Our open spaces
South Northamptonshire has a range of open spaces totalling over 433 hectares including parks, sports pitches, allotments, play areas, nature reserves and green spaces. These are owned and managed by a variety of stakeholders including the Council, Parish and Town Councils, voluntary sports clubs and private landowners. Local networks of high quality, well-managed and maintained open spaces, sport and recreation facilities create environments that are attractive, green and safe.

We recognise that good quality open space enhances the quality of life of local residents and has a positive impact on health and well-being. It provides settings for a wide range of social and recreational activities; helps community cohesion; promotes biodiversity and nature conservation; enhances the environment and contributes to the economic development of the district.

Parks and gardens
Our larger parks provide accessible, high quality open space to be enjoyed by the public, for a range of formal and informal activities. Pocket parks are generally maintained by community groups to promote the wildlife value of the site, providing recreation opportunities such as pond dipping, bird watching and picnics. Parks and gardens can act as an important focal point in a community, contributing towards the identity of an area and a sense of place. Larger parks can have an important focus at the neighbourhood scale, while small parks can have a more local focus.

Foxfields Country Park, at Grange Park is the only large park within our district. We have a network of small parks located in the market towns and rural villages. There is a lack of provision in the western and northern parts of the district.

Amenity green space
Amenity green spaces are public open spaces with a primary purpose of improving and enhancing the appearance of the local environment and improve the well-being of local residents. They are most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas as recreational green spaces and village greens. Children’s equipped playgrounds whether or not they are fenced off, are part of amenity green spaces, and the ‘informal’ play space which links to children’s play provision is integral to the amenity green space.

Not all of our villages have amenity green spaces and not all of the market towns have access to such space within 240m.
Accessible Natural and Semi-Natural green space

Natural and semi natural green spaces are areas whose primary purpose is for nature conservation, and includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands and wastelands. Natural England believes everyone should have access to good quality natural green space near to where they live and provide policy guidance for local authorities.

There are 26 natural and semi-natural green space sites across our district. These include large woodland sites at:

- **Bucknell Wood** (182 hectares), in Abthorpe ward
- **Whistley Wood** in Syresham ward, managed by Forestry England
- **Hazelborough Forest** (138 hectares), in Syresham ward, managed by Forestry England
- **Salcey Forest** (522 hectares) in Ashton ward, managed by Forestry England

In 2009 Towcester Water Meadows were purchased by the council and Planning Permission was granted from private use to public open space.

There are over 20 smaller sites through the district. However, there are urban areas and villages within our district that do not have accessible natural and semi-natural green space within the recommended travel distance of 720m.
Children’s Play and Provision for Young People

There is under-provision of play areas by population size in Brackley, Towcester and a number of our larger villages. Some existing play areas lack suitable equipment, especially for children aged over 8 years.

There is an identified need for new provision of facilities for teenagers at Brackley, Towcester and Grange Park and a need to enhance play equipment for older children in a number of existing village facilities.

Allotments

Allotments can improve wellbeing and the quality of life of communities by providing a cheap source of good food, healthy outdoor exercise and social interaction. They can also enhance biodiversity and our green infrastructure.

There is inadequate provision of allotments in Brackley and Towcester. Almost half our villages have no allotment provision and there are only 57 allotment sites throughout the district. Delivery of allotments is a responsibility of Town and Parish Councils.

Canals

Approximately seventeen and a half miles of the Grand Union Canal transit South Northamptonshire, from the Iron Trunk Aqueduct at Cosgrove up to Stowe Hill bridge near Nether Heyford. Part of the Oxford Canal travels through Kings Sutton. As well as boat use and hire, canals and towpaths provide opportunities for:

- Walking
- Wildlife
- Fishing
- Cycling
- Community events and tourism