

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Conservation & Design Advisory Group. 12th July 2006
Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder

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A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY FOR THE CAMBRIDGE SUB REGION

Purpose

1. To present to Members the Green Infrastructure Strategy and seek support for Cabinet to adopt or endorse these documents to enable the development of the projects as appropriate.

A copy of the Summary Report will be distributed for members with the agenda and a presentation on the strategy will made at the meeting. It can be viewed on line at : www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/Document_links.asp?sec_id=811

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	<p>The Green Infrastructure Strategy is one of the 4 'Quality of Life' Strategies which are expected to have a key role to play in the planning and delivery of the new communities.</p> <p>It is proposed that the strategy will be incorporated into a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, linked to the Local Development Framework, later in 2006/7.</p> <p>The strategy will help focus the Council's work on the delivery of enhanced and better connected biodiversity and improved access to the countryside, both of which are included as actions in the Community Strategy and are fundamental to planning policy.</p>
Village Life	<p>The strategy will develop a cohesive network of green spaces which will enhance the opportunities for informal recreation and biodiversity provision and thereby enhance the quality of life in the existing villages and help mitigate the demands of communities in the new developments.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The provision of a cohesive network of green spaces is fundamental to the achievement of sustainability not only by means improved access to the countryside but also by creating new strategic greenspaces which will help mitigate for climate change.</p>
Partnership	<p>The development of the strategy has been achieved by a successful partnership of public and its delivery will be reliant upon this being developed to include the private sector.</p>

Background

3. The Green Infrastructure Strategy report is a fundamental part of the drive to create a series of new communities in the Cambridge Sub Region, in accordance with the approved Structure Plan. It sets out an exciting and realistic vision for using planned

development to enhance and extend our network of large scale green spaces, protected sites, nature reserves and greenway linkages.

4. The strategy was completed by external consultants and managed and funded through a steering group involving a wide range of partners. South Cambridgeshire District Council has been a key funding partner on the study as this Council (along with Cambridge City Council) is the local authority area most affected by major growth in the Sub Region.
5. The vision is to create a “Green Infrastructure” for the sub-region which is described as :

“the sub-regional network of protected sites, nature reserves, greenspaces and greenway linkages. Green Infrastructure should provide (where possible) multi-functional uses, i.e wildlife, recreational and cultural experience, as well as delivering ecological services, such as flood protection and microclimate control. It should also operate at all spatial scales from urban centres though to open countryside”.

Considerations

6. The main objective of the Green Infrastructure Strategy is to create a cohesive and imaginative plan for the provision of large-scale Green Infrastructure for the Cambridge Sub-region over the next 20 years. The purpose is to complement and support housing growth, and to ensure a good quality of life for all existing and new residents for the next 20 years and beyond.
7. The provision of appropriate levels of green infrastructure are acknowledged by the Government as a key priority for the successful implementation of the growth areas, to accommodate and counteract major urban development.
8. The **strategic objectives** which underpin the Green Infrastructure Strategy are :
 - (a) The provision of improved linkages between existing and proposed Green Infrastructure resources.
 - (b) Multi-functionality of greenspace in and around settlements.
 - (c) Creation of enhanced access for all, and by sustainable, means to promote a healthier lifestyle.
 - (d) The enhancement of landscape appropriate to the distinctive patterns of Cambridgeshire.
 - (e) Biodiversity enhancement reflecting and protecting existing resources.
 - (f) Development of prominent landmark projects to provide a focus for the strategy.
9. The strategy sets out the following **Strategic Recommendations** which are summarised and presented for consideration and approval below.

Enhancement of existing habitats.

- R1 - Promote all existing river corridors as focal features for biodiversity and access enhancement and creation.
- R2 - Promote the extension/creation of enhanced biodiversity linkages between ancient woodland clusters.
- R3 - Promote the extension/creation of traditional fen habitats, inc. wetland, meadow and wet woodland with seasonal flooding.
- R4 - Identify/promote opportunities to enhance linkages of chalk habitats.

R5 - Protect acidic heath habitats, encourage restoration and enhance linkages with sites to the west on the Greensand Ridge and to the east to the Breckland.

Creation of new biodiversity corridors.

R6 - Promote development of 'green bridges' over major physical barriers

R7 - Create new strategic biodiversity and access corridors linking main settlements and green hubs.

Provision of new major greenspaces to serve existing and new populations.

R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.

R9 - Develop existing and create new orbital and strategic recreational routes to the countryside in association with existing and planned development.

Enhancement of the recreational access network.

R10 - Promote enhanced and new waterway links within the Fens to provide improved access by water.

R11 – Promote biodiversity and landscape enhancements in rural areas, particularly along the Strategic Rights of Way.

R12 – Promote and improve the network, status and quality of strategic/published routes.

R13 - Promote the provision of river bridging points in key parts of the Rights of Way network.

Provision of Landmark Projects as a catalyst for delivery.

R14 - Support the creation and development of Landmark Projects to focus delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and encourage linkage with recreational and historic/cultural sites and projects.

10. The **spatial development** and delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy is essentially composed of three components : (a) corridors; (b) sites and (c) areas. These are outlined below :

(a) *Corridors*

The first part of the development of the strategy is the creation of a 'green grid', which is the network of routes across the area. The Ouse Valley and Ouse Washes are the most prominent features but the other rivers (such as Cam, Rhee, Shep), streams, drains, etc are also a key part of the network. The new corridors have been identified to provide linkage between biodiversity clusters and also provide enhanced public access.

(b) *Sites*

More than 20 significant sites are included in the strategy, comprising both existing major sites (such as Wimpole Hall, Wandlebury, Denny Abbey & Farmland Museum) and new facilities in close proximity to urban expansions (such as the country parks at Northstowe and the Southern Fringe/Monsanto).

(c) *Areas.*

Initiatives which relate to the wider agricultural landscapes are also included and aim to enhance the local landscape character and biodiversity interest.

11. A series of potential projects have been identified to address the delivery of each strategic recommendation. These are prioritised in the report (*refer to Table A – Page 25*). The projects have been developed to build upon existing initiatives that are currently being developed, to create a complementary programme of initiatives.

12. The highest **priority initiatives** with the most direct impact relevance to South Cambridgeshire are summarised in the table below.

Green Infrastructure Strategy recommendation	Project Name	Lead Delivery Organisation.	Current status <i>(June 2006)</i>
R1 - Promote all existing river corridors as focal features for biodiversity and access enhancement and creation.	Fen Drayton Lakes	RSPB	Implementation. Growth Area Funding approved – 2006-08
R1 - Promote all existing river corridors as focal features for biodiversity and access enhancement and creation.	River Rhee Enhancement	Environment Agency, SCDC.	Project concept being developed.
R1 - Promote all existing river corridors as focal features for biodiversity and access enhancement and creation.	Cam Valley Project – Cambridge to Ely.	Farmland Museum, English Heritage Nat. Trust, SCDC	Project outline developed for GAF bidding round.
R2 - Promote the extension and creation of enhanced biodiversity linkages between ancient woodland clusters.	Forest of South Cambridgeshire	Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust.	Implementation. Growth Area Funding approved – 2006-08
R3 - Promote the extension and creation of traditional fen habitats, inc. wetland, meadow and wet woodland with seasonal flooding.	Wicken Fen Vision	National Trust	Implementation. Growth Area Funding approved 2004-06 & 2006-08
R3 - Promote the extension and creation of traditional fen habitats, inc. wetland, meadow and wet woodland with seasonal flooding.	Chalk landscapes enhancement – south east of Cambridge.	Devils Dyke Steering Group	Project outline developed for GAF bidding round.
R7 - Create new strategic biodiversity and access corridors linking main settlements and green hubs.	Guided busway corridor	CCC, SCDC, Wildlife Trust.	To be implemented subject to Planning Permission & final funding approval.
R7 - Create new strategic biodiversity and access corridors linking main settlements and green hubs.	Northstowe, Cottenham to Denny Abbey/Farm Museum & Wicken fen corridor.	Farmland Museum, English Heritage, SCDC Farm,	Project outline to be developed - along with landscape strategy for Northstowe.
R7 - Create new strategic biodiversity and access corridors linking main settlements and green hubs.	Wimpole Hub – Cobbs Wood Demonstration Farm	National Trust	Project concept being developed.
R7 - Create new strategic biodiversity and access corridors linking main settlements and green hubs.	North west Cambridge settlements link - Cambourne	CCC, SCDC	Project concept being developed.
R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Gog Magog Countryside Project	Cambridge Pres. Society & Wildlife Trust.	Project outline developed for GAF bidding round.
R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Northstowe new settlement. Landscape buffers to existing villages, water park & country park	Developers & SCDC	Project outline developed - along with landscape strategy for Northstowe.
R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Coton Countryside Reserve	Cambridge Pres. Society.	Implementation. Growth Area Funding approved – 2004-06

R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Cambridge Southern Fringe & Monsanto site – strategic open space on enhanced Cam corridor	Developers & SCDC	Project outline developed - along with landscape strategy for Southern Fringe..
R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Northern Fringe of Cambridge enhanced access to land east of Fen Rd.	Developers & SCDC, CCC	Project to be developed - along with landscape strategy.
R8 - Create a range of new strategic, accessible greenspaces in association with planned major development.	Northern Fringe – Arbury Camp – enhanced linkage to west of Histon Rd	Developers & SCDC, CCC	Project implementation to be developed - along with landscape strategy.
R9 - Develop existing and create new orbital and strategic recreational routes to the countryside in association with existing and planned development.	Create cycleway, bridleway along route of Guided Busway	CCC	To be implemented subject to Planning Permission & final funding approval.
R11 – Promote biodiversity and landscape enhancements in rural areas, particularly along the Strategic Rights of Way.	New strategic access corridor from Wilbrham Fen and Fleam Dyke to Icknield Way	CCC, Wildlife Trust, Eng.Nature, Eng.Heritage	Project to be developed - along with strategic landscape strategy.
R11 – Promote biodiversity and landscape enhancements in rural areas, particularly along the Strategic Rights of Way.	Chalk grassland project – Roman Road & Fleam Dyke	CCC, Wildlife Trust, Eng.Nature, Eng.Heritage	Project on-going and under further development - along with Linear Sites Project.
R13 - Promote the provision of river bridging points in key parts of the Rights of Way network.	River Cam Crossing at Upware to aid east-west connection from Wicken Fen to Denny Abbey & west	Nat Trust, EA, SCDC, Sustrans CCC	Project on-going and under further development
R13 - Promote the provision of river bridging points in key parts of the Rights of Way network.	Additional crossing of R.Ouse at Needingworth, Church End	CCC	Project to be developed- along with strategic landscape strategy.
R14 - Support the creation and development of Landmark Projects to focus and encourage linkage with recreational and historic/cultural sites and projects.	Bridge of Reeds link to Wicken Fen Vision	National Trust	Project on-going and under further development.

13. Members will recognise that a number of the above key projects have previously been considered by the Conservation Advisory Group and have already received support, including some funding support. It is considered appropriate that the group continues to act as a forum to examine and develop SCDC support for the priority projects, hence the need to consider the strategy as a whole and gain Council adoption.
14. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is referred to in the **Local Development Framework** documents and the proposal is to incorporate it into a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document later in 2006. The objective is to ensure the long-term commitment to the strategy to enable its cohesive realisation.
15. It is considered important that the strategy is properly recognised by the local authority as being vital to the successful and sustainable delivery of the growth areas. This will strengthen its status and help attract external funding to secure delivery.

Officers in each of the local authorities in Cambridgeshire are in the process of presenting the strategy to Elected Members for their approval.

Options

16. The Conservation & Design Advisory Group is requested to consider the Green Infrastructure Strategy and either :
- (a) Recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder and the Cabinet support the proposed adoption of the Strategy as Council Policy and authorises officers to continue to work with partners to secure its long-term delivery.
- Or
- (b) Declines to recommend that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder and Cabinet support the proposed adoption of the Strategy as Council Policy, outlining the reasons for this option.

Financial Implications

17. The delivery of the Green Infrastructure will be achieved by a wide range of options and opportunities for funding. These include : direct developer's funding; provision of suitable sites or local facilities by developer as a fundamental contribution in order to meet basic planning needs. Funding has also to date been made available from the Government's "Growth Area Fund". It is clear that S.106 packages will not on their own meet all the demands identified and the strategies.
18. Therefore, it is important to identify a balanced programme of prioritised initiatives for which funding from a variety of sources will need to be drawn over the life of the strategy. Crucially the Council's encouragement and support is required to enable the various lead partner organisations secure necessary funding.
19. It is not expected that the Council will sign up to any financial commitment to the delivery of the strategy at this stage. It is important though that it commits through officer time, member support and Planning Policy development, to work in partnership towards the achievement of the component projects.

Legal Implications

21. No legal implications at this stage, support for the strategy is discretionary.

Staffing Implications

22. SCDC staff have been involved in the development of the strategy and its component projects. This is expected to continue and may increase if assistance is required with developing funding bids.

Risk Management Implications

23. The main risk is to the successful delivery of the growth areas if these Strategies are not taken into consideration and delivered.

Consultations

24. Wide consultation with stakeholders has taken place with each of the studies. Each individual component project will be subject to further consultation, including presentation to C&DAG if appropriate.

Conclusions/Summary

25. Sir David Trippier (Chairman of Cambridgeshire Horizons) and Jonathon Porrit (Chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission) jointly launched the Green Infrastructure Strategy on 9th June 2006. In launching the strategy they laid great emphasis on the *fundamental necessity* of achieving the delivery of the long-term strategy, as a key component of the growth agenda (rather than as an optional addition to housing development).
26. It was stressed that the enhancement and provision of space to accommodate both the movement of wildlife and community recreation is essential to ensure that the demands of development does not compromise existing quality of life or negate the attractiveness of the area for future communities. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is, therefore, one of the basic strategic tools to help positively manage this development process. Members are thus requested to support the adoption of the strategy.

Recommendation.

27. That the Conservation & Design Advisory Group expresses support for the development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and recommends that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder and the Cabinet support the adoption of the Strategy as Council Policy, and authorises officers to continue to work with partners to secure its long-term delivery.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Quality of Life Programme : “Green Infrastructure Strategy” - Cambridgeshire Horizons – 2006.

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