

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK EXECUTIVE PANEL – 7 JULY 2011

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

EAST HERTS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (MARCH 2011) AND HERTFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (MARCH 2011)

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report presents for consideration and agreement the East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan and Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan by Land Use Consultants.

RECOMMENDATION TO EXECUTIVE: to commend to Council that:	
(A)	The East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan (March 2011) and the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan (March 2011) be agreed and published:
(i)	as a technical study, forming part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts Local Development Framework;
(ii)	as a basis for informing future Development Control decisions concerning development and green infrastructure; and
(iii)	as a basis for green infrastructure planning in the District.

1.0 Background

1.1 Green Infrastructure is described in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning, as “a network of multifunctional green space...both new and existing...both rural and urban...which

supports the natural and ecological processes...and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities...” This definition is reinforced and expanded in *Green Infrastructure in Hertfordshire: A Framework* and in Natural England’s *Green Infrastructure Guidance*.

1.2 Working on behalf of a network of stakeholders, in particular Hertfordshire Borough and District Councils, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Authority and the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Hertfordshire County Council commissioned Land Use Consultants to develop Strategic Green Infrastructure Plans for the county and the wider GreenArc area. ‘Local level’ Green Infrastructure Plans (GIPs) have also been developed for seven districts (Dacorum, East Herts, Hertsmere, St. Albans, Three Rivers, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield). Account has also been taken of existing GIPs to ensure links across boundaries, such as with North Herts.

2.0 Report

2.1 The East Herts GIP is a high level plan which identifies further technical and project work which will be needed in the future to deliver green infrastructure. As such the GIP for East Herts:

- Provides an overview of existing green infrastructure assets within the district;
- Sets out an assessment of the ability of green infrastructure to provide multiple environmental, social and in some cases economic functions;
- Considers opportunities for enhancement and creation of green infrastructure;
- Outlines a series of potential projects to deliver multiple functions and benefits; and
- Provides advice on taking green infrastructure proposals forward through spatial planning and practical delivery.

2.2 The Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for Hertfordshire relates to GI assets and proposals which affect multiple districts. In addition to the above, the Hertfordshire Strategic GIP:

- Provides an overview of existing green infrastructure assets within the County, including consideration of assets and proposals which are significant for national and sub-national/regional green infrastructure planning; and,

- Sets out an assessment, at the strategic level, of the ability of green infrastructure to provide multiple environmental and social and in some cases economic functions.

2.3 The production of the reports has been informed by a variety of stakeholder events held for each district and for the Hertfordshire Strategic Plan. Both the East Herts and Strategic events were very well attended by a wide variety of interested parties including the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre, Environment Agency, Natural England and British Waterways among other industry experts.

2.4 The East Herts GIP (**Essential Reference Paper 'B'**) consists of four sections with Section 1 introducing the project and explaining what green infrastructure is and the importance of managing these assets through the planning process. Section 2 explains in detail how the District's GI assets have been mapped and assessed based on particular functions of GI, such as contributing to health and wellbeing, conserving historic landscape character, land remediation, flood attenuation and water management for example. Each assessment is supported by further evidence contained in an appendix document which consists of larger maps, detailed evidence and references (**Essential Background Paper 'C'**).

2.5 Section 3 of the report takes the assessment stage through into a bespoke vision, five action zones based on key habitat enhancement schemes defined for the wider GI network and a list of recommended GI projects for East Herts, with an indication of costs and steps required to deliver. This list of projects does not preclude others from coming forward at a later date, but the six detailed are considered of sufficient scale and importance to the East Herts and wider GI network to be given priority. They include:

1. Hertford and Ware Wetland Enhancements
2. Stort Valley and Countryside Links
3. River Valleys Project – Lee, Stort, Rib, Beane, Quin and Ash
4. Lateral Links – Green Link between Bishop's Stortford and Stevenage
5. Panshanger Park and Mimram Valley Greenspace
6. Green Hertfordshire

2.6 Section 4 of the report addresses issues of delivery in terms of progressing the findings of the report into spatial planning and

development management/development control policies. A process diagram is included which details the way the reports should be used in practice, which could be provided to developers, stakeholders and officers. This section also details specific actions that should be taken to embed the importance of green infrastructure into all aspects of the local authority's responsibilities. One of these actions is to nominate a green infrastructure 'Champion', ideally a Council Member, to ensure greater 'buy-in' from Members and to actively promote GI.

2.7 Potential future work could also include producing a GI checklist for development management decisions, a GI Design and Delivery Guide or a GI Supplementary Planning Document and more detailed site-specific GI project work.

2.8 It is the intention that the East Herts GIP and Hertfordshire Strategic Plan, along with the suite of district and GreenArc reports and appendices prepared by Land Use Consultants, will become a key part of the evidence base informing the development of the Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Development Management documents along with informing decisions on planning applications.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

An electronic copy of the reports are available online at www.eastherts.gov.uk/gip

- *ERP 'B': East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan – Final Report, March 2011, Land Use Consultants*
- *ERP 'C': East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan – Appendices*

- *Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan – Final Report, March 2011, Land Use Consultants*
- *Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan – Appendices*

Hard copies can be made available for Members to borrow on request from the Planning Policy Team.

Public inspection copies are available at reception at the Council Offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):</p>	<p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improve standards of the built neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p>Shaping now, shaping the future <i>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.</i></p> <p>Leading the way, working together <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>In order to ensure the GI plans had 'buy-in' from landowners, stakeholders and providers a series of consultation events were held.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>It is a statutory duty under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for East Herts Council as the local planning authority to produce and keep up-to-date sound and robust Development Plan for the district. The Green Infrastructure Plan forms part of the evidence base used to ensure the Core Strategy and other planning documents are justifiable and deliverable.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>There will be on-going costs associated with the recommended projects and future technical work if this is undertaken. It is intended that the majority of project work would be achieved through developer contributions and partnership working with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust among others. Other sources of potential future funding include Central Government, Lottery and European funding.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>Depending on how the GIP is taken forward there could be staffing implications in terms of providing a central resource for GI project management and promotion.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Failure to proceed with the recommended actions and projects contained in the GIP reports could result in the gradual loss of or decline in quality of the district's GI assets resulting in a reduced quality of life for both people and wildlife, a loss of key habitats and wildlife corridors. GI assets also mitigate against the implications of climate change, including extreme weather conditions such as drought and flood.</p>

	<p>In order to be found sound the Core Strategy and other planning documents should be based on technical evidence and the views of the community and stakeholders. There is widespread support for raising the profile of green infrastructure. To not take the reports into account in the production of key planning documents could lead to challenges that they are unsound.</p>
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