



**EPOA**  
Essex Planning  
Officers Association



# ACCESS TO OPEN GREEN AND BLUE SPACES

Thanks to Chelmsford  
City Council

## HEALTHY PLACES GUIDANCE





Activity for all



Walkable communities



Connected walking and cycling routes



Multifunctional open spaces



Co-location of community facilities



High quality streets and spaces



Appropriate infrastructure



Active buildings



Management, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation



Activity promotion and local champions

# KEY FACTS

- There is a growing evidence base around the positive benefits to health and wellbeing from open green and blue spaces. These include positive impacts on both mental and physical health<sup>14,15</sup>.
- The Marmot review<sup>6</sup> identified the need to improve the availability of good quality open and green spaces as a supportive measure to reduce health inequality.
- These spaces come in a variety of forms. Examples include parks, sports pitches, public realm, green corridors and building design elements such as green roofs and green walls<sup>37</sup>. In Essex, we have a multitude of in-land waterways and considerable length of coast.
- In Essex, 19.2% of the population have used outdoor space for exercise or health reasons<sup>43</sup>.
- 15.7% of the Essex population have access to woodland which is less than the England average<sup>43</sup>.

## How to encourage access to open green and blue spaces

- Ideas around improving access to green space can be found in the 5 principles of healthy places developed by the Landscape Institute<sup>13</sup>. This document provides multiple examples of what can be done around green and open space including a variety of case studies and evidence to support action.
- Accessible distances are important. In the Public Health England briefing with UCL, they have identified the Bristol City green space standards as an example of distances to green space. These include 400m to the nearest green space, 550m to the nearest informal green space and 600m to formal green space<sup>14</sup>.
- The TCPA and Ramblers Association commissioned a survey around walking in urban parks and green spaces<sup>44</sup>. The survey found that barriers to walking for younger people was associated with perceptions of safety and barriers to walking for older people was a lack of street furniture. Designing for people to make sure that spaces are safe, inclusive and accessible is an important consideration.

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- Funding and maintenance of spaces needs to be considered<sup>13,14,44</sup>. There are multiple green infrastructure strategies being developed locally in Essex that address stewardship issues. Quality and maintenance have been identified as key barriers for access to spaces. Ensure funding for the management and maintenance of spaces is part of the proposal.
- The TCPA paper<sup>44</sup> also features some case studies with associated 'lessons learnt' around green space. Some case studies highlight issues such as safety in space including the need for adequate lighting, design and signage to support personal safety concerns.
- Community engagement is another important feature when looking at space. Engaging with the stakeholders and community is necessary to ensure that open spaces are a collaboration<sup>13,44</sup>. Reference to the Public Rights of Way developer guide<sup>45</sup> for additional information.

- Active Design principles<sup>19</sup> include elements to support access to open space which can be included in design.
- The Essex Design Guide covers some principles in the 2018<sup>17</sup> updated edition and highlight case studies locally with good practice.
- Engaging with local parks, leisure and environment teams may be useful so to understand local need, strategy and approach to stewardship.
- The Green Essex strategy<sup>16</sup> is due for publication in 2019 and provides further detail on access to green space in Essex including how to encourage and support groups who do not access green space and how to support better health outcomes.

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