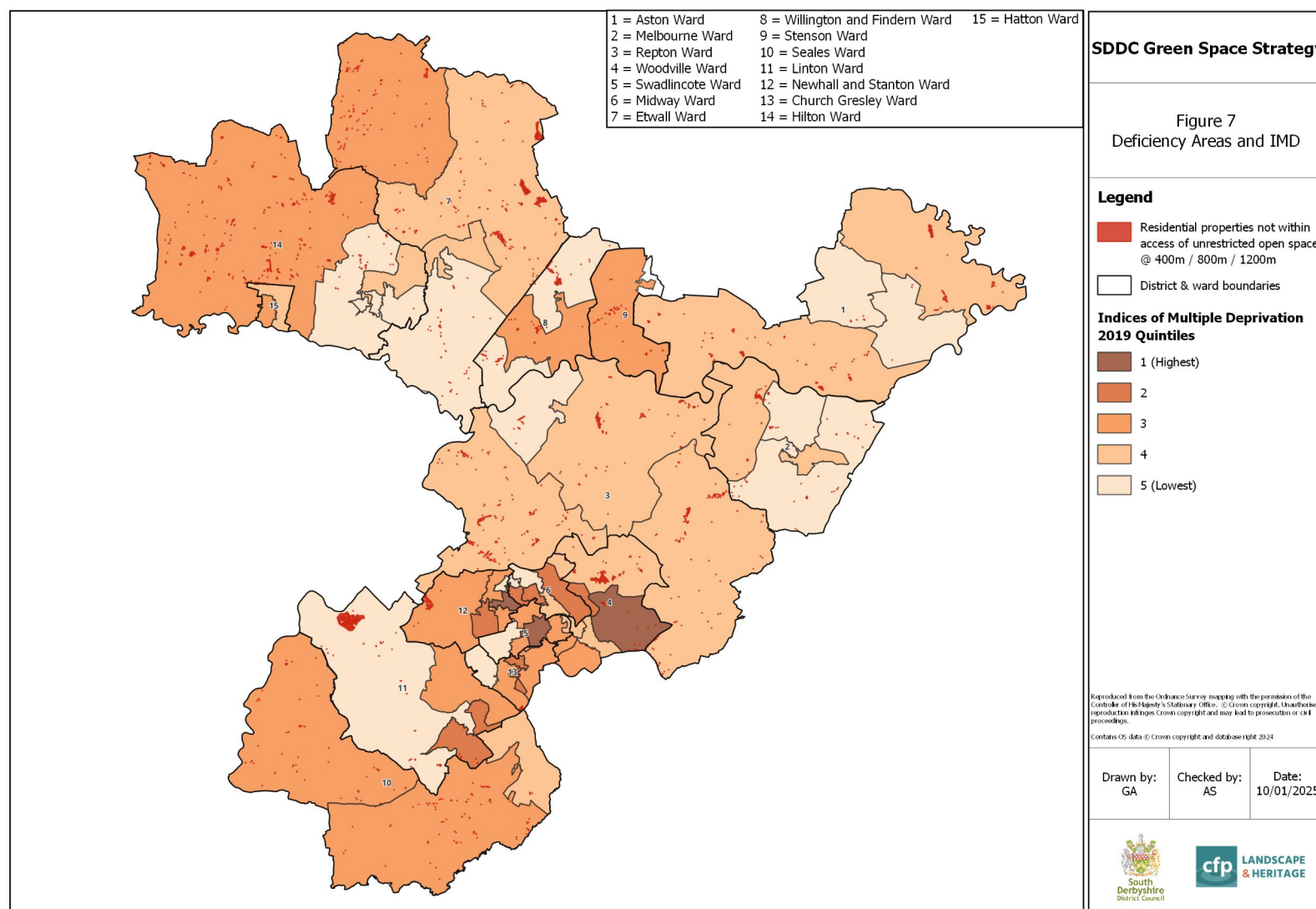


level. All households in Swadlincote ward have access to some form of unrestricted green space but there are significant deficiencies particularly in Repton, Linton and Etwall, Willington & Findern, and Hilton wards.

When considering the accessibility of play provision, 78.2% of residential households have good accessibility based on travel time / distance (Local / Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play and other outdoor provision such as multi-use games areas and wheeled sports facilities). A total of eleven wards have more than 10% of households without sufficient access. The greatest areas of deficiency lie within Woodville, Church Gresley, Linton, Midway and Repton wards.



When levels of deprivation (Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019) and health outcome data are considered alongside green space and play space deficiency the priorities areas that emerge are within Woodville Ward, Church Gresley, Midway and Newhall & Stanton Wards.





### 3.5.7. Accessible Natural Green Space

Natural England published Accessible Natural Green Space Standards in 2023 as part of their Green Infrastructure Framework. These standards categorise green space provision into three types based on size and how close they are to residential areas.

Doorstep green space must be at least half a hectare in size and accessible within 200 metres of homes. Local green space needs to be at least 2 hectares and reachable within a 300-metre walk. Neighbourhood green space requires at least 10 hectares and should be accessible within a 1-kilometre walk.

The Accessible Natural Green Space Standards have been applied to South Derbyshire (and neighbouring authorities) based on a sample of 163 such spaces. The analysis revealed varying levels of access across different categories of green space.

For doorstep greenspace, just over one-fifth of residential households have access to suitable green space of at least half a hectare within 200 metres. Local greenspace provision is slightly better, with a quarter of households having access to green space of at least 2 hectares within 300 metres. Neighbourhood greenspace shows the highest level of provision, with nearly one-third of households able to access green space of at least 10 hectares within 1000 metres.

When all three categories are combined using Natural England's standards, more than half of residential households have access to appropriate green space provision. However, the analysis identified significant deficiencies in certain areas, with Melbourne, Repton and Willington, and Findern wards showing the greatest lack of accessible green space.

### 3.5.8. Green Space Quality

The quality of selected green spaces has been assessed using the field assessment criteria of the Green Flag Award Scheme: the national quality standard for parks and green spaces. A total of 19 key green spaces of varying types were assessed. The quality assessment scores ranged from 47 to 74 (out of 100). The average quality score is 62. Eight of the nineteen sites assessed have a quality score of 66 or greater (used as a proxy to indicate reaching the Green Flag Award standard).

For the award scheme there are 27 field assessment criteria. The quality assessment found highest scoring field criteria are: Personal security in park; Control of dogs/fouling; and Chemical use. The lowest scoring criteria are: Appropriate information channels; Appropriate educational and interpretational information; and Implementation of the management plan. The relative scores indicate strengths in management and maintenance practices and potential areas for improvement.

The Green Space Strategy Residents Survey found that respondents consider parks and green spaces across the district to be high quality, with an average score of 8.2 out of 10. Over half (52.2%) of respondents considered that green space quality had increased over the last three years and a further three out of ten (28.8%) considered it had stayed the same.

Currently (2024) four green spaces have been accredited and hold the Green Flag Award. These are: Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Cadley Park, Eureka Park, Swadlincote Woodlands. Further green spaces will be subsisted for the Award scheme and South Derbyshire District Council will use the Award scheme criteria as a tool for continuous improvement.

#### Summary of Key Issues

1. The scale and pace of development in South Derbyshire District is significant. Population growth places additional pressures on existing green space but planned development can provide opportunities to create new green spaces, improve connectivity and increase quality.
2. Green space quality matters more than quantity for disadvantaged groups
3. Proximity alone doesn't guarantee usage - safety, maintenance, and appropriate facilities are crucial
4. Green space interventions can reduce health inequalities more effectively than many medical interventions
5. Multiple benefits beyond physical activity include mental health, air quality, and social cohesion
6. Targeted investment in deprived areas could have the greatest health impact

This evidence strongly supports green space investment as a public health strategy that could specifically address the physical activity inequalities identified in South Derbyshire.



## Key facts and figures



Aston ward accounts for 21.6% of unrestricted open space

Just under nine in ten households have access to unrestricted open space using SDDC's accessibility model



South Derbyshire District Council are responsible for 452.79 hectares of unrestricted open space.



There are 7.1 hectares of unrestricted provision for children and young people



Natural and semi-natural green space is the most dominant type making up 209 hectares

This equates to 4.07 hectares of unrestricted open space per 1000 population



## 4 Vision / Aims

The vision for this Green Space Strategy is:

To create and protect a resilient, connected network of green spaces that enhance health and wellbeing, strengthen climate resilience, and support nature recovery and biodiversity, ensuring all South Derbyshire communities can enjoy and participate in sustaining a flourishing natural environment for generations to come.



This Strategy sets out the following Policy Statements. These are based on the findings of the Phase 1 Green Space Audit, engagement with officers and partner organisations and from the findings from public consultation.



## Protecting and Planning for Green Space

**Policy Statement 1:** The Council will protect existing green space through robust policies in the Local Plan, through Fields in Trust dedication and other appropriate mechanisms and commit to managing and maintaining its green spaces to a high standard through core funding whilst also exploring commercial opportunities for income generation.

**Policy Statement 2:** The Council commits to revising the Green Space Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) setting standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space, enhancing the financial contributions and extending the commuted sum period to achieve sustainable finance and long-term investment in green spaces.

**Policy Statement 3:** The Council take steps to plan for the provision of sufficient burial space within the district to meet the demands of South Derbyshire residents.



## Healthy and Active Green Space

**Policy Statement 4:** The Council will work in partnership to develop safe and accessible walking and cycling routes that connect neighbourhoods to key parks and open spaces, promoting active lifestyles.

**Policy Statement 5:** The Council will work in partnership to secure funding and resources to develop and deliver activity programmes aimed at improving health outcomes across the district, prioritising those communities most in need.



## Partnerships, People and Communities

**Policy Statement 6:** The Council will work to understand and remove barriers to accessing green space, improving inclusivity and community safety and will ensure that that facilities are welcoming, clean and well-maintained.

**Policy Statement 7:** The Council will foster volunteer participation and community involvement in the management and promotion of local green spaces, empowering residents to take an active role in enhancing their environment.

**Policy Statement 8:** The Council will work with plotholders and local allotment associations to facilitate a process of self-management for all allotment and community garden sites.



## Sustainable Green Spaces

**Policy Statement 9:** The Council will manage 30% of its land to enhance biodiversity by 2030, implementing best practices in land management that support environmental conservation and sustainability.

**Policy Statement 10:** The Council will review and adapt its ground maintenance operations to align with carbon neutrality goals by 2030, focusing on practices that support biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and climate resilience.



## Promoting Green Spaces

**Policy Statement 11:** The Council will enhance its digital presence (website and social media) to promote green spaces effectively to inform the community about available green space facilities, events & activities, and volunteer opportunities.

**Policy Statement 12:** The Council will develop a comprehensive Marketing Plan for green spaces, supporting community groups and volunteers in promoting events and initiatives that encourage active participation and stewardship of local parks.



## 5 Protecting and Planning for Green Space

### 5.1 Legal Protection

South Derbyshire Council is committed to protecting existing green spaces from development. Under Policy INF9, development affecting open space is only permitted in exceptional circumstances where provision exceeds requirements, losses are compensated, or alternative facilities meet greater need.

However, green spaces face increasing development pressure as the district plans for 14,500 new dwellings between 2022-2041, including 9,633 for local needs and supporting Derby City's housing requirements. The greatest pressures are on Derby's urban fringe and Swadlincote (including Woodville and Church Gresley).

A comprehensive protection strategy is proposed with two complementary approaches. Fields in Trust designation provides the strongest legal protection for district-wide significant sites, with proposals to expand from three current sites to sixteen. This designation ensures accessible, safe spaces promoting active lifestyles, health and wellbeing, and climate resilience.

Local Green Space designation through the Local Plan protects smaller, locally important spaces that may not qualify for Fields in Trust status but remain vital to community character. This existing policy mechanism has not been fully implemented but enables community-led identification of special local spaces.

#### Objectives

1. Protect key green spaces through Fields in Trust Designation.
2. Protect additional green spaces through the Local Green Space designation in the Local Plan.

### 5.2 Updated Planning Obligations for Green Space

The current Green Space (Planning Obligations) Supplementary Planning Document needs updating to establish robust standards for green space provision, quality, and

developer contributions. The revised document should include enhanced financial contributions for off-site improvements and extend the maintenance funding period beyond the current 10 years, which has proven insufficient for sustainable long-term management.

The updated guidance should ensure new green spaces meet community needs and connect effectively with existing networks. It should also give the council first refusal rights on adopting new green spaces from developments, maintaining consistent management standards.

Where developments cannot provide adequate on-site green space, improved financial contribution mechanisms will fund off-site enhancements, addressing identified deficiencies across the district.

#### Objectives

3. Produce a revised Supplementary Planning Document for Green Space provision.

### 5.3 Strategic Development Opportunities

Strategic intervention is required to ensure new development responds effectively to identified green space deficiencies rather than perpetuating existing inequalities. The Green Space Strategy has identified specific areas with significant deficiencies, including Derby's urban fringe (Etwall, Willington & Findern, Stenson and Aston) and Linton, Hatton, Woodville, Hilton and Repton. These areas require targeted provision to address both quantitative shortfalls and accessibility gaps, particularly given the varying levels of deficiency across the hierarchical access model.

Development pressures from Derby's unmet housing needs present both challenges and opportunities - whilst increasing demand for green space, they also provide mechanisms through planning obligations to deliver necessary improvements.

Infinity Garden Village (STRA1) will provide 2,000 homes and 70 hectares employment with interconnected green infrastructure, continuation of Derby City's green wedges, and active travel connections throughout the site.

South of Mickleover (STRA2) offers the best opportunity for a new country park in



the north district, requiring dedicated provision around Pastures Hospital estate, wide green buffers along the A38, and heritage protection for the Grade II Church and Winter Garden.

The country park feasibility study should examine costs, maintenance, income generation, demand assessment, funding mechanisms (including developer contributions and National Forest Company partnerships), and biodiversity enhancement opportunities.

The former Drakelow Power Station (STRA3) requires nature reserve protection, buffer zones, multi-user greenway provision linking to Drakelow Park, habitat creation, and landscape screening despite being primarily for employment (up to 68 hectares).

All new developments must connect green spaces to existing networks, enhancing accessibility and biodiversity whilst meeting Fields in Trust quality standards. Financial contributions should target local deficiencies with clear criteria for on-site versus off-site provision. The council's first refusal rights on the adoption of new green space should ensure consistent management standards. Success requires coordinated planning that treats green space as essential infrastructure, not optional enhancement.

#### Objectives

4. Ensure new development seeks to address deficiencies in the quantity and accessibility of green spaces
5. Carry out a Feasibility Study to investigate the creation of a new country park in the north of the district

## 5. 4 Partnership Working with Parish Councils

Elvaston Castle Country Park is a unique heritage and recreational asset requiring collaborative protection. This Grade II\* listed historic parkland serves communities across South Derbyshire and beyond, supporting tourism and the local economy. Owned by Derbyshire County Council, the park faces significant challenges requiring partnership working. Elvaston Parish Council is actively pursuing National Lottery Heritage Fund support, demonstrating strong community commitment.

The park provides essential green space for Derby's urban population and contributes to the district's tourism offer. Collaborative approaches can address maintenance challenges, heritage conservation, and accessibility improvements whilst respecting historic character. South Derbyshire District Council will support partnerships to preserve this significant heritage asset whilst maintaining public access for current and future generations.

Many green spaces across the district are managed by Parish Councils and other organisations, with access being important for residents. Early collaboration with Findern Parish Council on this Green Space Strategy prompted them to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for green spaces and community facilities. South Derbyshire District Council recognises this approach's value and will work with other Parish Councils developing similar plans that help deliver this Strategy's vision and aims.

#### Objectives

6. Work in partnership with Elvaston Parish Council and other organisations that are working to save and protect Elvaston Castle Country Park.
7. Work in Partnership with Parish Councils seeking to develop Neighbourhood Plans that will help to enhance and sustain green space provision.





## 5. 5 Planning for Sports and Playing Pitches

The South Derbyshire Playing Pitch Strategy is currently being developed, building on the 2018 strategy to ensure outdoor pitches meet existing and future residents' needs. The 2018 strategy identified a significant outdoor sports deficiency of 1.11 hectares per 1,000 population compared to Fields in Trust standards.

Greatest deficiencies were identified in Stenson and Aston wards, with above-average shortfalls in Seales, Willington and Findern wards. Implementation of the Playing Pitch Strategy recommendations is essential to address these gaps.

The Strategy Action Plan identifies sites where provision quality can be enhanced, considering how facilities may be used for informal or recreational activities rather than formal sport to encourage health and activity using local green space.

### Objectives

8. Carry out improvements and seek funding (as appropriate) to implement the recommendations of the PPS on Council owned green spaces.

## 5. 6 Green Flag Award and Quality Standards

The Green Flag Award is the national quality standard for parks and green spaces. South Derbyshire District Council will use this scheme to drive continuous improvement, ensuring spaces are welcoming, clean, safe, and inclusive whilst promoting sustainability and community engagement. Awards enhance the district's reputation, increase visitor numbers, and support economic development.

South Derbyshire achieved four Green Flag awards in 2024 (Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Cadley Park, Eureka Park, and Swadlincote Woodlands). Further applications will be submitted for Coton Park Nature Reserve and Sandholes Open Space (2025) and Rosliston Forestry Centre (2026).

Management and Maintenance Plans provide robust frameworks for the stewardship of key green spaces, ensuring consistent standards and long-term sustainability.

Current plans cover six of eight key sites: Maurice Lea Memorial Park (2022-2027), Eureka Park (2022-2027), Cadley Park (2022-2027), Swadlincote Woodlands (requiring update), Coton Park Nature Reserve (2024-2029), and Church Gresley Cemetery (2024-2029). Plans for Rosliston Forestry Centre and Newhall Park are in development.

These documents establish management objectives, maintenance schedules, budget requirements, and performance indicators whilst supporting Green Flag criteria. Regular updating ensures plans remain relevant to changing community needs and environmental challenges.

Fifteen Neighbourhood Parks currently lack formal management plans. Simplified one-page management plans represent a proportionate approach, establishing basic management objectives, maintenance frequencies, and safety requirements without comprehensive detail required for major sites.

### Objectives

9. Achieve and retain the Green Flag Award for key green spaces.
10. Continue to update and develop Management and Maintenance Plans for all eight key parks and green spaces.
11. Develop simplified 'Management Plans' for other green spaces as appropriate

## 5. 7 Strategic Funding and Investment Opportunities

Delivering the Green Space Strategy vision requires sustained capital investment beyond ongoing revenue funding, necessitating strategic approaches to secure both internal SDDC and external funding. Strategic funding goals align with the council's Economic Development and Growth Strategy themes of Business Support and Productivity, Low Carbon/Clean Growth, and Connectivity and Inclusion.

The Natural Capital Strategy for Derbyshire and emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy provide frameworks for accessing agri-environment funding streams and attracting investment for nature recovery. The council's Action Plan for Nature identifies opportunities to link investment across water quality, flooding, nature recovery, carbon and climate initiatives to create new funding sources.



## Objectives

12. Continue to seek SDDC and external capital funding to deliver the vision and objectives of this strategy and to support the development of investment opportunities

## 5. 8 Children's Play Provision Review and Enhancement

A comprehensive review and update of the play audit is required to address significant deficiencies in children's play provision and align with emerging national policy frameworks including the new Play England strategy. Current evidence demonstrates that South Derbyshire's play provision stands at just 0.11 hectares per 1,000 population, representing less than half the Fields in Trust recommended standard of 0.25 hectares per 1,000 population.

Only 78.2% of households have access to children's play provision, with significant gaps in Repton Ward (55.7% deficiency), Etwell Ward (46.8% deficiency), and Church Gresley Ward (37.4% deficiency).

Current mapping distinguishes between Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs), and other outdoor provision including Multi-Use Games Areas. This approach, aligned to the Planning Obligations SPD, addresses previous provision of smaller play spaces (LAPs) with limited play value.

The audit should address specific needs of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly as 1.1% of households in the most deprived areas experience play space deficiency. An updated audit will inform strategic investment decisions, guide developer contributions, and ensure new development addresses identified deficiencies.

## Objectives

13. Review and update the play audit to inform future Provision for Children and Young people across the District



## 5. 9 Increasing Demand for Burial Space

The Draft Local Plan Part 1 Review explicitly acknowledges a shortage of cemetery space, particularly acute in the Swadlincote Urban Area and likely to affect the whole district in coming decades.

The district's rapidly ageing population creates substantial burial space demands requiring urgent strategic intervention. South Derbyshire's population has increased dramatically by 20.5% since 2011 and continues growing. More concerning is the demographic shift, with 18.7% of residents now aged 65 and over (increased from 16.4% in 2011). The population is forecast to reach 135,951 by 2043, with the older adult cohort (55+) experiencing a particularly pronounced 27% increase.

This demographic transition directly correlates with increased mortality rates and heightened demand for burial services throughout the planning period.

Given the council's commitment to sustainable development and green infrastructure enhancement, new cemetery provision should integrate with the existing green space network, potentially offering multifunctional benefits including biodiversity enhancement, community spaces for remembrance, and contributions to the district's carbon neutrality goals by 2030. The review should establish both immediate and long-term capacity requirements and consider factors such as increased religious diversity and environmental sustainability trends.

## Objectives

14. Carry out a review to establish how the demand for more burial space within the District will be met.



## 6 Healthy and Active Green Spaces

### 6.1 Creating Connected Networks

The Local Plan establishes the foundation for sustainable development that protects and enhances green networks whilst enabling active travel and connectivity between neighbourhoods. Policy S6 emphasises sustainable access, seeking development that minimises travelling distances and enhances walking, cycling, and public transport infrastructure.

'Making our Move', the shared vision for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, exemplifies the collaborative approach required for effective green space delivery. This framework emphasises developing compact, connected neighbourhoods where people can meet everyday needs within a short walk or cycle. The initiative promotes co-design with local people and businesses to create walkable, connected places that make moving more easier and safer.

This complements Sport England's Active Design, which offers ten design principles optimising opportunities for active and healthy lifestyles. The guidance supports activity promotion, walkable communities, connected routes, and high-quality streets through collaborative planning.

Green spaces will play an important role in creating active and connected neighbourhoods, whether enhancing connectivity in established areas or through development of new communities in South Derbyshire.

#### Objectives

15. Continue to work in partnership across service areas and with external organisations to create active and connected green spaces at the heart of communities.
16. Develop safe and accessible active travel routes to create green space networks that connect neighbourhoods and communities.

### 6.2 Established Programmes Supporting Active Lifestyles

The district's established programmes including Parklife, Get Active in the Forest, and Beat the Street provide proven frameworks for engaging residents in active lifestyles. Rosliston Forestry Centre serves as the flagship venue where Exercise by Referral and Green Social Prescribing programmes demonstrate the connection between nature and health. Survey evidence shows 70% of residents visit green spaces for walking, whilst 49% attend events and activities, highlighting significant appetite for organised programmes.

The Parklife programme exemplifies professional programme delivery, coordinating activities across multiple sites whilst developing volunteer and sports opportunities addressing health inequalities. Continuing to deliver existing and new programmes that animate parks is essential for maximising the health and wellbeing potential of South Derbyshire's green spaces, particularly targeting areas of greatest need where health outcomes for adults and children are poorest.

#### Objectives

17. Continue to deliver existing and new programmes of activity that animate parks and contribute to increased physical activity and wellbeing

### 6.3 Cross-Service Working for Active Wellbeing

The emerging Active Wellbeing Strategy, currently in development recognises that effective health promotion requires integration across multiple council service areas including planning, environmental services, cultural and community services, and operational services. This cross-service working ensures that active design principles are embedded in new developments, green spaces are maintained to high standards that encourage usage, and transport policies prioritise pedestrians and cyclists whilst creating connected networks that facilitate active travel.

External partnerships with Active Derbyshire, the Derbyshire Health and Wellbeing Board, Active Schools Partnership, NHS health services, and voluntary sector organisations provide access to specialist expertise, additional funding streams, and wider community reach that results in greater and more sustained outcomes.

## Objectives

18. Work across service areas and with external partners to deliver the recommendations of the Active Wellbeing Strategy

## 6. 4 Expanding Exercise Referral and Green Social Prescribing

Current provision at Rosliston Forestry Centre provides the foundation for expansion, with evidence showing that participants in green social prescribing experience reduced anxiety, improved happiness, and enhanced life satisfaction through nature-based interventions including conservation work, horticulture, and outdoor exercise groups. The integration potential with existing programmes like Parklife offers sustainable delivery mechanisms that can extend reach to early years and school-aged children.

Sustaining these programmes requires embedding them within wider health pathways, connecting with social prescribing link workers, and developing partnerships with primary care services that recognise nature-based interventions as legitimate and effective healthcare options. Extension opportunities include developing measured walking routes, outdoor gyms, and therapeutic gardens across key parks whilst increasing the skills and capacity of staff and volunteers to support programme delivery.

There should be a focus on Swadlincote Central, Newhall and Stanton and Midway wards which ranking in the 10-20% most deprived nationally with significant health disadvantage. In addition, Church Gresley, Woodville and Lower Midway rank in the 10-20% most deprived nationally with significantly worse health outcomes.



## Objectives

19. Explore ways to sustain and extend programmes of Exercise by Referral and Green Social Prescribing and integrate this into other programmes of activity.

## 6. 5 Capital Investment to Support Greater Physical Activity



Seeking capital funding to create facilities within key parks that support increased physical activity and wellbeing is essential for addressing the challenge that 13,500 people in South Derbyshire undertake no physical activity, whilst building on the district's strength where 67.6% of adults are already physically active above the national average. Strategic investment in measured walking routes, outdoor gyms, and other activity facilities can significantly expand opportunities for exercise within the natural environment, supporting the council's commitment to enhance existing green spaces whilst creating new pathways to healthier lifestyles. Consideration should also be given to linking to other objectives that can help address barriers to accessing green spaces including 'Make Space for Girls' and 'Safer Parks for Women and Girls'.

## Objectives

20. Seek capital funding to create facilities within key parks that support increased physical activity and wellbeing.

## 6. 6 Youth Engagement and Outdoor Education

Continuing to engage with young people through local schools is fundamental to addressing the challenge where just 46.7% of children and young people in South Derbyshire are physically active, whilst recognising that Covid-19 has exacerbated barriers for young people who weren't active enough before the pandemic. School-based engagement creates vital connections between education and neighbourhoods, helping young people build positive experiences of being active whilst developing skills and confidence for lifelong active lives.

The Environmental Education Project at Rosliston Forestry Centre provides a proven model for delivering biodiversity education programmes. Forest Schools approaches through regular outdoor sessions offer particularly powerful benefits, demonstrating how green spaces serve as outdoor classrooms where children develop environmental understanding through hands-on experiences with nature whilst engaging in physical activity.

Integration with the Active Schools Partnership and collaboration through park



wardens can create sustainable delivery mechanisms connecting curriculum learning with practical environmental stewardship. This supports the Making our Move strategy's emphasis on focusing resources on young people experiencing greatest inequalities, ensuring environmental education and physical activity opportunities reach all children whilst building lifelong habits supporting personal wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

#### Objectives

21. Continue to engage with young people through local schools to encourage greater use of green spaces, to get young people active and to raise awareness of the environment and biodiversity.



## 7 Partnerships, People & Communities

### 7.1 Coordinated Service Standards and Maintenance

Getting the basics right, ensuring that green spaces are accessible, safe, welcoming and clean is essential to sustaining use and to ensuring those people that are less confident can access and enjoy the benefits of green spaces. Whilst good quality visitor facilities are important (and the case for investment is set out through this Strategy), maintaining existing spaces and proactively addressing defects and issues is critical. With increased demand and increased use of green spaces, and new investment, maintenance practices will need to respond accordingly. There will also be additional challenges to maintaining standards presented by climate change and the need to support nature recovery and the net zero goals. This will all require greater co-ordination and joint working across Council service areas, with partners and with communities across the district.

#### Objectives

22. Ensure that Council services areas continue to work together to achieve high service standards that deliver welcoming, clean, safe and inclusive green spaces.

### 7.2 Capital Investment and Commercial Partnership Opportunities

This Strategy identifies numerous capital projects including replacement pavilions with cafés and public toilets at Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Eureka Park, conversion of existing facilities at Swadlincote Woodlands, replacement changing facilities at Newhall Park and Woodhouse Recreation Ground, and infrastructure to support increased physical activity such as outdoor gyms and measured routes. These improvements require substantial financial commitment whilst creating opportunities to attract external investment through enhanced visitor offerings and commercial partnerships.

Adopting 'invest-to-save' principles and working to develop key green space facilities through capital investment, can underpin the development of commercial



partnerships, increase income generating opportunities and improve the visitor offer. The Council has started the journey by identifying the priority investment opportunities and this Strategy restates these and the case for capital investment to act as a catalyst for change.

#### Objectives

23. Improve the visitor facilities at key sites that improve the visitor offer and provide opportunities to attract external investment.

### 7. 3 Addressing Safety, Access and Other Barriers

Many areas of the district are well served by green space with good access within a 15-minute walk. However, addressing barriers that limit access is essential for creating safe, accessible, and inclusive places for physical activity. Data from the recent Residents Survey shows whilst 37% of residents experience no barriers, significant challenges remain with 26% citing lack of time and 25% identifying lack of facilities as constraints, whilst 18% are dissatisfied with public transport access.

Policy responses to campaigns such as 'Make Space for Girls' and 'Safer Parks for Women and Girls' reflect recognition that safety concerns disproportionately affect certain demographics. Research shows 82% of women feel unsafe in parks after dark compared to 42% of men. Key safety factors include visibility, staff presence, park busyness, familiarity, and clear wayfinding.

The Council acknowledges that barriers to accessing green space affect some groups disproportionately and is committed to working with residents to identify strategic and local solutions.

#### Objectives

24. Address barriers that limit access to green spaces with a focus on inclusivity, accessibility and creating active green spaces

25. Ensure that community safety issues are addressed to reduce barriers to accessing green space.

### 7. 4 Policy Framework for Gender Equality

South Derbyshire District Council will establish a policy framework addressing systemic barriers preventing women and girls from fully utilising public green spaces. Research shows women are three times more likely than men to feel unsafe in parks during the day, with this disparity worsening after dark. The 'Make Space for Girls' campaign reveals that parks and play equipment are predominantly designed for the 'default male', with facilities such as skateparks, MUGAs, and BMX tracks creating male-dominated environments where girls feel unwelcome.

The policy should recognise that community safety encompasses feelings of comfort, belonging, and inclusion beyond crime prevention. Current resident satisfaction data indicates lower satisfaction with community safety aspects, particularly dog control and accessibility. Residents have identified insufficient provision for children and young people, with over half feeling there is too little provision, particularly in Swadlincote, Linton, and Repton wards.

Community engagement must be continuous and representative, specifically seeking voices of women and girls who currently avoid parks. The policy should establish mechanisms for ongoing consultation, including dedicated focus groups, digital feedback platforms, and collaboration with local women's organisations to ensure sustained community input into park development and management decisions.

#### Objectives

26. Develop a policy to ensure that key parks and green spaces respond to the opportunities highlighted through national campaigns such as 'Make Space for Girls' and 'Safer Parks for Women and Girls'.

### 7. 5 Supporting Arts and Cultural Programming

The Council's objective to support arts and cultural activity aligns with resident feedback showing 49% of survey respondents visit green spaces to attend events and activities, demonstrating strong community appetite for cultural programming.

South Derbyshire's parks serve as vital cultural assets connecting communities with local heritage and creative expression. The district demonstrates commitment to integrating arts within green spaces, notably through the miners' memorial at Maurice Lea Memorial Park, which honours the area's coal mining heritage and

provides a focal point for cultural remembrance.

As a National Forest gateway site promoting environmental sustainability education, Rosliston offers opportunities for artistic interpretation of climate change, biodiversity and natural capital themes. The site's role in renewable energy demonstration and carbon sequestration provides rich subject matter for environmental art installations that could engage visitors with sustainability messages whilst enhancing the woodland environment's aesthetic appeal.

#### Objectives

27. Ensure that parks and green spaces continue to support arts and cultural activity.

## 7. 6 Inclusive Community Consultation Approaches

South Derbyshire District Council will prioritise inclusive consultation approaches that address significant gaps in community representation identified through recent engagement efforts. Effective consultation should extend beyond traditional methods that do not gain responses from under-represented groups. The Council will review how it can establish partnerships with community organisations, faith groups, schools, and voluntary sector partners who have existing relationships with under-represented communities. Digital engagement platforms, pop up events, and targeted outreach at community events can help overcome geographical and accessibility barriers that prevent participation from residents in rural areas or those without reliable internet access.

#### Objectives

28. Continue to engage communities / residents and other audiences including under-represented groups in consultation about improvements to parks and green spaces.

## 7. 7 Volunteer Programme Development

South Derbyshire District Council recognises it must adapt its volunteer programme to reflect evolving participation patterns, moving beyond conventional long-term commitments to embrace flexible, family-friendly, and project-specific

opportunities. National research indicates significant shifts in volunteer preferences, with increasing demand for episodic events, one-off activities, and family volunteering that allows multiple generations to contribute whilst building environmental awareness among children. Citizen science activities have proved popular, combining meaningful environmental contributions with skill development opportunities.

Digital engagement opportunities can complement traditional hands-on activities, aligning with this Strategy's commitment to enhance social media promotions. Volunteer roles in social media promotion, photography documentation, and digital content creation can engage younger demographics whilst supporting comprehensive marketing plans. The South Derbyshire Environmental Forum Network provides an established platform for promoting volunteer opportunities and coordinating community engagement across diverse groups.

#### Objectives

29. Continue to develop a range of volunteer opportunities for local people to take action to improve their local park / green space

## 7. 8 Corporate Partnerships and Business Involvement

Corporate volunteering represents an underutilised resource, with current corporate programmes increasingly favouring team-building activities with environmental impact. This offers potential for regular corporate volunteering days requiring minimal coordination whilst delivering substantial maintenance and enhancement benefits.

The district's significant industrial base, including major employers such as Toyota Motor Manufacturing, JCB Power Systems, Nestlé UK, and Bison Concrete Products, presents opportunities for business involvement through investment, sponsorship, and employee volunteering programmes that deliver measurable social value whilst supporting corporate sustainability objectives.

Investment opportunities should focus on identified infrastructure improvements. The Council's exploration of commercial opportunities for income generation should develop innovative public-private partnerships that offset maintenance costs whilst

enhancing visitor experiences through café operations, event hosting, and facility management.

Objectives

30. Develop greater business Involvement in parks and green spaces through investment opportunities, sponsorship, volunteering and social value.

## 7. 9 Self-management of Allotments and Community Gardens

South Derbyshire District Council will prioritise expanding self-management arrangements for allotments and community gardens. Self-management delivers substantial benefits by transferring day-to-day operational responsibility to the user community, creating stronger ownership, improved maintenance standards, and enhanced community cohesion.

The National Allotment Society advocates for self-management, recognising that plotholders benefit from increased autonomy over site rules, waiting list management, plot allocation, and maintenance standards, enabling responsive decision-making that reflects user needs. Self-managing associations can implement environmentally friendly practices, biodiversity enhancement measures, and sustainable growing methods supporting the Council's 30% biodiversity management target by 2030.

Objectives

31. Continue to support and expand the process of self-management of allotments and community gardens.

## 8 Sustainable Green Spaces

### 8. 1 Biodiversity and Nature Recovery

South Derbyshire District Council will review its land management approaches to align with the Environment Act 2021 and the emerging Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, published later in 2025. The Council's vision for nature recovery commits to ensuring green spaces and biodiversity are "effectively managed and

appropriately protected to ensure optimum contribution to natural capital, ecosystem services and climate resilience."

The Action Plan for Nature establishes clear objectives requiring the Council to protect, sustain, enhance and increase biodiversity across all Council landholdings. Current management practices must be reviewed against the LNRS's identification of priority habitats and species, which will map valuable existing areas and propose specific locations for habitat creation and connectivity. Implementation requires partnership working with Derbyshire County Council, neighbouring authorities, Parish Councils and the voluntary sector.

Management reviews must integrate the Council's commitment to manage 30% of its land to enhance biodiversity by 2030. This requires systematic assessment of existing maintenance regimes across parks, open spaces, woodlands, and cemeteries to identify opportunities for habitat creation, species protection, and ecosystem service delivery.

Objectives

32. Review management and maintenance practices to ensure that Council land is managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity to enhance priority habitats / species as set out in the LNRS.

33. Deliver habitat enhancement and creation in parks and green spaces for (priority) opportunity areas as set out in the LNRS.





## 8. 2 Environmental Policy Framework for Green Space Management

Developing an Environmental Policy will enable strategic priority setting by establishing clear objectives and targets for environmental improvement, implementing operational procedures to achieve these goals, and creating robust systems for measuring, recording, and evaluating environmental performance. This systematic approach directly mirrors the Green Flag Award's expectation for sites to follow Environmental Management System principles, which focus on continuous improvement and evidence-based decision making. The policy provides the framework for eliminating problematic practices such as peat use and chemical pest control whilst promoting climate change adaptation strategies and waste minimisation approaches.

### Objectives

34. Develop an Environmental Policy to guide green space management and maintenance across the district.

## 8. 3 Climate-Focused Grounds Maintenance Transformation

Transforming grounds maintenance operational practices represents a significant opportunity and practical way to move towards supporting nature recovery and achieving South Derbyshire's carbon neutrality goals by 2030. The Council's Climate and Environment Action Plan specifically identifies ongoing alterations to grounds maintenance practices to maximise biodiversity as a key intervention, recognising that improved biodiversity increases soil capacity to sequester carbon whilst creating more resilient ecosystems. This strategic approach moves beyond traditional maintenance regimes to embrace practices that actively contribute to climate change mitigation through enhanced carbon sequestration, reduced fossil fuel dependency through electric machinery transition, and implementation of nature-based solutions that support both climate adaptation and biodiversity recovery. Such approaches are consistent and will support the ambition to achieve further Green Flag Awards for key spaces.

### Objectives

35. Review and modify grounds maintenance operational practices to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation and nature recovery.

## 8. 4 Habitat Banking Feasibility and Biodiversity Net Gain

A comprehensive Biodiversity Net Gain supply and demand assessment would analyse future development needs against available habitat banking opportunities on Council and private land, mapping baseline biodiversity values using UK Habitat Classification and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric 4.1. The study would evaluate Council landholdings for habitat enhancement potential, assess developer requirements across growth scenarios, and identify gaps between supply and demand for different habitat types including grassland, woodland, and potentially watercourse units.

The assessment directly supports the emerging Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy by identifying priority areas for habitat creation and restoration whilst guiding strategic investment in nature recovery. It aligns with SDDC's Action Plan for Nature core vision to ensure green spaces and biodiversity are "fully valued, effectively managed and appropriately protected" and Policy Statement 9's commitment to manage 30% of Council land for biodiversity enhancement by 2030. The study could inform the Council's carbon neutrality goals by potentially quantifying carbon sequestration opportunities and support this Strategy's objective to achieve sustainable financing for long-term green space investment through habitat banking revenue streams, whilst also ensuring BNG delivery contributes to wider environmental objectives including climate adaptation and flood resilience.

### Objectives

36. Through a Feasibility Study establish the potential for Council land to be used for habitat banking and consider the potential future demand.

## 8. 5 Rosliston as National Climate Action Exemplar



Rosliston Forestry Centre offers an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate integrated climate action and nature recovery at scale. This 144-acre site in the National Forest's heart can showcase comprehensive solutions through the Climate and Environment Action Plan (ISP20), which targets net carbon positive status.

The development will achieve 100% emission reduction through renewable energy infrastructure including solar photovoltaics and heat source pumps, plus biomass heating system repairs. Enhanced carbon sequestration and biodiversity improvements will support comprehensive environmental restoration.

Partnerships with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, the National Forest Company, and academic institutions will establish Rosliston as a living laboratory. This will test and refine best practice approaches for UK-wide replication, supporting the Action Plan for Nature whilst advancing South Derbyshire's 2030 carbon neutrality goals and the national target to halt biodiversity loss by 2030.

### Objectives

37. Develop a programme of measures at Rosliston as a national exemplar of measures to address climate change and nature recovery.

## 8. 6 Strategic Tree Canopy Expansion Programme

Expanding canopy cover across South Derbyshire supports critical climate action and the National Forest Strategy's target of 33% woodland cover whilst delivering environmental, social and economic benefits. The Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Management Policy establishes the framework with its vision that South Derbyshire's natural capital will be "fully valued, properly managed and well-maintained" to optimise ecosystem services and community health and wellbeing.

The policy commits the Council to increase tree canopy cover, improve habitat connectivity, and meet carbon offset targets through strategic planting of trees, woodlands, community orchards, nutteries, and hedgerows where opportunities



arise. The Climate and Environment Action Plan reinforces this commitment through free tree schemes across the district, monitoring increases that capture carbon whilst supporting canopy cover and flood resilience.

Parks and green spaces provide opportunities for tree and hedge planting and woodland creation, explored through maintenance reviews and management planning.

### Objectives

38. Increase canopy cover in the district and ensure tree management, planting and aftercare is aligned with principles and actions set out in the Tree Management Policy.



## 9 Promoting Green Spaces

### 9.1 An Enhanced Digital Presence

South Derbyshire's current digital presence for parks and green spaces shows significant improvement opportunities against best practice standards. The website provides basic information about sites like Maurice Lea Memorial Park, Eureka Park, Newhall Park, and Swadlincote Woodlands, plus some positive elements including downloadable Parklife programme resources and community contact information.

However, the website lacks essential features such as interactive mapping (find my nearest park), online event booking, real-time activity information, integrated social media promotion, and targeted content for different user groups like families, older adults, or people with mobility challenges. Limited evidence exists of coordinated digital marketing or tools supporting volunteer recruitment and community engagement.

Most importantly, the current digital presence fails to communicate health and wellbeing benefits of park use or provide clear pathways for residents to engage with programmes addressing health inequalities, missing opportunities given strong evidence for green space's role in improving health outcomes.

#### Objectives

39. Enhance the Council's digital presence to create a visitor centred approach that encourages greater use of parks and green spaces for health and wellbeing.

### 9.2 Strategic Marketing Plan Development

A comprehensive Marketing Plan for green spaces would help better realise the social, health and economic value of South Derbyshire's extensive green space network. This strategic approach follows Green Flag Award framework requirements, which emphasise understanding users and potential users as fundamental to effective green space management.

The marketing plan should address access barriers for under-represented groups, older adults and families with young children through targeted messaging

highlighting relevant facilities and programmes. It must leverage existing programmes such as Parklife, exercise by referral schemes and volunteer opportunities, ensuring these receive promotional support to achieve intended outcomes.

The plan should incorporate national campaigns including Love Parks Week and National Tree Week, whilst creating year-round promotional activities through a content calendar aligned with seasonal activities, ecological events and community celebrations. The approach should recognise that tailored outreach work may be required to build confidence and address concerns from under-represented groups.

The Marketing Plan should identify ways volunteers and community groups can support messaging and promotion of green spaces across the district.

#### Objectives

40. Develop a Marketing Plan for green spaces that provides a strategic approach to promoting the district's green spaces, opportunities to visit and get involved.

41. Support volunteers and community groups to promote green spaces and the opportunities to get involved

### 9.3 Signage and Interpretation Strategy

High quality signage and interpretation can transform green spaces into welcoming educational community spaces promoting health, heritage and environmental awareness. Green Flag Award criteria emphasise opportunities for sites to facilitate learning about nature, healthy living and local heritage, particularly relevant given South Derbyshire's National Forest location and industrial heritage. The plan should integrate with digital marketing strategies, creating connections between on-site interpretation and online resources.

The eight key sites identified should reflect South Derbyshire's diverse green space network whilst supporting the Council's priorities around health, education and environmental awareness.

For heritage sites like Maurice Lea Memorial Park and Eureka Park, interpretation should highlight historical significance whilst connecting to contemporary health and



wellbeing messages. For Swadlincote Woodlands, interpretation should celebrate the transformation from industrial use to valuable green space, demonstrating environmental recovery and climate change mitigation. For Rosliston Forestry Centre, interpretation should emphasise the National Forest context, biodiversity enhancement and exemplar environmental management practices.

## Objectives

42. Develop a signage and interpretation plan focusing on key parks and green spaces

# 10 Action Plan

## 10. 1 Action Plan








An action plan is set out below





# Protecting and Planning for Green Space

Ref	Recommendation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030-34	Lead	Partners	Resource implications	Cross Compatible Themes
1	Protect key green spaces through Fields in Trust Designation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Legal	Revenue	
2	Protect additional green spaces through the Local Green Space designation in the Local Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Planning / Legal	Revenue	
3	Produce a revised Green Space SPD		✓					Planning	Parks and Green Spaces	Revenue	
4	Ensure new development seeks to address deficiencies in the quantity and accessibility of green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Planning	Parks and Green Spaces	Capital / Revenue / Planning Gain	
5	Carry out a Feasibility Study to investigate the creation of a new country park in the north of the district	✓	✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Planning	Revenue	
6	Work in partnership with Elvaston Parish Council and other organisations that are working to save and protect Elvaston Castle Country Park	✓	✓					Elvaston PC	Parks and Green Spaces	Revenue	
7	Work in partnership with Parish Councils seeking to develop Neighbourhood Plans that will help to enhance and sustain green space provision.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parish Councils	Parks and Green Spaces	Revenue	
8	Carry out improvements and seek funding (as appropriate) to implement the recommendations of the PPS on Council owned green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces / Community Services	Sports clubs & governing bodies	Capital / Revenue	
9	Achieve and retain the Green Flag Award for key green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Friends / community groups	Capital / Revenue	
10	Continue to update and develop Management and Maintenance Plans for all eight key parks and green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Friends / community groups	Revenue	





Ref	Recommendation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030-34	Lead	Partners	Resource implications	Cross Compatible Themes
11	Develop simplified 'Management Plans' for other green spaces as appropriate		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Friends / community groups	Revenue	
12	Continue to seek SDDC and external capital funding to deliver the vision and objectives of this strategy and to support the development of investment opportunities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Finance	Capital / Revenue	   
13	Review and update the play audit to inform future Provision for Children and Young people across the District		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	-	Revenue	 
14	Carry out a review to establish how the demand for more burial space within the District will be met.		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Bereavement Services	Revenue	



## Healthy and Active Green Space

15	Continue to work in partnership across service areas and with external organisations to create active and connected green spaces at the heart of communities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Planning / Community Services	Revenue	
16	Develop safe and accessible active travel routes to create green space networks that connect neighbourhoods and communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Planning / Community Services	Revenue / Capital	 
17	Continue to deliver existing and new programmes of activity that animate parks and contribute to increased physical activity and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services / DCC	Revenue	
18	Work across service areas and with external partners to deliver the recommendations of the Active Wellbeing Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services / DCC	Revenue / Capital	
19	Explore ways to sustain and extend programmes of Exercise by Referral and Green Social Prescribing and integrate this into other programmes of activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services / DCC	Revenue	




Ref	Recommendation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030-34	Lead	Partners	Resource implications	Cross Compatible Themes
20	Seek capital funding to create facilities within key parks that support increased physical activity and wellbeing		✓		✓		✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Finance	Revenue / Capital	
21	Continue to engage with young people through local schools to encourage greater use of green spaces, to get young people active and to raise awareness of the environment and biodiversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Local Schools / Community Services	Revenue	  



## Partnerships, People and Communities

22	Ensure that Council services areas continue to work together to achieve high service standards that deliver welcoming, clean, safe and inclusive green spaces.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Operational Services	Revenue	 
23	Improve the visitor facilities at key sites that improve the visitor offer and provide opportunities to attract external investment		✓	✓	✓			Parks and Green Spaces	Finance	Revenue / Capital	
24	Address barriers that limit access to green spaces with a focus on inclusivity, accessibility and creating active green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services	Revenue	
25	Ensure that community safety issues are addressed to reduce barriers to accessing green space.		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services	Revenue	
26	Develop a policy to ensure that key parks and green spaces respond to the opportunities highlighted through national campaigns such as 'Make Space for Girls' and 'Safer Parks for Women and Girls'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services	Revenue	
27	Ensure that parks and green spaces continue to support arts and cultural activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Cultural Services	Revenue	
28	Continue to engage communities / residents and other audiences including under-represented groups in consultation about improvements to parks and green spaces	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services	Revenue	

Ref	Recommendation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030-34	Lead	Partners	Resource implications	Cross Compatible Themes
29	Continue to develop a range volunteer opportunities for local people to take action to improve their local park / green space	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Community Services	Revenue	 
30	Develop greater business involvement in parks and green spaces through investment opportunities, sponsorship, volunteering and social value	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Finance	Revenue / Capital	 
31	Continue to support and expand the process of self-management of allotments and community gardens.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Allotment Associations	Revenue	










## Sustainable Green Spaces

32	Review management and maintenance practices to ensure that Council land is managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity to enhance priority habitats / species as set out in the LNRS		✓				✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Operational Services	Revenue / Capital	
33	Deliver habitat enhancement and creation in parks and green spaces for (priority) opportunity areas as set out in the LNRS		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	DCC / DWT	Revenue / Capital	
34	Develop an Environmental Policy to guide green space management and maintenance across the district.		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Operational Services	Revenue	
35	Review and modify grounds maintenance operational practices to contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation and nature recovery		✓		✓		✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Operational Services	Revenue / Capital	
36	Through a Feasibility Study establish the potential for Council land to be used for habitat banking and consider the potential future demand		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Planning	Revenue	
37	Develop a programme of measures at Rosliston as a national exemplar of measures to address climate change and nature recovery	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	The National Forest Company	Revenue / Capital	

Ref	Recommendation	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030-34	Lead	Partners	Resource implications	Cross Compatible Themes
38	Increase canopy cover in the district and ensure tree management, planting and aftercare is aligned with principles and actions set out in the Tree Management Policy.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Planning	Revenue / Capital	



## Promoting Green Spaces

39	Enhance the Council's digital presence to create a visitor centred approach that encourages greater use of parks and green spaces for health and wellbeing		✓		✓		✓	Marketing / Comms	Parks and Green Spaces	Revenue	 
40	Develop a Marketing Plan for green spaces that provides a strategic approach to promoting the district's green spaces, opportunities to visit and get involved.		✓					Marketing / Comms	Parks and Green Spaces	Revenue	  
41	Support volunteers and community groups to promote green spaces and the opportunities to get involved	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Parks and Green Spaces	Marketing / Comms	Revenue	
42	Develop a signage and interpretation plan focusing on key parks and green spaces		✓					Parks and Green Spaces	Marketing / Comms	Revenue	



## 10.2 Key Performance Indicators

### 1. Protecting and Planning for Green Space

- Number of green spaces protected through Fields in Trust dedication or similar mechanisms
- Number of Green Flag Awards achieved
- Number of current Management and Maintenance Plans

### 2. Healthy and Active Green Spaces

- Number of safe and accessible travel route projects delivered
- Number of people participating in health improvement programmes in green spaces
- Number of active lifestyle facilities installed in parks and open spaces

### 3. Partnerships, People & Communities

- Number of external partner organisations worked with
- Number of active volunteers engaged in green space activities
- Percentage of allotment and community garden sites under self-management

### 4. Sustainable Green Spaces

- Percentage of Council land managed to enhance biodiversity
- Number of habitat enhancement projects completed in LNRS priority areas
- Area of habitat enhancement delivered

### 5. Promoting Green Spaces

- Digital engagement metrics for green spaces promotion
- Number of community events and activities held in green spaces
- No of signage and interpretation projects delivered

**Reporting Frequency:** All KPIs should be monitored quarterly with annual reporting

**Review Process:** KPIs should be reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and achievable, with targets adjusted based on performance and changing circumstances.

**Cross-cutting Considerations:** Many KPIs will contribute to multiple themes, reflecting the interconnected nature of green space management and the holistic approach outlined in the strategy.

## Strategy Development and the Use of AI

In the preparation of this strategy document, artificial intelligence (AI) tools have been utilised by the consultant team to enhance the quality, consistency, and accessibility of the final output. AI has been employed in the following ways:

**Research Enhancement:** AI tools have been used to assist with background research, data compilation, and identification of relevant policy frameworks, best practice examples, and supporting evidence to inform strategic recommendations.

**Visual Content Creation:** AI-generated images and graphics have been incorporated to support the narrative and improve the visual presentation of key concepts, ensuring the document is engaging and accessible.

**Text Editing and Accessibility:** AI tools have been employed to review and refine textual content to ensure consistency in language, tone, and formatting throughout the document, whilst maintaining accessibility standards and clarity.

### Quality Assurance

All content and research has been carefully reviewed, fact-checked, and validated by the professional consultant team. The final document has been thoroughly examined and approved by both the consultant team and South Derbyshire District Council to ensure accuracy, appropriateness, and alignment with local policy objectives and statutory requirements.

### Credits

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