

### SCOPE OF THE BRIEF FOR THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY FOR MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Maldon District Council developed the existing Green Infrastructure Study in 2011 as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Plan (LDP). The study surveyed the green infrastructure assets in Maldon, focussing on accessible greenspace, alongside the indoor and outdoor sports facilities in their role as community facilities. It identifies the need for green infrastructure in the district, a range of green infrastructure standards and key areas of existing deficiency as well as recommendations that could be used in both development management and to inform the Council's wider strategic objectives in areas such as health, environment and regeneration. The study was strongly informed by the approach developed in Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation, now superseded by the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.
- 1.2 Five years on from that initial study the planning context has changed and there is a need to review the proposed network to update the evidence base of the LDP, alongside the development of a vision statement and concept plan to promote the idea of green infrastructure in Maldon to developers, potential funding partners and the community. A set of principles will be identified to underpin the vision and concept, inform a set of proposed policies, as well as realizing the key recommendation from the 2011 study to develop a Green Infrastructure Action Plan.

#### 2.0 MALDON CONTEXT

- 2.1 Maldon is predominantly a rural district that covers an area of 36,000 hectares. It has over 70 miles of coastline. The natural landscape is dominated by the estuaries of the Rivers Blackwater and Crouch, with their extensive alluvial plains. There are significant areas of semi-natural habitat that make an important contribution to the area's diverse landscape character and ecology. The presence and distribution of these habitats is strongly influenced by geology and landform and include woodland, grassland, estuary, salt marsh and mudflat and freshwater and open water habitats. Many of the areas are of international, national and local importance and have been designated as Ramsar Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and National Nature Reserves (NNR). These assets comprise a significant part of the sub-region's "green infrastructure" base.
- 2.2 The District also has a strong built heritage that defines the character and distinctiveness of the District's towns, villages and hamlets and is reflective of its historic settlement patterns, land use, industry, and social and economic history. This heritage includes buildings of architectural or historic interest, Scheduled Monuments, one Registered Park and Garden, the Battle of Maldon Registered Battlefield, many Conservation Areas, including the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation and the nationally important World War One Aerodrome at Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome. All of these form important elements of, or destinations within, the Green Infrastructure network
- 2.3 Within Maldon there are also a range of accessible greenspaces that provide a variety of experiences for both residents and visitors alike. These vary between more formal parks such as Promenade Park in the centre of Maldon town and Riverside Park in Burnham on Crouch, and the semi-natural Elms Farm Park, which is also of district level significance. Elsewhere provision is in the form of amenity greens, formal sports pitches, accessible semi natural greenspace, allotments and cemeteries. Maldon also has a well-developed network of Public Rights of Way,

including along much of its coastline, although with a fragmented bridleway system, that along with cycle paths, the canal and railway corridors provides the potential for a dynamic framework of green links.

### 3.0 THE VISION FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the importance of green infrastructure in relation to climate change adaptation and mitigation, as well as its benefits in terms of quality of life<sup>1</sup>. It defines green infrastructure as ‘... a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’.<sup>2</sup>

3.2 Natural England’s 2009 guidance explains that green infrastructure networks should be capable of delivering ecosystem services to the communities they serve whilst maintaining local character and distinctiveness. It confirms that green infrastructure helps deliver:

- A healthy natural environment
- Enhanced access and understanding of the natural environment
- Sustainable use of the natural environment
- Future-proofing for climate change

3.3 Green infrastructure typologies include parks and gardens, amenity greenspace such as village greens and greenspace on housing estates, natural and semi-natural greenspace, green corridors, allotments and cemeteries. The Landscape Institute’s 2013 Position Statement on green infrastructure<sup>3</sup> confirms that green infrastructure assets that relate to local character and heritage can enhance sense of place and foster community spirit. Both the natural and historic environment have shaped Maldon’s principal assets, attracting tourists and providing recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors alike.

3.4 The existing Maldon Green Infrastructure Study was prepared in 2011 as one of a suite of evidence-base documents to inform the proposed Local Development Framework. The opportunity was taken to incorporate a sports facilities assessment at the same time and to fulfil the needs of Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) in relation to identifying local green space standards. However PPG17 was cancelled by publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012. The Localism Act in 2011 also resulted in the abolition of Regional Strategies which had provided the main policy context for development of green infrastructure networks at a local level.

3.5 Nowadays it is the NPPF that identifies that local authorities are required to plan positively for both biodiversity and green infrastructure, and that local plans should take account of long term climate change impacts. Planning for green infrastructure is still seen as forming an intrinsic part of shaping new development.

3.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines green infrastructure as, ‘A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities’. The NPPF specifically makes reference to the role of green infrastructure in new development to meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change all of which are highly pertinent to Maldon as a coastal district.

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012); Communities and Local Government

<sup>2</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (2012); Communities and Local Government

<sup>3</sup> The Landscape Institute (2013): Green Infrastructure – an integrated approach to land use

### 4.0 PROPOSED MALDON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy is intended as a two-stage document:
- a) Providing an update of the existing green infrastructure baseline, including reviewing the existing GIS datasets, the policy context and criteria for evaluation Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace, as well as
  - b) Developing a vision, concept plan, principles and policy for the network and an action plan for delivery.
- 4.2 A key part of the process at both stages will be engagement with key stakeholders such as land use and transport planners, landowners and developers, community leaders and those in the public, private and third sectors who will develop and manage the green infrastructure and potentially provide funding for it.

### 5.0 SCOPE OF THE WORK

#### 5.1 STAGE 1: EVIDENCE REVIEW

Review of Assets: The review should examine the existing green infrastructure assets identified in the Green Infrastructure Study, 2011 that lie within Maldon District Council boundaries and collate any new elements created or lost since 2011, including demonstrating awareness of green infrastructure features beyond the district's boundaries that contribute to the functionality of the green infrastructure network. Likewise, the review should have regard to identified future growth and the impact that this may have on current green infrastructure within the district or its future provision.

- 5.2 It is not intended that a site by site PPG 17 type greenspace assessment should take place, nor that indoor sports provision should be included in the review, except to note where these facilities provide a valuable destination or hub on the green infrastructure network e.g. for parking, toilets, cafes and further leisure opportunities. However, the update should include a review of the existing policy and guidance context including future –proofing of the strategy against emerging national policy going forward particularly in relation to public health, ecosystem services and natural capital accounting.
- 5.3 The database of existing green infrastructure GIS layers (list appended to this brief) should be reviewed and updated. The database includes sites below 0.2 hectares where groups of smaller sites form strategically-important green corridors or opportunities together. New or previously unrecognised assets should be added to the database, and further deficiencies of different sizes and types of green infrastructure identified with recommendations as to how these might be remedied. Any issues of data quality should be reflected in caveats to the study.
- 5.4 Development of a set of robust criteria for appraising Natural and Semi-Natural greenspace sites should be undertaken to inform future policy, and the existing database of natural and semi-natural greenspace sites appraised against these criteria.
- 5.5 STAGE 2: VISION, CONCEPT, PRINCIPLES, POLICY AND ACTION PLAN: The analysis of the interplay of the different elements of green infrastructure should include the identification of existing multi-functional corridors, key green infrastructure features, gaps and sensitivities, strategic opportunities and specific projects for improving the functionality of the network for both the current and future population. Opportunities and projects could include both spatial

opportunities for existing or proposed enhancement zones, sites and corridors, as well as health, educational or promotional opportunities that could enhance the resident or visitor experience.

- 5.6 The analysis should lead to identification of a Vision for the green infrastructure network over the lifespan of the approved Maldon District Local Development Plan, along with a Concept Plan that expresses that vision and the opportunities in a spatial way. These should be underpinned by a set of Principles for the protection, enhancement or creation of the green infrastructure network, particularly in relation to new opportunities delivered through the development management system. The Principles should be used to inform a set of proposed Policies that could be adopted at a future date and inform decision-making.
- 5.7 Identified opportunities and projects should be developed into a prioritised and phased Action Plan, including recommendations on key delivery mechanisms and partners, potential sources of funding and order of cost, timescales and priorities.
- 5.8 In undertaking this work, the implications of other relevant existing and emerging national, sub-regional and local strategies and plans should be taken into account. Projects of particular importance include:
- The England Coast Path - a new National Trail: the government's initiative to create a right of access around the open coast;
  - The Wildlife Trust's Living Landscape Project – which aims to restore nature on a landscape scale.
  - Wallasea Island Wild Coast project: RSPB's landmark project on the River Crouch that aims to recreate around 670 acres of coastal wetland landscapes using spoil from the Crossrail Project, more than 9 miles of access routes and new visitor facilities.
  - Maldon Central Area Masterplan and Action Plan which promotes a coordinated approach to development and regeneration of the Central Area of Maldon and guides future development and area improvements.
  - Maldon Sense of Place project: aims to promote the district as a destination of choice through the standard usage of an agreed graphic language for promotional material including tourism web site, leaflets and signage.
  - Consultants will also be required to demonstrate that lessons from neighbouring green infrastructure strategies have been taken into account, where appropriate, in undertaking this study.
- 5.9 **CONSULTATION:** A list of key stakeholders including relevant council officers, land use and transport planners; landowners and developers; community leaders and those in the public, private and third sectors who will help develop and manage the green infrastructure will be provided to ensure both up to date data and development of a robust vision, concept and action plan. Allowance has been made for one stakeholder workshop at the vision and concept stage.

## **6 SUBMISSION, ASSESSMENT, BUDGET AND REPORTING**

- 6.1 Submissions will be invited from consultants who are able to demonstrate relevant expertise in green infrastructure strategy development. They will be asked to submit appropriate evidence of their understanding of the brief, their experience, references and CVs, a work programme, and how they will deliver against the budget. The submissions will be judged against set criteria – a balance of cost versus quality. The identified guide budget is £35,000.
- 6.2 It is intended to go to tender in October and appoint by the end of November 2017. A draft report and action plan is anticipated in April 2018 with a final report by September 2018. It is

## **APPENDIX 1**

intended that the Green Infrastructure Strategy will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Maldon District Council.

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