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| <b>Policy, Finance and Development Committee</b> | <b>Tuesday, 03 February 2026</b> | <b>Matter for Information and Decision</b> |
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**Report Title:** **Green Spaces Strategy (2025 - 2035)**

**Report Author(s):** **Ben Wilson (Head of Neighbourhood Services)**

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| <b>Purpose of Report:</b>   | To provide Members with the outcome of the consultation on the Green Spaces Strategy (2025 - 2035).  |
| <b>Report Summary:</b>  | The report proposes the final Green Spaces Strategy (2025 - 2035) which in turn will inform the management of the Parks and Opens Spaces within the Borough.   |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>   | <b>A. That Members note the feedback from the consultation; and<br/>B. That the Green Space Strategy (at Appendix 1) be adopted.</b>   |
| <b>Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):</b> | Ben Wilson (Head of Neighbourhood Services)<br><a href="mailto:ben.wilson@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">ben.wilson@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a><br>0116) 257 2711<br><br>Teresa Neal (Strategic Director)<br><a href="mailto:teresa.neal@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">teresa.neal@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a><br>(0116) 257 2642 |
| <b>Strategic Objectives:</b>  | Our Communities (SO2)<br>Our Council (SO1)<br>Our Environment (SO4)<br>Our Partners (SO5)  |
| <b>Vision and Values:</b>   | Customer & Community Focused (V1)<br>Collaborative & Creative (V3)<br>Proud of Everything We Do (V2)<br>"Our Borough - The Place To Be" (Vision)   |
| <b>Report Implications:-</b>  |  |
| Legal:  | There are no implications arising from this report.  |
| Financial:  | There are no implications arising from this report.  |
| Corporate Risk Management:  | Reputation Damage (CR4)<br>Effective Utilisation of Assets / Buildings (CR5)<br>Organisational / Transformational Change (CR8)   |
| Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):  | There are no implications arising from this report.<br>Initial EA Screening (See Appendices)   |
| Human Rights:   | There are no implications arising from this report.  |
| Health and Safety:  | There are no implications arising from this report.  |

| <b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b> |   |
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| Head of Paid Service:                 | The report is satisfactory.   |
| Chief Finance Officer:                | The report is satisfactory.   |
| Monitoring Officer:                   | The report is satisfactory.   |
| <b>Consultees:</b>                    | None.   |
| <b>Background Papers:</b>             | None.   |
| <b>Appendices:</b>                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Green Spaces Strategy (2025 - 2035)</li> <li>2. Equality Impact Assessment</li> </ol> |

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Parks and open spaces are fundamental to the health, well-being, and quality of life of any urban community. In Oadby and Wigston, these green spaces act as vital havens amid a rapidly urbanising landscape, offering residents and visitors opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and connection with nature.
- 1.2 From well-maintained local parks to tranquil nature reserves and green corridors, Oadby and Wigston is home to a diverse range of open spaces that support both environmental sustainability and the social fabric of the community.
- 1.3 Several services play a role in the functioning of Oadby and Wigston's parks or have a stake in how they are used, including corporate assets, grounds maintenance, planning policy, community engagement, health and wellbeing, community safety, and climate change.

## **2. Why a change is needed**

- 2.1 As Oadby and Wigston continues to develop, the demand for accessible, high-quality outdoor spaces becomes increasingly critical.
- 2.2 The Green Spaces Strategy for Oadby and Wigston is a comprehensive plan aimed at protecting, enhancing, and expanding these valuable green spaces to meet the evolving needs of a growing population.
- 2.3 This strategy:
  - Outline's the approach for managing, protecting and developing green spaces which gives consideration to the Council's resources, management and maintenance responsibilities and the contributions from community and interest groups.
  - Highlights a set of principles which will guide future maintenance, investment, community engagement decisions and actions regarding our green spaces.
  - Agree a set of priorities which focus effort, resources and decision making, ensuring that our green spaces remain high quality spaces for everyone to enjoy.
  - Help secure additional investment and external funding towards enhancing infrastructure, faculties and opportunities for the benefit of the community.

2.4 The successful delivery of the strategy's objectives will rely on several key factors:

- The active support and contribution of our partners and stakeholders in delivering high-quality work.
- Securing consistent and sufficient funding throughout the strategy's lifespan.
- Establishing a clear and effective monitoring framework, with defined milestones and achievements to assess progress.
- Ensuring the strategy is widely communicated and promoted in a variety of formats to foster ongoing stakeholder engagement.

### **3. Environmental Implications**

3.1 The strategy also supports the Council's Climate Action plan and climate change mitigation by focusing on enhancing green spaces, which play a vital role in reducing carbon emissions. Well-maintained parks and open spaces act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO2 and improving air quality.

3.2 Additionally, increasing the biodiversity and the number of trees and plants in these areas can help counterbalance the environmental impact of urbanisation.

3.3 The strategy also encourages sustainable practices such as using environmentally friendly materials in park designs, reducing waste, and promoting green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems.

### **4. Overall Consultation & Response Information**

4.1 At the Policy, Finance and Development Committee held on the 9 September 2025, Members approved for the strategy to go out for consultation.

4.2 The consultation commenced on 6 October 2025 and closed on 17 November 2025 (6 weeks) with 50 responses being received. Of which, 50% of respondents were over 70 years of age, with 26% of respondents being between 61-70 years of age. (31-40 years = 8%, 41-50 years = 8%, 51-60 years = 8%).

4.3 96% of respondents live within the borough and the remaining 4% being part of a community group within the borough. 88% of respondents typically use the boroughs open spaces for walking, followed by running, socialising and using play equipment.

4.4 The consultation was broken down into 6 key areas with 16 questions overall. This was open to all stakeholders including residents, visitors, and businesses.

### **5. Consultation Section: Quality & Accessibility**

5.1 Question - How would you rate the overall quality and maintenance:

- Excellent – 6%
- Good – 46%
- Fair – 40%
- Poor – 6%
- Very Poor – 2%

**Outcome:** It is very positive feedback that 92% of respondents think the current green spaces are excellent, good or fair. With only 1 respondent thinking they are very poor.

5.2 Question - Are there any barriers preventing you from accessing the parks:

64% of respondents did not raise any accessibility issues, however muddy paths were raised as an issue.

5.3 Questions - What improvements would make green spaces more accessible and welcoming to you:

Most frequently suggested improvements were better maintained pathways & Improved accessible play areas. Unfortunately, elements were raised on street lighting, bus routes and cycling routes that are not within the jurisdiction of the Borough Council, but information will be shared with County Council for feedback purposes.

## 6. Consultation Section: Biodiversity and Climate Resilience

6.1 Question - How important is it to you that green spaces support biodiversity and climate change mitigation:

- Extremely Important – 80%
- Somewhat Important – 10%
- Neutral – 6%
- Somewhat unimportant – 4%

**Outcome:** 90% of people felt passionate about green spaces supporting biodiversity and climate change mitigation.

6.2 Question - What types of environmental improvements would you like to see (e.g. more trees, wildflower meadows, wildlife habitats):

100% of respondents included Trees, Wildlife habitats, and/or wildflower meadows as an improvement.

There were also 2 comments relating to improving ponds and protecting hedgerows.

6.3 Question - Would you support more naturalised areas even if it meant less frequent mowing or a “wilder” appearance:

- Yes – 46%
- Maybe – 28%
- No – 26%

## 7. Consultation Section: Strategic Direction & Priorities

7.1 Question - do you agree with the 5 strategic priorities outlined in the strategy:

- Yes 82%
- Some but not others 18%
- No 0%

7.2 Question – Would you like to give any further feedback on the strategic priorities of the strategy:

74% of responders did not give any further feedback on the priorities

Other comments were to further protect trees, and wildlife areas can look messy if left too wild.

7.3 Question – Which should be the top priority:

- Improving biodiversity – 34%
- Protecting Heritage – 26%
- Support health and wellbeing – 24%
- Enhancing Accessibility – 10%
- Community Engagement – 4%
- Not mutually exclusive – 1%

7.4 Question – How should the Council focus its resources:

- Focus on spreading resources across all green spaces, no matter the size, to ensure all are of a decent standard – 88%
- Focus resources on our bigger, most popular green spaces and parks to ensure they are of really high quality – 12%

## **8. Consultation Section: Overall Feedback & Outcome**

8.1 All respondents deeply value the green spaces within the borough and want them protected, enhanced, and kept accessible. There is significant positive feedback on the current state of the green spaces but important to note that the priorities of the strategy are in line with the results of the consultation.

8.2 All responses were positive in relation to the 5 key priorities of the strategy, with increasing Bio-diversity, protecting the heritage and supporting health and wellbeing being overwhelmingly popular priorities.

8.3 In summary, the strongest messages from the consultation are:

- Protection of existing green spaces, trees, and hedgerows
- Investment in biodiversity and nature-friendly planting
- Improved accessibility for mobility users and older people
- Better maintenance, especially paths and play areas
- Equitable investment across all parks, not just major sites

8.4 General tone of the consultation is being supportive, and passionate of the green spaces and the strategy, respondents consistently emphasise that Green spaces are essential for health, wellbeing, wildlife, and community life, of which they agree the priorities of the strategy aim to achieve and are predominantly happy with.