

London Borough of Enfield

Portfolio Report

Meeting Date **3 November 2020**

Subject: **[Enfield Blue & Green Strategy]**

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Guney Dogan**

Executive Director: **[Sarah Cary]**

Key Decision: **[5235]**

Purpose of Report

1. This report seeks approval to publish and consult on the draft “Enfield Blue & Green Strategy – Valuing our Parks and Open Spaces and Waterways” over a 4-week period from 16 November to 14 December 2020 and submit the final version to Cabinet and Full Council approval, following the close of the consultation.
2. The Enfield Blue and Green Strategy sets out our long-term approach to the protection, management and expansion of the borough’s blue and green network, with an ambition to become the greenest borough in London. The strategy forms a key part of our response to the climate change emergency and the covid-19 crisis to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the borough. It also sets out how we will be contributing towards London’s status as a “national park city” (as set out Mayor of London’s Environment Strategy).
3. The consultation draft of the strategy (see attached at appendix 1) will be published alongside the audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of the borough’s blue and green network, including parks, open spaces, woodlands, rivers and wildlife sites.
4. The strategy represents an update of the current Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan. The new document will become an overarching strategy for other key documents to either feed into or flow from and setting the wider context. It will also help achieve the borough’s aim of being zero carbon by 2040.
5. Once adopted, the strategy will set out the priorities that will inform the determination of planning applications and investment decisions through the capital programme alongside other relevant corporate strategies, including the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Local Flood Risk Management

Strategy, Tree Management Strategy, Parks and Open Spaces - Outdoor Events Policy, Playing Pitch Strategy, Heritage Strategy and Climate Action Plan. The strategy will also form part of the evidence base to inform the new Local Plan and the development of planning policies relating to blue-green infrastructure and biodiversity/nature recovery networks.

Proposal(s)

6. Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainability is asked to approve the public consultation on the draft Enfield Blue & Green Strategy (see appendix 1) from 16 November to 14 December 2020 and supporting evidence.

Reason for Proposal(s)

7. The previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2010-2020) expires this year. There is currently no long-term integrated approach to delivering high quality blue and green infrastructure in the borough as part of the place-making agenda. A new strategy relating to the planning and management of the borough's blue and green network is needed to deliver the aspirations and priorities set out in the new Council Plan, Climate Action Plan and existing adopted Local Plans as well as new legislative requirements. Specific advantages of having a blue and green strategy include:
 - supporting the delivery of the current adopted Local Plan (including policies set out in the Core Strategy, Development Management, North Circular Area Action Plan, North East Area Action Plan and Edmonton Leaside Action Plan) to help determine planning applications;
 - defining our approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation on the natural environment, in response to the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan (including a net increase of green cover of around 25%);
 - creating positive outcomes to the covid-19 and public health response through coordinated action to deliver multiple benefits, such as reduced stress and anxiety (e.g. interaction with nature) and physical exercise;
 - creating innovative solutions to address long-standing structural deficiencies within the existing green and blue network (including poor east-west links, exposure to air pollution, uneven distribution of open space, vulnerability to flood risk and poor sense of arrival);
 - achieving a more equitable distribution: direct future interventions (e.g. new open space) to areas of deficiency within deprived wards (as per the recommendations of the Poverty & Inequality Commission Report);
 - promoting Enfield's assets and partnership-working through volunteering and education programmes and encouraging local ownership of projects;
 - addressing the ongoing management requirements of various service areas, including events (Parks and Open Spaces - Outdoor Events Policy) and long-term maintenance;

- updating existing strategies and evidence: The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (including the accompanying audit) and the Biodiversity Action Plan are now significantly out of date. The quality, quantity and accessibility of the borough's parks, open spaces, nature conservation sites and other designations (e.g. historic landscapes) needs to be reviewed against the latest standards from best practice and national planning policy guidance;
- meeting new legislative requirements (as proposed in the new Environment Bill) and revised national (National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and 25 Year Environment Strategy) and regional policies (current adopted London Plan). This includes a commitment to biodiversity net gain;
- providing a clear framework to strengthen the borough's focus on protecting and enhancing wildlife-rich habitats and protected areas (e.g. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) to create a bigger and more connected nature recovery network;
- developing a clear and robust mitigation strategy to address impacts of new development arising from recreational pressure on the integrity of a nearby site of international nature conservation importance (Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation);
- supporting/enabling sustainable growth and quality place-making through the integration of green and blue infrastructure within new development to meet future demands (e.g. Meridian Water and healthy streets programme); and
- strengthening the approach to delivery and implementation of green and blue infrastructure using digitised mapping/platforms, new stakeholder forums and innovative funding mechanisms (e.g. combined contributions).

Relevance to the Council's Corporate Plan

8. The strategy set out in this report has been developed to support the overarching priorities set out in the Council Plan, namely:

Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods:

9. The provision of high quality green and blue infrastructure is recognised as essential component of sustainable and inclusive communities, particularly in the face of climate change and the ongoing health crisis. Delivery of new affordable homes must go hand-in-hand with supporting infrastructure, such as new public parks, public spaces and routes, connecting neighbourhoods to services and the street network. Enfield's ambitious growth and place-making agenda offers a significant opportunity to develop healthier, cleaner and environmentally resilient places where people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy good access to nature and open spaces. Green and blue infrastructure needs to be carefully planned to unlock growth opportunities and facilitate site development, especially along existing river corridors in association with new housing and employment opportunities. The approach set out in the strategy is to integrate parks and other public spaces

into the heart of the borough's physical environment through partnership working and major strategic interventions (e.g. improvements to the public realm) to strengthen the connection between people and their local communities.

Sustain strong and healthy communities:

10. The recent covid-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of our parks, open spaces, trees and waterways to the health and well-being of our communities. As the population of the borough continues to grow and becomes more diverse, greater demands will be placed on existing infrastructure and services, with existing open spaces and natural habitats under increasing pressure from development. Coordinated action is needed to ensure that sufficient infrastructure capacity and funding is available to support the borough's growing communities (e.g. improved links between communities, food-growing opportunities and new sport and recreation facilities) and build resilience against the threats of climate change and poor health, especially in areas of greatest need. In response, this strategy sets out how we will work with the local community and our partners to create opportunities to get more people visiting and enjoying our parks, open spaces and waterways, improve community safety and increase the prevalence of walking and cycling.

Build our local economy to create a thriving place:

11. The proposals set out in this strategy will help to kick-start the local economy and green recovery post lockdown and incentivise more sustainable means of transport, such as cycling and walking to reduce emissions and improve the health of our residents. Enfield's green and blue network is worth millions of pounds to the local economy as it increases property values, visitor numbers and business occupancy rates. This strategy seeks to capitalise on Enfield's unique offer as a visitor designation and green borough and help promote London's identity as a world-class national park city. We want to build on this to attract more green businesses and stimulate investment and activity within our town centres and growth areas, as we recover from covid-19 and the uncertain economic climate. We want to use green and blue infrastructure to create more attractive and thriving places where people want to live, work and enjoy leisure/culture.

Background

12. Blue and green infrastructure encompasses all of the 'green' (such parks, open spaces, street trees and routes) and 'blue' (such as reservoirs, lakes and waterways) elements of the landscape that contribute to the well-being of the borough's communities and its environment, quality of place and economic success.
13. Blue and green infrastructure forms an integral part of the identity and open character of the borough. Enfield boasts more green and blue spaces than most parts of London, offering access to a wide range of parks, historic landscapes, woodland and nationally and internationally important conservation sites like Epping Forest and Lee Valley Regional Park. Over

40% of the borough lies within the Green Belt and areas of Metropolitan Open Land.

14. London has recent been awarded the status of a 'national park city' owing to the quality and diversity of its spaces and habitats. Enfield's green setting and its proximity to national and internationally important assets on the edge of the city makes it an ideal location in which to trailblaze and pilot strategic projects (e.g. Enfield Chase) as part of the national park city programme (as set out in the Mayor of London's Environment Strategy).
15. However, parts of the network remain fragmentated and inaccessible to the public, with significant disparities between the east and west of the borough in terms of access to open spaces and nature. Urgent action is also needed to address the continuing decline of wildlife and open spaces across the borough and reduce emissions.
16. In the face of these challenges, we need to develop a long term approach to effectively coordinate and guide the future planning and implementation of blue and green infrastructure across our key growth areas and development sites, in line with the place-making principles set out in the council's adopted Local Plan and adopted London Plan, and the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan. This strategy will also compliment the forthcoming Culture Strategy, Economic Development Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
17. We need to update the existing assessment of our green and blue spaces (Enfield Open Space and Sports Assessment) to gain a more detailed understanding of future needs and requirements (including deficiencies and surpluses) in the light of changing circumstances. We also need to review the borough's nature conservation sites of local and national importance.
18. The findings of the Blue and Green Strategy are based on the following evidence base documents:
 - Open space and sites of nature conservation importance audit data (LUC consultants).
 - Active travel maps (healthy streets).
 - Mapinfo files (e.g. watercourses, private gardens, public rights of way, tree and woodland coverage etc).
 - Green infrastructure focus map (London Datastore, Mayor of London).
19. The Blue and Green Strategy will have a 10-year shelf life but will be kept under regular review. It will be updated once the new Enfield Local Plan has been formally adopted. In the interim, the strategy will help implement the strategic objectives and policies set out in the existing adopted Local Plans (especially in terms of: managing flood risk, protecting biodiversity, improving east-west connectivity, improving access to open and green spaces, preserving the open character of the borough, creating a more integrated

green and blue network and creating safer and more accessible environments¹) and the adopted London Plan.

20. We have a strong track record of working with academics and practitioners to develop pilots (e.g. sustainable drainage systems) and model systems on water/land management practices in the borough. We have also held award-winning festivals and events in our parks and town centres. Enfield is also home to some of London's largest environmental projects, such as Enfield Chase woodland restoration and Salmons Brooks wetlands programme. We want build on this success.
21. We also want to set up new partnerships to help coordinate and deliver new projects and secure greater community/stakeholder buy-in. We will also set up new online interactive tools to allow the public and other stakeholders to prioritise issues and investigate potential future project opportunities.
22. The aims of the Blue and Green Strategy are to:
 - a) promote a long-term vision to support the creation, enhancement and continued protection of the borough's green and blue network, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and partner organisations, at the heart of the new national park city;
 - b) define the locations where blue-green infrastructure will be prioritised, especially areas of deficiency within deprived wards;
 - c) establish the strategic priorities and highlight the opportunities to expand the network through new initiatives and programmes;
 - d) steer the scale, location and timing of blue and green infrastructure to support new development that will be brought forward over the next 10 years;
 - e) act as a positive tool to guide the delivery and masterplanning of the borough's flagship programmes (e.g. Meridian Water and estate regeneration schemes);
 - f) establish an action plan which can be regularly updated and inform the operational requirements and day-to-day management of the various service functions, including on-going maintenance; and
 - g) provide detailed guidance and evidence to support the existing and emerging local Plans and other relevant strategies (e.g. Infrastructure Delivery Plan).
23. Our ambition is to be internationally recognised as a leading green and climate-resilient borough. We are committed to making Enfield the greenest borough in London.
24. The strategy sets out an ambitious programme of projects and interventions to achieve this vision. Some of the key projects set out in the strategy include:

¹ These priorities are taken from the strategic objectives of the adopted Core Strategy (see <https://new.enfield.gov.uk/services/planning/local-plan/planning-policy-information-enfield-core-strategy.pdf>)

- Enfield Chase - over 300 hectares of new publicly accessible woodland and rewilding initiatives, creating a continuous corridor of landscape parkland on the edge of the main built area;
- Enfield Sports Village – a major expansion of the existing sports hub to create world-class facilities at Enfield Playing Fields;
- expansion of the borough's cycle and pedestrian network (including new walking and cycle routes from Enfield Town to Broxbourne and from Fore Street to Meridian Water) as part of the healthy streets programme;
- expansion of the open space and route network to improve links to the Lee Valley Regional Park – new public parks, sport facilities and routes, reconnecting deprived communities to the waterfront;
- Green Loop – a new circuitous route along the river valleys from the open countryside through densely populated urban areas to link east-to-west and north-to-south;
- grey-to-green gateways – a series of public realm interventions (sustainable drainage systems) along key gateways leading into town centres and growth areas; and
- an ongoing programme of wetland projects to restore Enfield's urban rivers (Salmons Brook, Pymmes Brook and Turkey Brook) and re-naturalise the water system across the Lea catchment area.

25. We also seek to prioritise interventions across the corridors (e.g. river valleys, country parks and linear spaces) and nodes/hubs (e.g. town centre gateways) of the network and link the various elements of the borough's blue and green infrastructure (parks, woodland, water features, links and habitats etc) together to create an integrated network. These various interventions are shown on the key diagram set out in appendix 1.

26. Future projects will be identified through regular reviews and updates to the Enfield Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Main Considerations for the Council

27. The purpose of presenting this report is to seek approval to consult on the Blue and Green Strategy over a 4-week period from Monday 16 November to Monday 14 December 2020.

28. The future adoption of this strategy will ensure that the council continues to meet the priorities set out in the Council Plan and has an effective mechanism in place to deliver the protection and enhancement of the borough's blue and green infrastructure network, whilst also providing essential new green and blue infrastructure to support new development.

29. The draft consultation version of the Blue and Green Strategy is attached as an appendix. It includes diagrams, maps and a summary of the document. We will also publish the findings of the audit at the same time.

30. As part of the consultation, we will:

- hold online workshops with both local community groups and external stakeholders, including statutory agencies;

- make hard copies available at the four library hubs: Enfield Town, Edmonton Green, Palmers Green and Ordnance Road;
 - prepare a statement setting out how the local community and stakeholders have influenced the preparation of the document; and
 - use social media and Let's Talk Enfield to publicise the consultation and raise awareness.
31. We will review and consider the consultation responses received and prepare a consultation statement setting out how it intends to respond to points made by representors. The updated strategy, audit and consultation statement will be presented to Cabinet/Full Council following the consultation in February 2021, with a view to securing formal adoption thereafter.
32. The overall strategy (see appendix 1) is based on the recommendations set out in the borough-wide audit of parks, open spaces and nature conservation sites.
33. Once the strategy has been adopted, we will develop a detailed plan setting out how the vision and objectives of the strategy will be achieved through a series of targeted actions across the various components of the borough's green and blue network (as outlined below).
- Parks and open spaces
 - Waterways (including watercourses and waterbodies)
 - Flood risk and water management
 - Public realm and urban greening
 - Heritage and landscape
 - Biodiversity and geodiversity
 - Woodland and trees
 - Leisure and recreation
 - Active travel routes (e.g. cycling and walking)
34. We intend to consult on the action plan once the mayoral elections have taken place in 2021. The actions and targets set out in the action plan will, in turn, support the effective day-to-day operation and delivery of the council's service areas, including events planning and on-going maintenance and management of council-run assets.

Safeguarding Implications

35. The publication of the draft Blue and Green Strategy does not have any direct safeguarding implications but implementing the projects identified in this strategy will need to be considered from a safeguarding perspective.

Public Health Implications

36. The vision of the strategy is for Enfield to be the greenest borough in London within ten years. If realised, this has the potential to improve health outcomes significantly for residents. Greener environments are associated with better

mental and physical health and enhanced quality of life for both children and adults. Greenspace can help to bind communities together, reduce loneliness, and mitigate the negative effects of air pollution, excessive noise, health and flooding.

37. The strategy also seeks to direct new investment to deprived communities and poor-quality environments so that everyone can access open spaces and nature close to where they live and work. This is significant because disadvantaged groups appear to gain a larger health benefit and have reduced socioeconomic-related inequalities in health when living in greener communities, so greenspace and a greener urban environment can also be used as an important tool in the drive to build a fairer Enfield.
38. Finally, the strategy aims to provide innovative activities to meet the needs of all users offering a great opportunity for green social prescribing, which can help people maintain a healthy weight, boost mental health and reduce inequalities. All of which will support Enfield's drive to meet the strategic objectives of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Equalities Impact on the Proposal

39. We have a public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to:
- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics as protected under the act: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not; and
 - foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
40. The Enfield Blue and Green Strategy sets out a strategic framework to support the creation of an integrated and high-quality network of open spaces, routes, habitats, woodland and waterspaces, so as to promote positive health and wellbeing outcomes, which can particularly benefit groups who share protected characteristics. The provision of accessible and high quality blue and green infrastructure will advance equality of opportunity among lower-income communities, residents with an existing health condition or disability, children and pregnant women, as well as helping to foster good community relations.
41. The strategy recognises that blue-green infrastructure can make a significant contribution to addressing inequalities (especially in terms of improving access to open spaces and nature) and delivering better health outcomes. In this respect, the strategy closely aligns with the recommendations of the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission (January 2020). It will also help put the cross-cutting theme of achieving an 'equal Enfield' (as set out in the new Council Plan) into practice, ensuring equality considerations are built into decision making and planning process.

42. Consultation with a wide variety of residents and stakeholders, including those with protected characteristics or representing groups with protected characteristics, will help to further enhance our understanding of the equality impact of this proposal.

Environmental & Climate Change Considerations

43. The Blue and Green Strategy forms a central plank of the borough's approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation set out in the Climate Action Plan.
44. Progress towards the vision and aims of the strategy will, in turn, make a significant contribution to meeting the council's targets of being a climate neutral organisation by 2030 and a climate neutral borough by 2040.
45. The continued protection, maintenance and expansion of the blue and green infrastructure network through the implementation of this strategy will have a significant positive impact on environmental outcomes, particularly:
- reduction in air pollution;
 - reduction in flood risk as part of sustainable urban drainage systems;
 - improvement to water quality and efficiency;
 - enhancing habitat and wildlife;
 - improving the perceptions of the borough as aesthetically pleasing; and
 - amelioration of high summer temperatures arising from urban heat island effect and climate change;
 - increasing tree canopy across the borough including urban areas and new woodland in the north which could offset up to 230 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

Risk category	Risks
Reputational: Failure to adopt an up-to-date parks and open spaces strategy (as agreed at EMT awayday on 25 June 2020)	Lack of an up to date strategy will hamper efforts to deliver a multi-functional and integrated blue and green network on the ground, undermining efforts to deliver sustainable growth
Risk of objections from Natural England and Conservators of Epping Forest to the new Local Plan and the determination of planning applications	Enfield needs to demonstrate that it is taking a pro-active approach to managing the effects of recreational pressure and air quality from development on the Epping Forest SAC.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

Key risk	Action to mitigate
Loss of momentum as projects move on	Develop a detailed plan setting out the actions that will be taken to meet the objectives set

out in the strategy as well as those in other relevant plans and strategies and a series of monitoring targets to measure progress.

Financial Implications

46. Costs from undertaking the public consultation of the Blue and Green Strategy will be met from approved revenue budgets.

Property Implications

47. This report does not of itself commit the council to any expenditure on its property portfolio. Any redevelopment proposal involving council-owned land and property assets will need to take account of the latest standards set out in the audit of green and blue spaces, which will raise the bar in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility of blue and green infrastructure provision, including urban greening, sustainable urban drainage and biodiversity net gain requirements (as set out in the London Environment Strategy, Environment Bill 2019-21 and new National Planning Policy Framework 2019). Such proposals will need to be subject to separate reports and full financial appraisal.

Legal Implications

48. The Blue and Green Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the regulatory requirements in respect of the need to avoid or mitigate any harm to the integrity of a nearby nature conservation site of international importance (Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation) as set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
49. The strategy has also been prepared in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 96) and Planning Practice Guidance (see reference ID: 8-007-20190721) which advise local authorities to prepare blue-green infrastructure strategies to inform future provision within new development and supplement policies relating the protection and enhancement of parks, open spaces, biodiversity, waterways and trees set out in Local Plans.
50. The forthcoming consultation will be undertaken in line with best practice and the regulations.

Workforce Implications

51. The work to support the preparation of the draft strategy and the supporting evidence base can be covered through existing budgets. Officers have set up a working group with representatives from planning, healthy streets and environmental services to lead on the delivery of green and blue infrastructure on behalf of the council.

Options Considered

52. The alternative would be to not update the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the Biodiversity Action Plan. However, these strategies are now significantly out of date and do not provide sufficient coverage of the borough's network of spaces and assets, especially blue infrastructure. Putting in place an up-to-date strategy will ensure that new development and regeneration programmes in the borough accord with the new/emerging requirements set out in legislation, national and regional policies and the priorities set out in the Council Plan, as part of our response to covid-19 and the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan. The 'business as usual option would also hamper cross-boundary working and limit the potential of the green and blue network to create attractive and cohesive places. It would also undermine the council's ability to deliver sustainable growth over the next 10 years.
53. Consulting on both the strategy and action plan at the same time would cause at least 6-month delay to the proposed timetable. Early engagement on the strategy with relevant community groups and statutory agencies will ensure consensus can be reached on the shared vision and aims. The preparation of the action plan will require the input of specialist officers from all four directorates.

Conclusions

54. This report sets out our intention to publish a new strategy to facilitate and better coordinate the delivery of green and blue infrastructure across the borough in line with best practice. We are seeking approval to consult on the draft proposals and receive feedback from local communities and stakeholders.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft consultation version of the Enfield Blue & Green Strategy