

Committee(s):	Date(s):
Open Spaces, City Gardens and West Ham Park	15 th April 2013
Subject: Open Spaces Audit Report 2012	Public
Report of: Director of the Built Environment	For Information
<p>Summary</p> <p>This report summarises the key findings of the City of London Open Spaces Audit Report 2012. This Audit updates previous Audit reports in 2002 and 2007 and will provide information to update the City of London's Open Spaces Strategy, to be prepared later in 2013.</p> <p>The Report identifies a largely stable level of open space provision in the City since 2007, although it excludes sites which are closed due to redevelopment or construction works, including most of Finsbury Circus Gardens. The Report shows that most open spaces in the City are very small and can be categorised as 'Pocket Parks'. There remain some larger areas of open space, such as Inner Temple and on the Barbican and Broadgate Estates.</p> <p>Despite the slight fall in the total level of open space provision, there has been a significant increase in public accessibility. The vast majority of open space is fully accessible to those with disabilities.</p> <p>Recommendation(s)</p> <p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report.</p>	

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Core Strategy, policy CS19 Open Spaces and Recreation, seeks to protect existing open spaces in the City, provide additional open space where practical and secure public access to open spaces where possible. The policy aims to maintain a ratio of at least 0.06 hectares of high quality, publicly accessible open space per 1,000 weekday daytime population.
2. An Audit of open space in the City was undertaken in 2002 and reviewed in 2007. The 2007 Audit provided the information which underpinned the City Corporation's 2008 Open Spaces Strategy.

3. This report summarises the findings of the 2012 Open Spaces Audit. It provides a factual update to the 2007 Audit and will provide base data to input into a review of the Open Spaces Strategy due later in 2013.

Current Position

4. The City of London Open Spaces Audit provides information on the amount, size and location of open spaces within the City. It also provides information on public accessibility and access for people with disabilities, seating provision and biodiversity. The Audit Report presents information at 31st March 2012.
5. Open spaces in the report are defined as: "Land which is not built on and which has some amenity value or potential for amenity value. Amenity value is derived from the visual and other enjoyment which open spaces can provide, such as historic interest and value." The Audit includes land which is in public and private ownership, but excludes private residential gardens and streets where the primary role is movement.
6. The Audit is undertaken using the same standard methodology used to undertake previous Audits in 2002 and 2007 and therefore provides a comparable historical data series. A full comparison between the 2007 and 2012 Audits and the implications for the provision and management of open spaces in the City will be provided in a review of the Open Spaces Strategy due later in 2013. This review will address the City Corporation's Strategy for the provision of new open spaces and set out how the City Corporation will implement the Core Strategy policy requirement to increase the amount and quality of publicly accessible open space. The review will be brought back to this Committee and the Planning & Transportation Committee for approval later in the year.

Key Findings

7. At 31st March 2012, there was a total of 32.09 hectares of open space within the City of London (excluding land closed due to construction works). This compares with a total of 32.18 hectares in 2007. The apparent small reduction in open space is principally the result of the temporary loss of open space due to redevelopment and construction works, and to changes in the way that the area of open space is measured. The loss of open space includes the temporary closure of most of Finsbury Circus Gardens due to Crossrail construction works. Taking account of this temporary loss of open space, there has been a small increase in both the area (of 0.29 hectares) and quality of open space in the City since 2007. This issue will be addressed in the forthcoming Open Spaces Strategy.
8. The majority of the open space in the City is contained within sites of under 0.4 hectares which are defined as 'Pocket Parks'. There are, in addition, a number of Small Open Spaces over 0.4 hectares, including areas such as Inner Temple Garden, St Paul's Churchyard and open spaces on the Barbican and Broadgate estates.

9. During 2012 there was a significant improvement in open space provision near St Paul's Cathedral, when the former coach park on the south side was relocated and replaced by a new publicly accessible open space with significant planting and seating, as part of a major public realm enhancement project. This new space was named in celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.
10. Fifty-two percent of the open spaces are defined as civic spaces, 16% are parks and gardens, 14% cemeteries and churchyards and the remaining 18% a mix of amenity greenspace, natural and semi-natural greenspace, provision for children and young people, outdoor sports facilities and local green corridors.
11. The City's Core Strategy seeks to ensure public access to open spaces where possible. The Audit shows that 80% of the open spaces have full public access between dawn and dusk, amounting to 25.66 hectares of space. This represents an increase of 2.35 hectares since the 2007 Audit. A further 7% of the open space has significant restrictions to public access or is accessible only to residents of a specific housing estate, a reduction from 12% in 2007. Thirteen percent of the City's open space is closed to the public, again representing a reduction from 2007, when 16% of the identified open space was closed to the public.
12. Seventy-one percent of the open space is fully accessible for people with disabilities, with 29% having only partial or no access.
13. The majority of open spaces in the City provide seating, with some, such as St Paul's Churchyard or Broadgate Circle providing a significant number of seats. Those sites that do not provide any seating are generally very small sites of under 0.1 hectares, but also include walkways such as those on the Golden Lane and Barbican Estates.
14. The City of London has 10 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, totalling 0.68 hectares of open space. The Audit also shows that there are nearly 2,500 trees in the City, with 9 Tree Preservation Orders affecting 34 Trees.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

15. There are no financial implications or legal implications for the City Corporation arising from this report.

Conclusion

16. The Open Spaces Audit 2013 provides information on the amount and type of open space within the City of London as at 31st March 2012. It updates previous Audits in 2002 and 2007 and will provide the information to underpin a review of the Open Spaces Strategy later in 2013.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – City of London Open Spaces Audit Report 2013

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