

Please note part 2 report is now confidential appendix.

London Borough of Enfield

Council

Meeting Date **19 May 2021**

Subject: **Enfield Blue & Green Strategy**

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Guney Dogan**

Executive Director: **Sarah Cary**

Key Decision: **KD5235**

Purpose of Report

- 1** This report is seeking approval from Full Council to formally adopt the “*Enfield Blue & Green Strategy – Valuing our Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways*”.
- 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 part of our response to the climate change emergency and covid-19 crisis to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the borough. It also sets out how we will be contributing towards the Mayor of London’s Environment Strategy and London’s status as a “national park city”.
- 3** The strategy replaces the current Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. It provides an overarching framework that helps tie together a number of existing plans and strategies, will inform the development of future planning policies and sets the wider context. It will also help achieve the borough’s aim of being zero carbon by 2040.
- 4** Once adopted, the strategy will outline blue and green infrastructure priorities for the borough. It will also help prioritise 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, Culture Connects (Cultural Strategy) and Climate Action Plan. Whilst the strategy does not constitute planning policy, it will be able to be drawn upon when considering blue and green infrastructure provision in the context of planning applications; supporting the implementation of policies in the existing adopted Local Plan. It will also form part of the evidence base to

inform the new Local Plan and the development of new planning policies relating to blue and green infrastructure.

Proposals

5 Council is asked to:

- approve the formal adoption of the “*Enfield Blue & Green Strategy – Valuing our Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways*”; and
- delegate to Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, authority to make minor variations and amendments to the strategy prior to final publication.

Reason for Proposals

6 The previous “Parks and Open Spaces Strategy” (2010-2020) has now expired. 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.

7 We need a new strategy to deliver our aspirations and priorities relating to the planning and management of the borough’s blue and green network. Such a strategy will:

- prioritise blue and green infrastructure investment and help secure funding for such projects;
- support the implementation of existing policies set out in the current adopted Local Plan to help determine future provision within new developments¹;
- define 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 25% net increase of blue and green infrastructure;
- create positive outcomes to the covid-19 and public health response through coordinated action to deliver multiple benefits, such as physical exercise;
- create innovative solutions to address long-standing structural deficiencies within the existing blue and green network (including poor east-west links, exposure to pollution, vulnerability to flood risk and poor sense of arrival);

1 The adopted Local Plan comprises a number of documents, including the Core Strategy, Development Management Document, North Circular Area Action Plan, North East Enfield Area Action Plan and Edmonton Leaside Area Action Plan. These include policies relating to managing flood risk, enhancing biodiversity, improving access to open and green spaces, preserving the open character of the borough and creating safer and more accessible environments.

- achieve a more equitable distribution of blue and green infrastructure (e.g. direct new provision to areas of deficiency within deprived wards);
- promote Enfield's assets and partnership-working through volunteering and education programmes and encouraging local ownership of projects;
- address the ongoing management requirements of service areas, including events (e.g. festivals) and long-term maintenance;
- meet new legal and policy requirements (as set out in the new Environment Bill, National Planning Policy Framework 2019, 25 Year Environment Strategy and new London Plan). This includes a commitment to biodiversity net gain;
- provide a clear framework to strengthen our focus on protecting and enhancing wildlife-rich habitats and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation to create a larger and more connected nature recovery network;
- develop a clear and robust mitigation strategy to help address impacts of new development arising from recreational pressure on the integrity of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation;
- support/enable sustainable growth and quality place-making through the integration of blue and green infrastructure within new development to meet future demands;
- provide a robust and up-to-date assessment of current and future requirements across the blue and green network;
- strengthen our approach to delivery and implementation of blue and green infrastructure using digitised mapping/platforms, new stakeholder forums and innovative funding mechanisms; and
- form part of the evidence base informing the development of up-to-date planning policies in the emerging new Local Plan.

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 blue and green infrastructure is recognised as an 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. Blue and green 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 blue and green 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 blue and green 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' (e.g. parks, open spaces, street trees and routes) and 'blue' (e.g. 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 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 nature 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 fragmented 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 across the borough and reduce emissions.
- 16** Faced with these challenges, we need to develop a long term approach to effectively coordinate and guide the future planning and implementation of blue-green infrastructure across our key growth areas and development sites, in line with the place-making principles set out in the Local Plan and London Plan, and the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan.
- 17** Our ten-year 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.
- 18** The strategy sets out an ambitious programme of projects and interventions to achieve this vision. Some of the key projects include:

 - 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;
 - provision of new world-class sporting facilities at Enfield Playing Fields and Firs Farm;
 - expansion of the borough’s cycle and pedestrian network (including new walking and cycle routes from Enfield Town to Meridian Water as part of the healthy streets programme);
 - expansion of the open space and route network to and from 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 (e.g. sustainable drainage systems) along key routes 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.

19 This strategy also seeks to prioritise interventions across the blue-green corridors (e.g. river valleys, country parks and linear spaces) and nodes/hubs (e.g. town centre gateways) of the network and link our open spaces, woodlands, watercourses and habitats together to create an integrated whole.

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 and 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 Salmon Brook wetlands programme. We want to build on this success.

21 The findings of the Blue and Green Strategy are based on the following evidence base documents:

Blue & Green Infrastructure Audit	This assesses the quantity, quality, condition and accessibility of different types of blue and green infrastructure (including parks, natural and semi, green space and allotments) and sets appropriate standards to inform future provision within new development through planning applications. This, in turn, has informed the priorities and interventions set out in the strategy in appendix 3 and summarised in paragraph 18 above. Improvements to open space, playspace, biodiversity and access to nature will be prioritised within areas of deficiency identified in the audit (as set out in the adopted Core Strategy) ² .
Review of the Biodiversity Action Plan	This updates the existing objectives of the BAP to ensure they remain relevant up-to-date, in light of baseline conditions, and highlights progress made since its

² Policies 34 and 36 of the Core Strategy require the provision of new and improved blue-green infrastructure (including parks, playing fields, habitat creation, waterway networks and children’s play space) to address existing deficiencies in line with future needs, with priority given to areas of deficiency identified in the latest audit. The Blue & Green Infrastructure Audit provides the latest up-to-date evidence in line with paragraph 31 of the National Planning Policy Framework and replaces previous versions.

	publication.
Review of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation	This assesses the status, condition and value of existing wildlife sites and identifies opportunities to upgrade, extend or amend boundaries to establish new habitats through positive management and enhancement.

- 22** In November 2020, we launched a six-week public consultation on the draft strategy to gather the views of key stakeholders such as friends of parks, government agencies, infrastructure providers and the wider public. A summary of the consultation process (including methods of publicity) is provided in appendix 1. A list of the proposed changes to the strategy in the light of the consultation is provided in appendix 2.

Main Considerations for the Council

- 23** Approval is sought from Full Council to formally adopt the *“Enfield Blue & Green Strategy – Valuing our Parks and Open Spaces and Waterways”* (as set out in appendix 3).
- 24** The 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 protect, maintain and enhance the borough’s network of parks, open spaces and waterways, as part of the green recovery agenda, whilst providing essential blue-green infrastructure to support development. The adopted version of the strategy is attached at appendix 3.
- 25** The strategy has been amended (as outlined in appendix 2) to take account of the feedback from the public consultation. Overall, the feedback on the strategy has been generally positive, with widespread support from government agencies, local authorities, community groups and infrastructure providers. Respondents have put forward ideas on how the borough’s blue-green network could be protected and enhanced. In total, we received:
- 245 responses from a wide range of organisations and individuals, including community groups, government agencies, neighbouring authorities and infrastructure providers (176 of which came from online surveys and 69 from emails and letters);
 - 8k visitors to the website at <https://letstalk.enfield.gov.uk/blueandgreen>; and
 - 120,447 social media hits (equivalent to over a third of Enfield’s population).
- 26** Further detail about the results of the public consultation (including a summary of the issues raised and how they have been addressed in the strategy) can be found at appendix 1.
- 27** 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 following elements of the borough’s blue-green network.
- Parks and open spaces
 - 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

- 28** These actions will, in turn, support the effective day-to day operation and delivery of the council's various service areas, including events planning and on-going maintenance and management of council-run assets.
- 29** The Blue and Green Strategy and accompanying evidence base documents (see paragraph 21 above) will inform the development of planning policies in the new Local Plan on the provision of blue and green infrastructure in new development and the loss/replacement of existing open space.
- 30** Once the new Local Plan has been formally adopted, the Blue and Green Strategy will be subject to review to make sure it can support the implementation of its policies, including the determination of planning applications. Future projects will be identified through annual updates to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Safeguarding Implications

- 31** The 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

- 32** The long-term vision of the strategy is to make Enfield the greenest borough in London. 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.
- 33** 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.
- 34** 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 (2020-2023).

Equalities Impact on the Proposal

- 35** 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.
- 36** The 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 water spaces, 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.
- 37** The strategy also recognises that blue-green infrastructure can make a significant contribution to addressing inequalities (for instance, through 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 outlined in the Council Plan) into practice, ensuring equality considerations are built into decision making process.
- 38** An equalities impact assessment has been done as part of the process of preparing the strategy. It forms part of the supporting papers to this report.

Environmental & Climate Change Considerations

- 39** The Blue and Green Strategy forms a central plank of our long term approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation set out in the Climate Action Plan.
- 40** Progress towards the vision and aims of the strategy will, in turn, make a significant contribution to becoming a climate neutral organisation by 2030 and a climate neutral borough by 2040.
- 41** 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; and
- 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	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 impact on Local Plan evidence base and policy development
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 the new Local development on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.
Risk of further losses to biodiversity without further intervention	10% biodiversity net gain within major developments is set out to become a legal requirement through the Environment Bill. Enfield needs to set out how this target will be achieved and where future provision will be prioritised in line with the objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

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.
Insufficient funding to realise the strategy goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders (e.g. friends of parks, adjoining boroughs, GLA and government agencies) to achieve the shared vision • Availability of grant funding (e.g. Levelling Up Fund) and developer contributions (S106/CIL) to facilitate the delivery of projects and

programmes

- Develop a roadmap of capital infrastructure projects (Infrastructure Delivery Plan) to address funding gaps and track progress in line with the policies in the new Local Plan

Financial Implications

- 42** The Enfield Blue & Green Strategy sets out the long-term approach to the development of the borough's blue and green network with an ambitious programme of projects and interventions to achieve this vision. The strategy will enable the council to leverage in additional funding/grants and is proposed to be self-financing through seeking various external funding sources (e.g. Enfield Neighbourhood Fund, ringfenced S106/CIL, GLA, DFT, Forestry Commission, Thames 21, Natural England, Environment Agency, National Heritage Fund, partnership organisations, private sector etc). In the event external sources of funding are not enough to cover the cost of these projects, officers will need to produce Cabinet reports to seek funding approval.
- 43** Once the strategy has been adopted, officers will develop a detailed action plan setting out how the vision and objectives of the strategy and programme of projects (paragraph 18) will be achieved through a series of targeted actions, with a detailed financial appraisal for each programme/project.

Property Implications

- 44** This report does not of itself commit the council to any expenditure on its property portfolio, however there are a number of example 'strategic programmes' described in appendix 1 to the strategy which propose redevelopment or improvement works involving council-owned land and property assets. Such proposals will need to be subject to separate approval reports and full financial appraisal. If and when projects within these programmes come forward, consideration will be needed regarding applicable strategies to the affected land or asset, and the Blue and Green Strategy will need to interweave with these. Ultimately the latest standards set out in the audit of green and blue spaces (Blue & Green Infrastructure Audit) 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 and National Planning Policy Framework).

Legal Implications

- 45** 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).

- 46 The strategy has also been prepared in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (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 to the protection and enhancement of parks, open spaces, biodiversity, waterways and trees set out in Local Plans.

Workforce Implications

- 47 The work to support the preparation of the strategy and the supporting evidence base has been 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 blue and green infrastructure on behalf of the council.

Options Considered

- 48 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.

Conclusions

- 49 This report sets out our intention to adopt a new strategy to facilitate and better coordinate the delivery of green and blue infrastructure across the borough in line with best practice.

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Background Papers

None