
Borough Council of
**King's Lynn &
West Norfolk**



Draft Green Space Strategy

2008-2013

Foreword

King's Lynn and West Norfolk has outstanding natural heritage and many beautiful green spaces. Green space is not just about environmental improvement; it is about people, communities and their quality of life.

Green spaces in the borough provide a wide range of benefits. They offer opportunities for exercise in the fresh air, children's play and other informal leisure activities. They contribute to biodiversity; they provide opportunities to appreciate the natural heritage on our doorstep and create a setting for successful business.

Our borough is set to grow over the next 20 years with the addition of 12,000 homes. The Challenge will be to ensure that as we grow, our residents benefit from an improving infrastructure of green space that will contribute to their quality of life, health and wellbeing.

Rising to the challenge will not be easy and cannot be achieved by the Council alone. It will need our key partners, our residents, businesses and volunteer groups to work together with a common vision.

I hope that this strategy will be a major step in assisting us deliver our vision and bring long lasting benefit to our communities.

Elizabeth Nockolds



Councillor Elizabeth Nockolds
Portfolio Holder for Sports, Arts and Open Spaces

Setting the Scene

Our Vision

We want West Norfolk to be:

“An area benefiting from high quality green space that meets the needs of local communities and visitors, ensuring present and future generations will be able to enjoy our rich landscape.”



The Benefits of Green Space

There is much research published nationally and supported by local research and consultation that demonstrates the importance of attractive Green spaces in enhancing quality of life.

One of the Council's key corporate objectives in our Corporate Strategy Transforming and Regenerating West Norfolk is to make our area Cleaner, Greener and Safer.

Green spaces create an attractive environment for residents to enjoy their leisure, work and social time. They can create wealth by their appeal to visitors and the beauty of nature. They can ensure a diverse and varied habitat for wildlife.



Partner Organisations

Our Partner Organisations include:

- ✚ Norfolk County Council
- ✚ Town and Parish Councils
- ✚ Civic Societies
- ✚ Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- ✚ In Bloom Committees
- ✚ Friends Groups



Why is a Strategy Necessary?

The benefits of adopting a strategy are:

- ✚ Continuity: A strategy gives steady guidance through periods of change in personnel and organisation
- ✚ Accountability: A strategy is based on thorough public consultation
- ✚ Sustainability: Long-term needs and trends are addressed, not just short-term fixes

A Green Space Strategy for King's Lynn & West Norfolk

The King's Lynn and West Norfolk Green Space Strategy is a key step towards improving our green space. It is a comprehensive plan for the future that will be reviewed annually and formally updated every five years and supported by an annual action plan.

This strategy document will provide a framework for the Council and its partners to ensure that the vision for our borough is achieved.

It will allow us to allocate resources and implement plans that ensure attractive, safe, well managed spaces that are accessible to all.



Green Space and the Corporate Strategy

Transforming and Regenerating West Norfolk is the Council's Corporate Strategy to cover the period 2007/2011. The Strategy is based on a thorough analysis of the socio-economic and environmental issues facing the Council and the area.

The four corporate aims that provide focus and direction for all our work are:

- ✚ Promoting and leading West Norfolk
- ✚ Tackling important local issues
- ✚ Achieving value for money
- ✚ Providing quality accessible services

The contribution of green spaces to the Corporate Strategy includes:

Promoting and leading West Norfolk

- ✚ Contribute to the economic viability of the area and its attraction for residents, businesses and tourists.
- ✚ Enhance the environment and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Tackling important local issues

- ✚ Clean, well designed and safe green spaces.
- ✚ Dealing with anti-social behaviour.
- ✚ Improving health through leisure and exercise.

Achieving value for money

- ✚ Sustainable maintenance of green spaces.
- ✚ Modern working practices.
- ✚ Effective long-term financial planning.
- ✚ Best Practice.
- ✚ Section 106 funding.

Providing quality accessible services

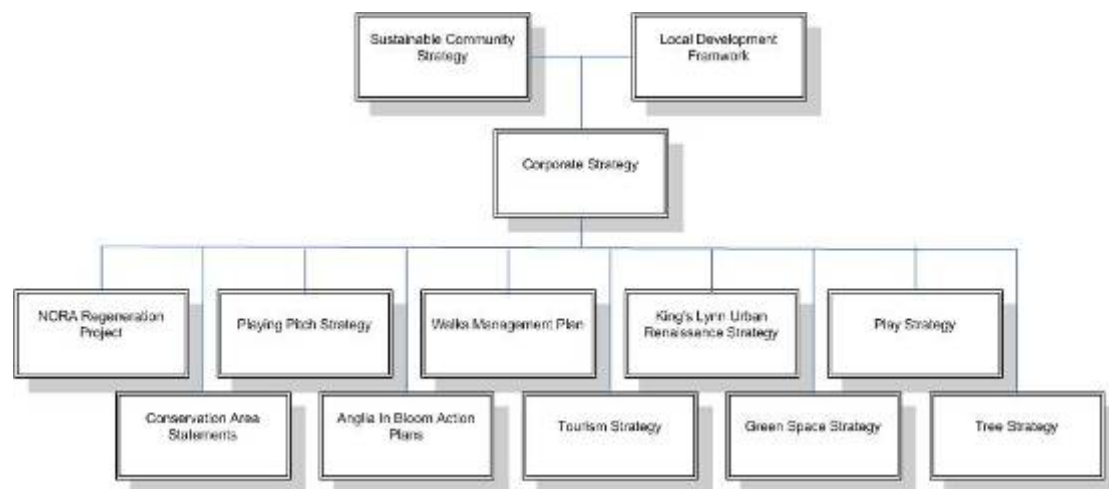
- ✚ Improving the quality and value of open spaces.
- ✚ Creating opportunities for leisure, play and relaxation.



The Green Space Strategy in context

The Green Space Strategy sets out the Council's vision for using its green space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals.

The Green Space Strategy forms part of a suite of key council documents. It is a comprehensive, council-wide document, which will directly contribute to delivering the Council's corporate aims and objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy. Other more detailed strategies, such as play strategies and sports strategies will contribute to the green space strategy.



A successful Green Space Strategy will:

- ✚ Support national, regional and local policy objectives;
- ✚ Contribute to the wider objectives of the Council including improvements to the economy, housing, education, health, culture, planning, transport, regeneration, biodiversity, the environment and the public realm;
- ✚ Be based on a clear assessment of the local community's current and future needs and opportunities, and of design, management and maintenance processes;
- ✚ Support preparation of the local development framework by recording the location and characteristics of existing parks and green space, remedying any deficiencies and making strategic links between networks of spaces;
- ✚ Establish an action plan that sets out design, management and maintenance principles, and an implementation programme that includes monitoring and review procedures.

Scope

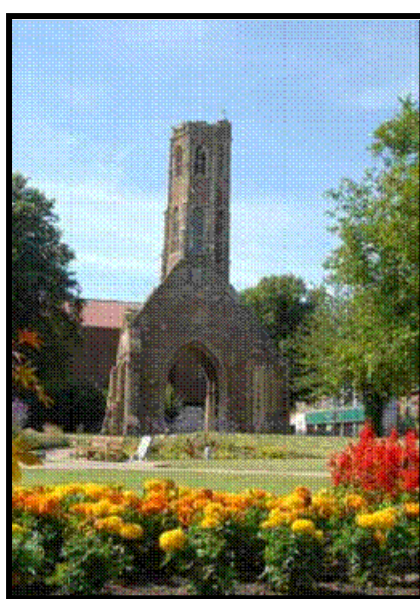
The focus of this document is green space. The Government's planning policy guidance sets definitions for open space and clarifies the distinction between green spaces and civic or hard spaces.

Planning Policy Guidance Note.17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) states that:

Open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

The following categories of green spaces are considered in this strategy:

- ✚ Parks and public gardens
- ✚ Natural and semi-natural spaces (including wastelands and derelict open land)
- ✚ Green corridors
- ✚ Outdoor sports facilities
- ✚ Amenity green spaces
- ✚ Provision for children and young people
- ✚ Allotments, community gardens and doorstep greens
- ✚ Cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds
- ✚ Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas.
- ✚ Tourist attractions.

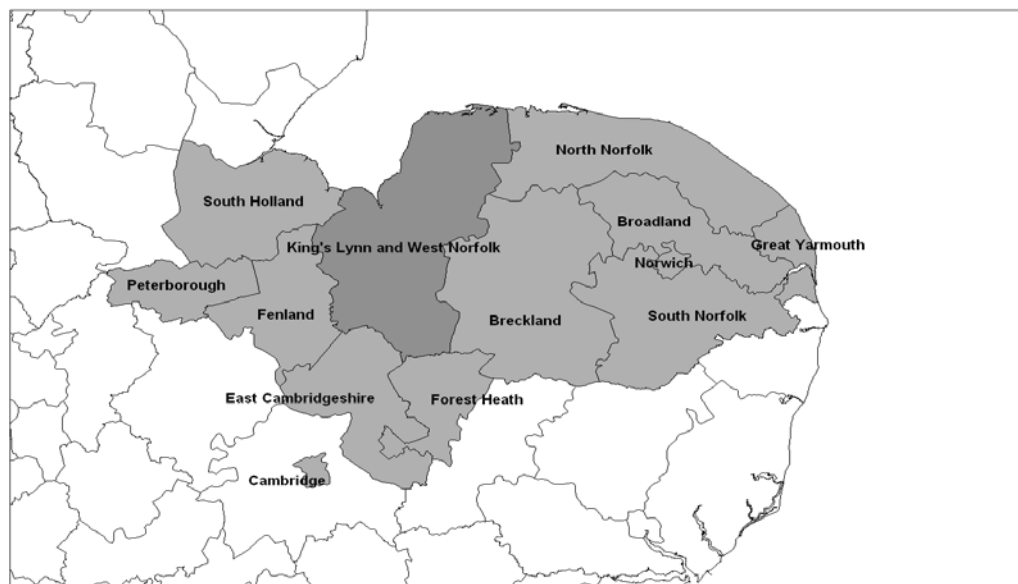


West Norfolk in Context

The largest Norfolk district, within the Eastern region, West Norfolk borders six districts, three counties and one region. The following are key characteristics of the area:

Rurality and Sparsity: West Norfolk is the sixth largest district in England, and with a current population of 142,300¹ it is the 31st most sparsely populated. The size and rurality of the Borough presents unique service delivery challenges, in terms of both taking services out into the more remote areas of the borough (e.g. benefits visiting officers, area offices, environmental health services) and also in providing appropriate channels through which people can access our services (e.g. community information points, website).

King's Lynn as a Service Centre: King's Lynn is the service centre and economic driver of a sub-region of some 200,000 people covering western Norfolk, northern Cambridgeshire and southern Lincolnshire. The distance between King's Lynn and the larger cities of Norwich (50 miles), Cambridge (45 miles) and Peterborough (38 miles) means that King's Lynn has services and facilities which are much greater than would normally be found in a town of its size (see below).



¹ <http://www.visitdawn.com>

Skills and Aspirations: arguably the biggest challenge facing West Norfolk, the West Norfolk Partnership has had a priority of raising skills, aspirations and improving attainment levels since 2005. One of the most telling statistics is that 42% of the resident population is functioning at basic skills level or below; our nearest neighbour based on our overall skills profile is Hull. There is a real need to improve the local skills base to help drive up what is a relatively low-wage economy.

Urban / Rural Mix: according to the 'Rural and Urban Area Classification 2004', 26 per cent of West Norfolk's wards are classified as urban, 24 per cent as town and fringe, and 50 per cent as village, hamlet and isolated dwellings.

Second home ownership: the northern, coastal part of the Borough is characterised by significant levels of second home ownership, exceeding 50% in some parishes. This has a disproportionate impact on the levels of services that are sustainable, given that these properties remain empty for significant periods of the year. Where possible, we are actively intervening to encourage increased provision of affordable housing in these areas.

Changing ethnic profile: West Norfolk is experiencing an increasing mix of nationalities and cultures. It is an attractive area for migrant workers, particularly since the EU was enlarged in 2004, focused around agricultural and food processing industries. The Council, with its partners, needs to ensure it is responsive to the challenges this presents to both service delivery and social cohesion.

Demography: the proportion of the population over retirement age will exceed a quarter by 2017, with 10% of residents aged over 75. This is projected to rise by nearly two thirds over the next 25 years. The proportion of those under 25 is below the national average.

Economy: the Borough has a strong farming tradition and, in addition to its well established strengths in food manufacturing, it is home to world-leading businesses in the fields of pharmaceuticals, precision and aerospace engineering and advanced manufacturing including commercial refrigeration, robotics, electronics and specialist chemicals. The construction sector includes the flagship National Construction College, whilst a small but growing service sector includes specialist insurance brokers and leading internet-based service providers. The area is also home to RAF Marham, a major employer with 3,700 military, civil servant and civilian contractor personnel based at the Station. The Station is in the first year of a 10-year, £947 million defence industrial partnership with BAE Systems as the prime contractor to deliver engineering support for the Royal Air Force's entire Tornado aircraft fleet, and as such is driving up the area's skills profile.

Quality of life: MORI surveyed the citizens' panel in 2004², highlighting the need to take a joined-up approach with our partners to tackle some of the more entrenched issues that are important to local people, such as fear of crime, activities for young people and transport links. This has been followed by the Partnership's quality of life survey³, designed to identify those issues having greatest impact on people's day-to-day lives at a neighbourhood level across the Borough.

Pockets of deprivation: West Norfolk ranks 150th (out of 408 districts) nationally in the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation, with a marked contrast between poverty and affluence – it ranks 21st in the country on inequality⁴. Pockets of isolation and deprivation are real issues, both in King's Lynn and in some of the more rural parts of the Borough. Funding from the government's Safer & Stronger Communities Fund was awarded to the areas because part of the Fairstead ward is in the bottom three per cent in an index of the most deprived areas in the country.

Seasonality: the tourist and food production industries are both seasonal in nature, with associated variations in population levels and demand on services. This links in turn to the issues surrounding migration already discussed.

Places for People to enjoy

According to the Campaign to Protect Rural England, West Norfolk has all the credentials for offering some of the most tranquil and relaxing places to visit in England. The wonderful coastline, much of it an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is well known for its vast stretches of soft sandy beaches, great for lazy summer days, but also fantastic for invigorating winter walks. The Borough is one of the largest district councils in the County with an overall area of 550 square metres.

Perhaps less known but just as magical are the vast areas of wonderful rolling countryside, dotted with fascinating and attractive villages, where cottages of flint or Norfolk Carrstone cluster around ancient village ponds or village greens. This magical landscape, dotted with church spires or windmills is a wonderful tapestry of rural England at its best.

To the south of King's Lynn, the ancient town of Downham Market is gateway to the mysterious and magical Fens, with the sheer sense of space, vast skies, wildlife and total tranquillity.

² Citizens' Panel Results - Wave 10

³ 2,850 face to face surveys conducted across West Norfolk by MEL Research in September 2007 with findings statistically valid to Neighbourhood level

⁴ Being the difference between the rank of the most and least deprived wards in the Borough. Source: DAWN <http://www.visitdawn.com>

Renowned through Britain, the special environment of West Norfolk provides some of the finest nature reserves in the country and outstanding opportunities for bird watching. From famous reserves along the coast, and the unique environment of the Wash, to the special habitats of the Fens and the neighbouring Brecks, there are great opportunities for all to enjoy and discover our natural habitats.



King's Lynn

Brim full of history, West Norfolk is a treasure trove of houses, windmills, castles and heritage sites to discover. King's Lynn is a real jewel of a town, steeped in maritime and trading history.



King's Lynn's history stretches back to the 12th century and beyond when it was one of England's most important ports. The town's rich past has left a magnificent heritage of buildings and stories to be discovered. Fine old merchant houses stretch down to the River Great Ouse between cobbled lanes. The town has two magnificent market places; Saturday Market Place where St Margaret's Church is surrounded by splendid buildings, and Tuesday Market Place, quite possibly one of England's grandest squares.

Problems from the past and future challenges

The quality of green spaces has declined dramatically over the past 20 years, leaving many under-used, in a state of neglect, or as no-go areas. Cumulative disinvestment, the lack of statutory obligations, a haemorrhage or absence of 'green' skills and the competition for car parking are just some of the factors that have contributed to their decline.

The situation in King's Lynn and West Norfolk is a reflection of a nationwide problem.

Reform and investment has started to create clean, safe, accessible, revitalised green spaces in which we can all take pride and enjoy.

The Green space Strategy will help to address the major issues and problems inherited from the past by responding to the challenges.

- ✚ Under investment in both Capital and Revenue

- ✚ Moving Green Space up the Corporate priorities

- ✚ Taking account of Climate Change and the length of the growing season

- ✚ Too many isolated areas difficult to access

- ✚ Fragmented land ownership and variable standards.

- ✚ Criminal, anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

- ✚ Lack of management and horticultural expertise.



Background Research & Evidence

The Green Space Strategy is based on feedback, community consultation and evaluation of existing provision.

This information has been reviewed to establish key issues. The documents include:

- ✚ Open Space Assessment (Llewelyn Davies) 2006.

- ✚ Green Spaces Audit for Safer, Stronger Communities Fund 2007.

- ✚ Walks Visitor Survey 2005.

- ✚ MORI—Listening to Residents research 2007.
- ✚ ENCAMS—Local Environmental Quality report 2007.

The information helps to illustrate that after issues like crime, health and education, the community places great importance on parks, open spaces and access to nature as being important issues for their '*Quality of Life*'. Over half of residents believe that maintaining, protecting and enhancing the '*Quality of Life*' in the area is the most important issue for the Borough Council.

Although 74% of residents believe the Council is working to make the area Cleaner and Greener, 22% disagree. In the context of the Green Space Strategy, the top priority for improvement in all Norfolk districts is "Activities for Teenagers". Overall satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces for BVPI 119e in 2006/7 is 70% for the borough, below the median for all authorities of 76% and only 2% above bottom quartile.

In particular if consultation and audit work in the five neighbourhoods with the SSCF initiative is not to be wasted then the Green Space Strategy must ensure improvements are integrated with the Council's plans.

There is clearly a need to improve existing green space quality and provision to improve the satisfaction and '*Quality of Life*' of residents. However, it is also vital that a better quality of green space is provided in new developments and that the opportunities available for funding, created by new development, is maximised to gain lasting benefit.

Consultation and research has identified the following as key issues which will be addressed:

- ✚ Additional investment and care to minimise vandalism and misuse.
- ✚ Improved security and safety for users.
- ✚ Better lighting.
- ✚ Improved quality and value of play areas.
- ✚ Improved amenity landscaping.
- ✚ Improved maintenance.
- ✚ Improved cleanliness and reducing litter/dog fouling.
- ✚ Opportunities for Sport and Play.
- ✚ Improved access to open space.
- ✚ Activities for teenagers.
- ✚ Improving the planning and funding for new developments.

National research has clearly shown that good quality green spaces can improve '*Quality of Life*' and can make a significant impact on the wider public agendas and health, community safety and social cohesion.

Objectives





Headline objectives for the Green Space Strategy:

1. To enhance the reputation of King's Lynn and West Norfolk for its high quality living environment
2. To give an improved reputation for Sound Urban Governance through increased resident satisfaction
3. To benefit from the marketing opportunities in an increasingly competitive economic environment of a high quality environment that is attractive to live in
4. To raise Environmental Awareness and Citizen involvement
5. To give social benefits through better health, accessibility, recreational opportunities and quality of life.

How will we measure progress?

A report on progress will against the action plan will be presented every 6 months to the Community and Culture Panel.

The key indicators of success will be:

-  Awards from external assessment for Anglia in Bloom
-  BVPI 119e Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces
-  BVPI 89 Satisfaction with Cleanliness
-  Green Flag Awards

Action Plan

Action	Who	When (Years 1-5)	Cost (Capital/Revenue)	Performance Indicators	Corporate Policy

Action Plan

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