

East Herts Council Report

Executive

Date of meeting: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Report title: Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – Members have agreed to undertake a review of the District Plan, including an update of the evidence documents needed to support the new District Plan. The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, published in 2022, provides a strategic framework for the delivery of green infrastructure in the county, that can usefully inform local planning policies and strategy in East Herts. Therefore, this report summarises key priorities of the Strategy and seeks agreement to use the document as part of the new District Plan evidence base.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE to recommend to Council that:

a) The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2022), attached in three sections as Appendix A, B and C, be agreed as part of the evidence base to inform the new East Herts District Plan.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree that the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy can be used as part of the evidence base for the new District Plan.

2.0 Background

2.1 Local planning authorities are required to complete a review of their local plans at least once every 5 years from the adoption date

to ensure that plans remain relevant. In October 2023, the Council agreed that East Herts District Plan 2018 needs updating, and that work should commence in 2023/24 on updating the technical studies and other preparatory work required to provide a robust evidence base to support this Review¹. The 30-month period of formal plan-making will then commence in early 2026.

- 2.2 A clear, relevant and proportionate evidence base is essential for efficient and sound plan-making to ensure that all future planning policy and decisions are based on up-to-date information. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out the requirement for the preparation and review of all policies to be, *'underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence'* (paragraph 32).
- 2.3 The evidence base consists of supporting documents that will help inform the future policies and site allocations in the new District Plan. It will cover a range of social, economic, and environmental topics and help identify local needs, constraints and opportunities.
- 2.4 The evidence base will be developed throughout the preparation of the new District Plan and the planning policy team will seek agreement from Executive and Council to include relevant studies as part of the evidence base.

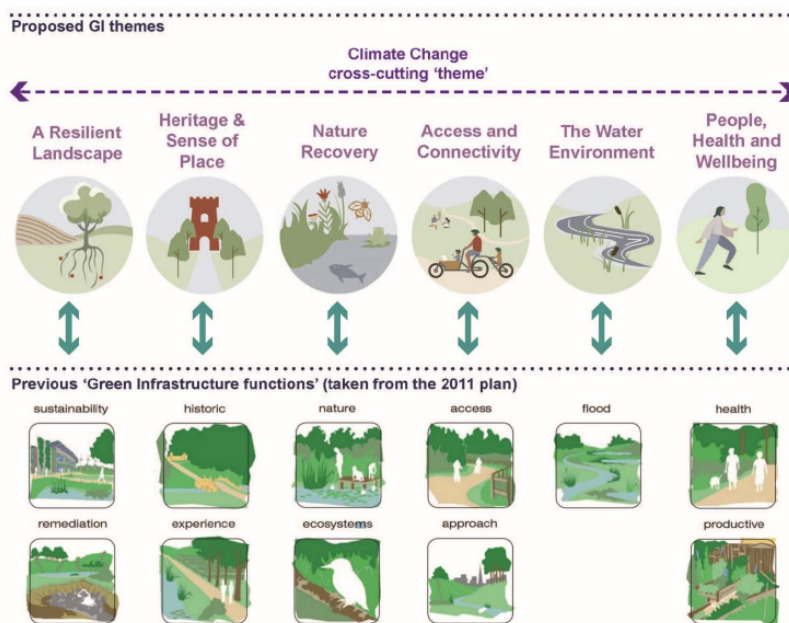
Development of the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 2.5 The current District Plan (2018) was informed by the 2011 Hertfordshire Green (GI) Infrastructure Plan, which was endorsed as part of the evidence base. Likewise, the new District Plan should take account of the latest green infrastructure evidence.

¹ [Agenda for Executive on Tuesday 3rd October, 2023, 7.00 pm - East Herts District Council](#)

2.6 Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership (HIPP),² commissioned the Hertfordshire Green (GI) Infrastructure Strategy to update the original 2011 Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan and provide a joint approach on green infrastructure planning. The relationship between the functions identified in the previous 2011 GI Plan and the themes in the updated Hertfordshire GI Strategy is set out in Figure 5.2 of Part 1 of the GI Strategy. For clarity, this figure is included below:

Figure 5.2: Proposed GI themes and their relationship to the former GI functions from the 2011 Plan



2.7 Published in August 2022, the Hertfordshire GI Strategy presents an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of Hertfordshire's current green infrastructure network. It also identifies priorities, mechanisms and an overarching vision to provide green infrastructure enhancements, with the aim of delivering a more resilient and healthier Hertfordshire. It was developed by consultants, LUC (Land Use Consultants), in consultation with all the Hertfordshire local authorities, through the collection of data, agreement of green infrastructure assets within the county and online workshops. The final Strategy was reported to HIPP on 21

² HIPP comprises the Planning/Transport Portfolio Holders and Heads of Planning from the eleven councils in Hertfordshire and its purpose is to provide a discussion forum for joint planning and infrastructure issues and work programmes.

September 2022, with the recommendation that partners take forward and deliver the priorities in the plan.

3.0 Reason(s)

Importance of Green Infrastructure

- 3.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of green and blue spaces and routes, landscapes, biodiversity, water bodies and heritage, which provide a range of benefits for people, nature and the climate. Essential for creating high-quality, sustainable places, it is an important planning policy consideration. The NPPF requires strategic local plan policies to conserve and enhance green infrastructure. Therefore, policies and site allocations in the new District Plan will need to promote the protection, provision and enhancement of green infrastructure in East Herts, at various scales. GI can serve multiple functions, so will be relevant to a range of topic areas, including nature recovery, biodiversity net gain, sport and recreation, flood risk management, design, active travel, climate change mitigation and adaptation and improvements to air and water quality.
- 3.2 To support the development of a holistic approach to GI in the new District Plan, policies need to be underpinned by a robust evidence base. The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy provides a strategic framework for considering GI in the district.

Overview of the Strategy

- 3.3 The Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy is one document, split in three sections. These are:
- Part One, a strategic review of GI in Hertfordshire;
 - Part Two (a) GI baseline, analysis and priorities;
 - Part Two (b), GI priority actions and delivery.
- 3.4 The three parts of the Strategy are attached to this report as **Appendices A, B and C**. Part One presents the strengths and weaknesses of the county's GI network. It sets the scene by

providing an overview of changes since 2011. This includes an update on policy, examples of best practice in GI and the development of a vision for GI in the county.

- 3.5 Part Two (a) explores the GI baseline in Hertfordshire. The analysis was divided into 'themes' to help understand GI in the county. The review of existing GI functionality was to reflect the aims of climate and nature recovery as well supporting the wellbeing of communities within Hertfordshire. The relevance of green infrastructure to different themes is examined as well as the key assets and factors influencing the need for green infrastructure. The analysis reviews socio-economic indicators to assist with identifying severance and areas for intervention.
- 3.6 Part Two (b) is the final section of the strategy and reviews the priority actions and potential delivery mechanisms. The Green Infrastructure priority actions aim to repair, reconnect and restore GI across Hertfordshire. Of the priorities identified, the following are most relevant to planning policy:
- Deliver environmental enhancement in vulnerable valleys and catchments, including requirements for Sustainable Drainage (SuDs) in policies, conservation of chalk rivers, enhancement of river corridors and integrating GI in planned growth;
 - Expand tree coverage and enhance woodland connectivity;
 - Protect, enhance and connect habitats to support species recovery and climate resilience;
 - Develop local plan policies to promote a GI-led design;
 - Deliver and manage GI as a mechanism to improve air quality and public health;
 - Improve the connectivity of active travel infrastructure, increasing walking and cycling routes and enhancing wildlife corridors.
- 3.7 Whilst not the only mechanism for delivering these GI priorities, the new District Plan can play a key role in conserving and enhancing GI in East Herts. It is officers' view that the strategic

analysis and actions in the Hertfordshire GI Strategy provide an overarching framework that can usefully inform the new District Plan, alongside other relevant documents and strategies that impact the consideration of GI (for example, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), Open Space and Sport Assessment). Therefore, now work has commenced on collating the evidence base, it is recommended the Strategy is agreed as part of this District Plan evidence base.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 The Council could choose not to agree to endorse the Hertfordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy as part of the new District Plan evidence base.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If the Green Infrastructure Strategy is not agreed as part of the evidence base, it may be considered as having reduced weight in informing the strategy and the policy in the new District Plan. This would mean that significant information about local green infrastructure issues could be undervalued. This would be contrary to Government policy to have a robust evidence base and could undermine the Council's position in terms of successfully bringing forward the update of the East Herts District Plan, 2018.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The Strategy was informed by consultation with stakeholders. It will be subject to a number of statutory public consultations as part of the production of the new District Plan.

Community Safety

There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report.

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be carried out of the new District Plan in accordance with The Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Evidence to support the delivery of green infrastructure has a range of environmental benefits including nature recovery, flood alleviation, biodiversity enhancement and climate change mitigation.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report

Health and Safety

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report

Human Resources

There are no human resources implications arising from this report

Human Rights

There are no human rights implications arising from this report

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- 7.1 Appendix A - Part One, a strategic review of GI in Hertfordshire.
- 7.2 Appendix B - part Two (a), GI baseline, analysis and priorities.
- 7.3 Appendix C - part Two (b), GI priority actions and delivery.

Contact Member

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