



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE**

**to
PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE
6 JUNE 2019**

GREEN ESSEX STRATEGY CONSULTATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. Essex County Council (ECC) are consulting on the Green Essex Strategy (GES). The consultation is open until June 2019. This report summarises the GES and includes draft comments for this Committee to consider submitting as the Council's response to the consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the draft consultation responses to the Green Essex Strategy, as detailed in paragraph 3.9 of this report, be approved and submitted to Essex County Council.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Essex County Council has produced a draft GES that raises the importance of developing quality green infrastructure and green spaces across Essex to accompany planned growth in the county over the next twenty years.
- 3.2 The purpose of the GES is to take a positive approach to enhance, protect and create an inclusive and integrated network of high-quality green infrastructure in Greater Essex, to create a county-wide understanding of green infrastructure – its functions and values, and to identify opportunities for implementing green infrastructure. The aim is to guide and shape planning and other services through setting principles that can inform plans and strategies, that will enable a coherent approach and partner collaboration in the delivery of multi-functional natural assets, which will provide environmental, social and economic benefits for Greater Essex.
- 3.3 Green infrastructure is made up of natural and semi-natural assets and habitat types, of green and blue spaces, and of other environmental features that maintain and enhance ecosystem services. It provides multi-functional benefits integral to the health and wellbeing of our communities and to the ecology and economy of the county. Green infrastructure is often referred to as a network of these natural and semi-natural assets and spaces, which are joined together connecting urban and rural areas and are habitually strategically planned.

- 3.4 Green infrastructure for this strategy includes the following assets:
- Parks and gardens;
 - Natural and semi-natural open spaces;
 - Ancient Woodlands;
 - Reservoirs, lakes and ponds;
 - Coastal features;
 - Waterways (watercourses);
 - Greenways (Public Rights of Way, footpaths, cycleways and tracks, byways, bridleways);
 - Outdoor Sport Facilities (Sport pitches);
 - Open spaces and premises (Educational premises open space and sport pitches);
 - Cemeteries and churchyards;
 - Allotments, community gardens and city farms;
 - Agricultural land and meadows;
 - Public realm / civic spaces (urban greening - urban and street trees, road verges, green walls, sustainable urban drainage and natural flood management).
- 3.5 The strategy aims to take a positive approach to enhance, protect and create an integrated network of high-quality green infrastructure in Essex. Just as importantly, it will help ensure funding opportunities are maximised in the delivery of multi-functional natural assets which will provide a range of benefits, including:
- helping mitigate the impact of climate change;
 - improving public parks, play areas and other green spaces;
 - the development of greenways (e.g. Public Rights of Way);
 - enabling active travel and recreational opportunities;
 - contributing to the attractiveness of a place to attract new businesses to the area.
- 3.6 It outlines an approach that requires a change to the way we think about and value our green infrastructure and green spaces.
- 3.7 The Strategy has been prepared by an Essex County Council cross directorate Steering Group and a range of key stakeholders have been engaged at various stages to inform the initial consultation version.
- 3.8 The public consultation is intended to enable the public and stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft GES. Comments will help to finalise the GES, identify priorities and develop the Green Essex action plan, which will be presented to partners and ECC's Cabinet in Winter 2019.

- 3.9 The GES follows a similar approach to the Maldon District Green Infrastructure Strategy in that it has a comprehensive evidence base, vision, objectives and projects linked to the objectives. Although it has a different emphasis, being written by ECC, it does not conflict with this Council's Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy. There are however a few areas where the GES could be improved, and these are the focus of the proposed consultation responses given below:

Section	Draft consultation response
Economy objective - Secure funding for new and existing green infrastructure to ensure their sustainability	<p>The objective should be re-named 'Funding', as the aim to secure funding for Green Infrastructure (GI) is not related to 'economy' as a topic.</p> <p>An additional objective related to the title 'Economy' should be considered, to recognise the importance of GI to the wider economy (e.g. tourism).</p>
3.1 Green Infrastructure Assets of Greater Essex, page 11	<p>It is understandable that agricultural land has been illustrated on a separate map to the Green Assets map, as it would mask the distribution of GI across the county, if the two were included on the same map. However, the map of agricultural land should not be relegated to an appendix. Agricultural land forms 68% of the county and the importance of farming to GI, in terms of food production, landscape and biodiversity should be given a higher profile in this strategy. The agricultural land map should be provided on the page after the GI map on page 12.</p>
Page 23 Local and regional policy	<p>Links to the Local Plans, local authority Design Guides and Green Infrastructure Strategies should be provided. This would reflect the approach taken in the Essex Design Guide, which includes a specific section linking to the other Essex local authorities' design guides.</p>
Table 2 Project delivery of the objectives, page 39/102- Objective: Increase use and inclusivity of green infrastructure across all social groups and abilities	<p>The two proposals listed are both aimed at young people. These do not cover all social groups and abilities (e.g. older people, people with disabilities, BAME) as the objective states and therefore the proposals do not meet the stated aim of this objective.</p>
Page 46 – Essex Design Guide section	<p>Links to the local authority Design Guides and Green Infrastructure Strategies should be provided here. This would reflect the approach taken in the Essex Design Guide, which includes a specific section linking to the other Essex local authorities' design guides.</p>
Page 52 – create green infrastructure as part of new developments	<p>3rd paragraph – technical correction required: 'All the Local Plans are being reviewed regarding their policies on green infrastructure in line with the NPPF.'</p> <p>Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) an adopted Local Plan must be reviewed every five years - but not just for GI policies - which this sentence suggests. Only a few Local Plans in Essex have been recently adopted, several are in the final</p>

	<p>stages of preparation.</p> <p>Revise to:</p> <p>Local Plan preparation or review should include policies to support green infrastructure, in line with the NPPF. These policies can provide for biodiversity net gains and off setting, as well as expanding this approach to</p>
Section 9.8 Agriculture page 86	The text on environmental and countryside stewardship schemes could be expanded and strengthened to include a map showing the areas of the county being farmed under these schemes (available from Magic Map) and the land area/% of Essex covered by these initiatives.
Throughout – references to the Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) e.g. pg. 92	References to RAMS need to be reviewed and, where necessary, updated by the Place Services team drafting the RAMS SPD.
Page 100 Action Plan proposal – Develop the Coast Path in Essex	This need to recognise that the recreational impact of the Coast Path on the coastal habitat sites need to be mitigated.
GES Appendices	
Appendix 2 - Map of Productive Spaces and the Agricultural Land Classification page 12	The text downgrades the contribution that agricultural land managed under the environmental and countryside stewardship schemes contribute to Green Infrastructure in the County. Include an additional map showing the areas of land managed under these initiatives (data available from Magic Maps).

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Essex County Council has published the Green Essex Strategy for consultation. The GES aims to strengthen the network of Green Infrastructure in the county. Maldon District Council has the opportunity to make representation to the consultation via this Committee.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The GES supports all three strategic themes: Place, Community and Prosperity.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – implementation of the GES will help to ensure that residents and visitors will have access to quality urban and rural green spaces.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The proposed projects will increase access to green spaces to all sectors of the population, with an emphasis on young people.

- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – No impact – this is an ECC strategy.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – No impact – this is an ECC strategy.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – No impact – this is an ECC strategy.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – Implementation of the GES could improve the quality and access to green spaces in Essex.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** - Implementation of the GES could improve the quality and access to green spaces in Essex.

Background Papers: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/rci/green-essex-strategy>

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