

## 14 A GREEN CITY

### Where we are

---

A sustainable city has a high-quality environment and manages its resources effectively. Birmingham has much to offer, including extensive parks and valuable natural habitats. Recent developments, such as the Birmingham High Performance Centre at the Alexander Stadium, have innovative, energy-efficient design. But the city also faces environmental challenges.

Birmingham has over 3,000 hectares of parks and open spaces, and measures of access to open space are above the national average. Nearly three in five people visit a park or open space at least once a month. There is, however, scope to improve access to public open space in some parts of the city, and in some areas, biodiversity and wildlife habitats are under pressure.

At street level, there is less satisfaction with the quality of the environment. Street cleaning – in particular, tackling rubbish - is a concern across about a third of the city. As in many cities, fly-tipping is a major problem in Birmingham, where thousands of tonnes of waste are illegally dumped in the city each year. A cleaner environment and better maintained streets are priorities for many people and businesses.

Levels of air and noise pollution are problems in some parts of the city. Vehicles are one of the principal sources of both air and noise pollution, so improvements to Birmingham's roads and public transport should aim to reduce the effects of pollution (see *Getting about in the city*, page 22). Birmingham has pioneered "noise mapping", and is leading the exchange of good practice with other European cities. Air pollution has been monitored, and the key problem identified as emissions of oxides of nitrogen. The whole city has been declared an Air Quality Management Zone, and a management plan has been prepared.

Birmingham, like the rest of the world, faces the challenge of global warming. Carbon dioxide emissions are a major contributor to climate change, and the City Council has pledged to meet the national government's target for a reduction in these emissions. The Council has a two-part strategy: to reduce its overall use of energy and to increase the proportion coming from renewable sources. The energy efficiency of homes in the city will be improved as part of work to reduce fuel poverty (see *Decent homes*, page 30). There are also opportunities to draw on good practice in the public and commercial sectors to improve the energy efficiency of buildings throughout Birmingham. But there is at present no city-wide approach to global warming.

Another pressing problem is disposing safely and economically of waste. All those disposing of waste – commercial operators as well as the City Council – are facing higher costs and increasing technical difficulties. Increased fly-tipping is one result of these pressures. The volume of Birmingham's domestic waste

going into landfill has been falling recently, but recycling rates are below average.

## **Where we want to be**

---

We see Birmingham as a city where the ways we meet the needs of the present do not compromise our ability to meet needs in the future. We see Birmingham as a city where people can enjoy a clean and green environment. We see Birmingham as a place where natural resources are managed wisely.

## **What we will do – Key Actions**

---

### **G 1 - Greening the city**

We will improve people's access to and enjoyment of green and open space. We will involve local communities in the planning and management of this land. We will also work with communities to preserve, protect, promote and enhance local biodiversity across Birmingham.

### **G 2 – Improving streets and public space**

We will get the city clean and keep it clean through better street cleaning and clearing rubbish promptly. We will work with local communities to develop new ideas to help keep localities clean. We will improve the design and maintenance of streets and public spaces.

### **G 3 - Cutting pollution**

Pollution damages people's health and well-being. We will prepare plans to reduce air and noise pollution in the city, focusing on those areas that are worst affected.

### **G 4 – Climate change**

We will prepare a strategy setting out how Birmingham can respond positively to climate change. This will focus on improving the efficiency with which we use energy both in buildings and transport. It will also encourage the use of energy from renewable sources.

### **G 5 - Cutting waste**

We will manage waste effectively to reduce the amount of commercial and domestic waste sent to landfill and to increase the recycling and reuse of materials.

## **How we will get there**

---

The separate implementation framework for this Community Strategy will set out how we will take these actions forward. The Birmingham Environmental Partnership, which includes representatives of Birmingham City Council and major environmental organisations, is co-ordinating plans for actions in this section.