



REPORT TO: Climate and Environment
Advisory Committee (CEAC)

12 January 2021

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Lead Cabinet member for Climate Change

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Shared Waste and Environment

Doubling Nature Strategy and Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document for Greater Cambridge

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the draft Doubling Nature Strategy and plans for a Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Greater Cambridge. The Biodiversity SPD is a key component of the Council's strategy to double nature, and for this reason, the two items are grouped together in this report.
2. The draft Doubling Nature Strategy sets out in high-level terms the Council's approach to achieving the aim agreed at Full Council in July 2019 to double nature in South Cambridgeshire.
3. The Doubling Nature Strategy will be a sister document to the Zero Carbon Strategy outlining how the Council uses its widening spheres of influence, on its own estate, through policies and through wider influence in partnerships and communities to achieve more wildlife-rich habitats, increased tree canopy cover and better accessibility to green space.
4. Commencement of a project to deliver a Biodiversity SPD has been agreed by Place Board. The new SPD will replace the existing Biodiversity SPD which was adopted in 2009 and predates current national policies on biodiversity. A new Biodiversity SPD will signal to developers and residents the Council's direction on biodiversity and environmental matters.

Recommendations

5. That CEAC recommend to Cabinet adoption of the draft Doubling Nature Strategy at Appendix A, subject to changes as required.
6. That CEAC note plans for a new Biodiversity SPD for Greater Cambridge.

Reasons for Recommendations

7. The CEAC's role is to advise Cabinet on policies, actions and resources required to deliver on the Council's climate change and environmental ambitions and to provide updates on progress towards achieving agreed targets and outcomes.
8. This includes reviewing the development of Council strategies and roadmaps/action plans for carbon reductions, climate resilience, biodiversity and environmental sustainability; making recommendations for their adoption; updating Cabinet on progress with implementation and recommending any mitigating actions necessary.
9. The draft Doubling Nature Strategy sets out in high-level terms the Council's approach to achieving the aim agreed at Full Council in July 2019 to double nature in South Cambridgeshire.
10. The Biodiversity SPD is a key component of the Council's strategy to double nature in South Cambridgeshire.

Details

11. Full Council recognised the ecological emergency on 18 July 2019 and agreed an aim to 'double the area of rich wildlife habitats, tree cover and accessible green space in order for nature and people to thrive, and businesses to prosper'.
12. The need for a 'visionary strategy' setting out the Council's programme in response to this motion was agreed by the Head of Waste & Environment and the Chair of the Climate & Environment Advisory Committee following adoption of the Zero Carbon Strategy in May 2020.
13. Plans for the development of this high-level strategy by the end of the year were noted by the Climate & Environment Advisory Committee on 30 June. The objectives, scope, structure and schedule for the strategy were discussed and agreed by CEAC on 1 September.
14. The Doubling Nature Strategy is a sister document to the Zero Carbon Strategy, outlining how the Council uses its widening spheres of influence: as an exemplar on its own estate, through policies and through its wider influence in partnerships and communities.
15. The Strategy is complementary to work being carried out by Greater Cambridge Shared Planning to map opportunities for green infrastructure, and develop a new Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and a new Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document. These three projects, all of which are very significant aspects of the Council's approach to delivering a doubling of nature, are referenced in the Strategy.

Development of the strategy

16. The strategy has been drafted by the Development Officer, Climate and Environment in collaboration with officers from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Natural

Environment and Planning Policy teams, the Air Quality Scientific Officer and the Housing Neighbourhood Services Manager. Two sessions for Members have been held: a briefing session on 8 September on current work relating to 'doubling nature', and a workshop on 20 October to gather Members' views on the vision for nature on the Council's estate and in the wider district.

17. Views from the Member workshop have been considered in the drafting of the Strategy. The chair and vice chairs of the CEAC have provided comments on an earlier draft of the strategy, which have been considered in the attached draft.
18. Additional changes are being worked on and will be reported verbally at the meeting. These include inclusion of relevant map or maps, changes to strengthen the vision and approach sections, make the planning policy section clearer and reflect the Council's aspirations to achieve 20% biodiversity net gain through development, whilst recognising that this cannot be required of development unless and until adopted in policy, and that the Council's aspirations will sit alongside other considerations in determining policy.

Biodiversity SPD for Greater Cambridge

19. Commencement of a project to deliver a Biodiversity SPD was agreed by Place Board on 3 December 2020. It is expected to be adopted in December 2021, with the likely timeline:

Jan – May	Draft Document (undertaken by an external consultant)
Jun – Sep	Consultation, stakeholder and member process
Oct – Dec	Amendments to document and adoption by Councils

20. The rationale for the new Biodiversity SPD is that the existing Biodiversity SPD is out of date (2009) and references even earlier policies which do not reflect current national environmental policies, thus risking provision of misleading or incomplete guidance for development schemes in South Cambridgeshire. The new Local Plan is still two to three years away and so we need an interim guidance document to support the councils green-to-the-core agenda. An updated biodiversity SPD will signal to developers (and local residents) the Council's intended direction on biodiversity and environmental matters.

Options

21. CEAC can recommend to Cabinet adoption of the draft Doubling Nature Strategy at Appendix A, subject to changes specified changes, or not.
22. CEAC can note plans for a new Biodiversity SPD for Greater Cambridge or not.

Background reports

Report to CEAC meeting, 1 September 2020 on Doubling Nature Strategy

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s117762/Doubling%20Nature%20Strategy.pdf>

Implications

23. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

24. Budget has been allocated for production of the Biodiversity SPD. Actions arising from the Doubling Nature Strategy will be resourced from existing budgets where this is possible. Otherwise, budget will be allocated through the Council's usual business and service planning procedures.

Climate Change

25. Nature can provide a range of solutions to climate change, both its impacts and causes, for example, increased tree cover may result in increased carbon sequestration and mitigation of flood risks exacerbated by climate change. Both the Doubling Nature Strategy and the Biodiversity SPD will support various natural solutions to climate change.

Appendices

Appendix A: draft Doubling Nature Strategy

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