

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation Advisory Group,
Conservation, Sustainability &
Community Planning Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Conservation Manager

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DEVELOPMENT OF A “GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY” FOR THE CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION

Purpose

1. To seek members support for the proposed development of a, “Green Infrastructure Strategy” for the Cambridgeshire sub-region, identifying potential funding to contribute to its development from the Conservation budget.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	The development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy will enable the Council to focus resources and deliver its objectives for quality of life and biodiversity enhancement, in both the Community Strategy and the Local Development Plan.
Village Life	The proposed strategy will help frame activity for the enhancement of district’s village, not only by creating major countryside access points but also by connecting greenspaces within a network and offering the potential for local people to engage in environmental enhancement.
Sustainability	Implementation of the strategic scale projects will help mitigate climate change and the extensive development
Partnership	The purpose of the strategy is facilitate a wide range of environmental enhancement initiatives and is being developed through a partnership of national and local government and voluntary sector organisations.

Background

3. In conjunction with partners, outlined below, it is proposed to draw up a bold and imaginative strategy for the provision of large-scale green infrastructure for the Cambridge sub-region over the next 20-30 years, to complement and support the significant growth in housing provision that is planned over this period.
4. The proposed strategy will build on the ‘*Strategic Open Space Study*’ carried out by W.S.Atkins for Cambridgeshire County Council in March 2004, and should link together and develop the large-scale open space proposals (which are hoped to funded under the Growth Area Delivery Grant II). Some significant projects which would help create substantial countryside access and biodiversity enhancement advantages in South Cambridgeshire are currently being promoted by a variety of agencies in the sub-region.
5. *Policy Context*
Members will be aware that over the next twenty years the Cambridge sub-region is expected to grow in population by approximately 130,000 people from its current population of 425,000. The impact of this growth on the existing quality of life of the

region will depend on the extent to which the existing infrastructure, including *green infrastructure*, can be enhanced.

6. The South Cambridgeshire area will be affected by the new town of 8,000 homes at Northstowe; a new urban quarter on the east side of Cambridge of up to 12,000 new homes; and two urban fringe developments sites located on the north west and south sides of Cambridge which will deliver approximately 6500 new homes between them. All these major developments will bring opportunities to enhance the adjoining green infrastructure, which could link into a strategic network of green spaces, funded by both development requirements and grant sources. The proposed strategy is expected to identify how this should be carried out.
7. The Structure Plan also includes policies for creating new green infrastructure and enhancing the existing landscape, including : *Policy 7/3 Countryside Enhancement Areas*, which identifies those broad areas where emphasis will be given to the promotion of schemes for quiet recreation and the enhancement of access, landscape and biodiversity.
8. The “Strategic Open Space Study” by WS Atkins, carried out an audit of strategic open space and proposed a standard for the provision of new strategic open space that could be applied to future developments. However, it stopped short of developing this work into an implementation strategy for future provision. The “*Green Infrastructure Strategy*” is also framed by the 50-year biodiversity vision map produced by the Cambridge and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership.
9. *Strategic Open Spaces Forum*.
During 2004, “*Cambridgeshire Horizons*” (CHs) was established as the local delivery vehicle for the Cambridge Sub-region, to co-ordinate and drive forward the growth strategy for the Cambridge sub-region. The provision of green infrastructure was identified as a key priority for the successful implementation of the growth agenda.
10. A ‘*Strategic Open Spaces Forum*’ has been established by CHs, which includes : all the local authorities; Woodland Trust; Cambridge Preservation Society; Wildlife Trust; Great Fen Project; English Nature; Peterborough City Environmental Trust (PECT); National Trust; Forestry Commission; Environment Agency; Countryside Agency; and the RSPB. The purpose of the group is to jointly develop projects which could be submitted for funding from the Government’s Growth Area Fund (GADG II). Two projects had been successful in receiving grant for 2003-6, and bids totalling £9.5 million are being submitted for implementation during 2006-8.
11. *Definition of green infrastructure*.
“*Green infrastructure*” is defined as the sub-regional network of protected sites, nature reserves, greenspaces and greenway linkages. It should provide (where possible) multi-functional uses, such as : wildlife habitat; recreational space; cultural experiences; as well as delivering ecological services, such as flood protection and microclimate control. Green Infrastructure should also operate at all spatial scales from urban centres through to open countryside.¹
12. The proposed “*Green Infrastructure Strategy*” will mainly concentrate on creating a strategic overview of Greenspace within the Cambridge Sub Region but will also inform the work being carried out by SCDC under the Biodiversity Strategy.
13. Well-designed and integrated greenspace will improve : environmental quality; health; well being; and sense of community, and provides opportunity for exercise,

¹ Biodiversity by Design – A guide for sustainable communities. Town & Country Planning Association. 2004.

sport and informal recreation. The eventual '*Green infrastructure*' of the sub-region should contribute to and enhance the quality of life of both present and future residents and visitors, through:

- a. *Providing a focus and attraction for the increased population proposed within the Cambridge Sub-Region.*
 - b. *Provision of further greenspace and wider access to the countryside.*
 - c. *Protection and enhancement of existing biodiversity and creation of new areas for biodiversity.*
 - d. *Reverse the fragmentation of habitats by restoring their connectivity.*
 - e. *Provide the opportunity to rehabilitate landscapes and habitats damaged by previous development or by existing recreational pressures.*
 - f. *Provide an enhanced environmental backdrop that will assist in attracting business and inward investment to those areas.*
14. The proposed *Green Infrastructure Strategy* would, therefore, be commissioned by Cambridgeshire Horizons, with a funding from the partners to :
- (a) Bring together existing data on sites and map out in detail existing greenspace provision based upon need, current opportunities and shortfall within the Cambridge sub-region.
 - (b) Carry out an analysis at a strategic level around the major development sites looking at existing provision, deficiencies and identification of future possible pressure points over a 20/30-year timescale.
 - (c) Carry out a general analysis on the wider Cambridge sub-region identifying current opportunities and possible future projects across the sub-region.
 - (d) Develop the analysis into a bold and imaginative 20/30-year vision strategy, building upon current (and future) initiatives and includes : biodiversity enhancement; landscaping and rights of way issues.
 - (e) Develop a framework for the longer-term management/running costs of any future assets created.

Considerations

15. The completion of the proposed '*Green Infrastructure Strategy*' will create a framework for targeting both action and resources across the Cambridge Sub-Region to facilitate the development and funding of major green spaces. The Atkins study identified that, despite its rural character the region is already under-provided for in terms development of accessible countryside. It is also clear from other studies that the region does not meet targets for wildlife space and biodiversity.
16. In the light of the development pressures in the region it is evident that significant provision across the region needs to be developed, and an 'implementation' plan consequently developed to direct resources from all sources. Such a strategy will help identify and prioritise key project areas in terms of funding regimes and ensure that that the emerging initiatives are connected and complementary.

17. While the proposed '*Green Infrastructure Strategy*' will focus on the development of a network of strategic scale projects, members will be aware of the village level initiatives that SCDC promote and support in partnership with local communities and Parish Councils. These smaller scale initiatives, which will be identified in the emerging SCDC "*Biodiversity Strategy*", will also contribute to the enhancement of countryside access and biodiversity in the region by helping to complete the district wide pattern of accessible greenspaces and wildlife habitats.
18. The realisation of the objectives of these two implementation strategies will be to address both the overall open-space requirements of the region (including the demands imposed by the new developments) and local enhancement in the existing villages. The smaller scale projects will also ensure that local communities are directly involved in the development and delivery of such open-space and biodiversity projects.

Options

19. The Conservation Advisory Group are requested to consider the above and either :
 - i. Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder supports the development of the proposed, "*Green Infrastructure Strategy*" and allocates appropriate resources from the Conservation budget to contribute to the necessary financial package and develop the project, subject to confirmation of matching funding from the project partners.

Or

- ii. Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder declines to support the development of the proposed, "*Green Infrastructure Strategy*" stating the reasons for this option.

Financial Implications

20. Cambridgeshire Horizons have allocated upto £20,000 towards the development of this strategy with smaller sums being agreed in principle by all the other funding partners. A contribution of £5,000 by SCDC would seem appropriate in the light of the indicative contributions by other partners.
21. Funding of £5,000 could be available within the Conservation budget by re-allocating an unexpended previous revenue commitment. This has been confirmed by the Director of Finances. Funding was authorised on 17th January 2000, under the budget for *Ecological Support Services*, by the then Conservation Committee, for Survey of water courses. This study was not commenced. It is, therefore, proposed to re-allocate this funding to support the "*Green Infrastructure Strategy*" as this will include such water courses, subject to leverage of other partnership funding and completion during 2005/06.

Legal Implications

22. None specific.

Staffing Implications

23. SCDC is represented on the *Green Infrastructure Strategy Steering Group* by the Conservation Manager and will work with the consultants and partners on projects which impact on South Cambridgeshire and the development of the strategy as local

policy. Members of the Conservation section will work with partners to develop the projects to implement the strategy.

Risk Management Implications

24. The project will be managed by Cambridgeshire Horizons.

Consultations

25. None specific to date. The strategy will be subject to the usual extensive consultation in its draft form. The Conservation Advisory Group and the Portfolio Holder will be consulted on the draft strategy.

Conclusions/Summary

26. It is considered that the development of a green infrastructure strategy for the Cambridge sub-region will have significant advantages for the development of the biodiversity and countryside access of the district.
27. It offers the potential to create a cohesive implementation plan to ensure that emerging initiatives which SCDC would want to promote and support are complementing each other rather than competing for funding resources. These include emerging strategic scale projects at : Wicken Fen extension; Fen Drayton RSPB reserve; the Gog Magog Countryside Park and the the Forest of South Cambridgeshire; as well as similar scale projects to be developed across the district during 2005/06 at the Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey and Wysing Arts.
28. In addition it will enable the potential to enhance the open space provision, required through the development proposals and funded by planning agreements, to be connected to developing network of accessible greenspace.

Recommendations

29. That the Conservation Advisory Group recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder supports the development of the proposed, "*Green Infrastructure Strategy*" and re-allocates the unexpended revenue commitment for a "Survey of Watercourses", under the budget for *Ecological Support Services*, to support the funding of the project, subject to leverage of other partnership funding and completion during 2005/06.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Draft Brief for the Green Infrastructure Strategy – Cambridgeshire Horizons. 2005

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