

Wiltshire Council

Environment Select Committee

29 October 2013

Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Executive summary

The first Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy sets a direction and vision for the identification, enhancement and protection of green infrastructure (GI) in Wiltshire up to 2026, in line with the Core Strategy delivery period and in support of Core Policy 52: Green Infrastructure (CP52) in the core strategy. The strategy provides a framework to identify, enhance and protect multifunctional GI; identifies 12 priorities for Wiltshire through five themes; suggests a number of delivery methods over the delivery period and outlines an Action Plan of key GI projects for Wiltshire Council and its partners to pursue.

Proposal

That the Committee:

- a) Consider the progress and direction to date on the Green Infrastructure Strategy
- b) Endorse the continued development of the Green Infrastructure Strategy

Reason for proposal

To ensure progress and development of the emerging strategy is subject to overview and scrutiny input and feedback

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Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

Purpose of report

1. The Environment Select Committee is asked to consider the development and progress made to date, on Wiltshire's first Green Infrastructure Strategy.

The Environment Select Committee is invited to feedback on the multifunctional framework and partnership approach that the strategy development has taken.

Background

2. The development of a Wiltshire-wide Green Infrastructure Strategy began in 2010 following the move to unitary status. Throughout 2011 and 2012 a number of consultation workshops with partner organisations and neighbouring authorities took place. Research of evidence required for the development of CorePolicy 52: Green Infrastructure (CP52) in the Wiltshire Core Strategy was undertaken in 2012 and is captured in Core Strategy Topic Paper 13.
3. As part the Core Strategy Examination in Public in support of CP52, the council agreed to produce a Draft Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy by the end of 2013 with public consultation and adoption of the final strategy by mid 2014.
4. Since June 2013 wide ranging consultation has taken place with a number of internal council departments, external partner organisations, neighbouring authorities and community groups across Wiltshire and the Wiltshire Local Nature Partnership, Link2Nature. A framework has been developed which captures the multifunctional nature of GI and assists in identifying issues and priorities within Wiltshire. Delivery mechanisms are being developed which focus on new development and community empowerment/asset transfer. An action plan which draws together key internal and external projects is also being developed.

Main considerations for the committee

5. The overarching aim of the strategy is to identify, enhance and protect Wiltshire's green infrastructure for the benefit of Wiltshire's economy, communities, wildlife and landscapes.
6. The Wiltshire Core Strategy considers GI as "a descriptive term used to characterise spaces such as parks and gardens (urban and country parks, formal gardens); amenity green space (informal and formal recreation and sports spaces, domestic gardens, village greens, green roofs); urban green spaces (urban commons, waste land and disturbed ground); woodland, downland and meadows, wetlands, open and running water, quarries; green

corridors (rivers and canals including their banks, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, pedestrian paths, and rights of way); allotments, cemeteries, and churchyards.”

7. The strategy will achieve the following objectives:
 - a. Awareness raising amongst communities, town and parish councils, planning authorities, developers and partner organisations about GI and the multiple benefits that high quality GI provides.
 - b. Provide a framework for communities to assess and identify local GI priorities, supporting the inclusion of GI considerations in local neighbourhood plans.
 - c. Provide developers and Wiltshire Council planning officers with guidance and support regarding GI standards in new developments in Wiltshire; including the requirement to complete a standardised GI audit as part of the planning application process for large developments.
 - d. Identifying opportunities for partnership working to improve and enhance GI in Wiltshire and across our authority boundaries.
 - e. Develop an Action Plan for the delivery and support of strategic GI projects across Wiltshire.
8. The strategy frames GI through five themes in order to capture the multi-purpose nature of GI. Within each theme a number of issues and priorities are identified for Wiltshire. These priorities are addressed through the strategies developing Action Plan. (See Appendix A)

Environmental impact of the proposal

9. The strategy outlines Wiltshire Councils commitment to protecting Wiltshire Councils historic natural environment, designated sites and protected areas. The strategy includes reference to a number of other Core Policies from the Wiltshire Core Strategy and policies relating to Habitat Regulations.

Equality and diversity impact of the proposal

10. The strategy recognizes the diverse nature of Wiltshire’s communities and seeks to improve community cohesion and interaction between community groups through the use of GI.

Risk assessment

11. There is a risk that the council will fail to produce the strategy by the agreed mid-2014 deadline. Feedback is being pursued throughout the strategy development process to assist in the consultation process and project plans are being strictly adhered to.

Public Health and Safeguarding Implications

12. There are no known implications.

Financial Implications

13. The production of the strategy bears no financial implication from departmental budgets as the costs of the project lead are met corporately as part of the organisations leadership and development costs.
14. The individual projects proposed in the strategy will be considered individually during the delivery and implementation of the strategy.

Legal Implications

15. The strategy supports the opportunities available to communities to take ownership of GI assets through the councils Asset Transfer Policy. As part of this process increased pressure is expected to be placed on legal services to deal with increased application rates in the future.

Conclusion

16. The Environment Select Committee are asked to consider and endorse the progress and direction that the Wiltshire Green Infrastructure strategy development has taken to date.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework

The Wiltshire Green Infrastructure Strategy Framework

