
Subject:	DRAFT GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 6 March 2023
Report of:	Stefanie Bramley, Senior Natural Environment Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Nicholas Kenton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To seek approval to consult on the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy dated February 2023

- Recommendation:**
1. That the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy February 2023, as set out in Appendix 1, be published for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks.
 2. That the Head of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make minor amendments to the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy, prior to consultation.
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1. Summary

- 1.1 Ensuring the provision of effective green infrastructure through planning policies and decisions is embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council's emerging Local Plan sets out policies and requirements in relation to green infrastructure, the protection and enhancement of ecological assets and high-quality design. To support these policies and assist the Council in meeting the requirements being brought forward through the Environment Act 2021, there is a need to produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the District.
- 1.2 This report outlines the key outcomes and approach to delivery of the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Cabinet's agreement is sought to carry out a formal public consultation on the draft document for a period of 6 weeks.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Green infrastructure is the term used to describe the natural environmental features of an area and the natural connections (or network) between these features. A green infrastructure network can include street trees, green roofs/walls, parks, private gardens, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, through to wildlife areas, woodlands and wetlands. Linear green infrastructure includes roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and rivers and ditches.
- 2.2 Green infrastructure provides multiple benefits for the economy, the environment, and people. By protecting, restoring, and connecting our green infrastructure network we will support:
- Nature's recovery.
 - Climate change resilience and adaptation.
 - Reduced flood risk and improved water quality.

- Active lifestyles and nature connections that benefit physical and mental health and wellbeing.
 - High quality environments that drive sustainable economic growth and regeneration.
- 2.3 Green infrastructure has a vital role in adapting to and mitigating the harmful effects of climate change. Many of the actions in the Council's Climate Change Strategy Action Plan are also relevant to the Green Infrastructure Strategy, and actions delivered through the Green Infrastructure Strategy will complement and contribute to the successful implementation of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan.
- 2.4 The Council's emerging Local Plan sets out the vision, strategic objectives, and overarching development strategy for the growth of Dover District. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will support the Local Plan and have a significant role in delivering the strategic objectives by responding to, informing and guiding development that comes forward.
- 2.5 The draft Green Infrastructure Strategy is informed by the *Dover Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Evidence Report* (Bayne and Seijo, 2022)¹, which identifies the baseline position of green infrastructure in the District and provides an assessment of needs and opportunities and potential future actions to improve green infrastructure in the District.
- 2.6 This has led to the following key outcomes for the Green Infrastructure Strategy:
- Protected and restored nature – 'Bigger, better, more and connected' habitat for nature.
 - Greater resilience to changing climate – Supporting adaptation and resilience to the changing climate.
 - Sustainable water management – Responding to and managing flood and drought risk, improving water quality, restoring river habitats, and connecting wetland habitats.
 - Improved health and wellbeing for all – Improving the availability and accessibility of green places which boost the health and wellbeing of everyone.
 - Sustainable places – Green infrastructure in new and existing communities that provides multiple benefits, so people and nature thrive.
 - Valued healthy landscapes – Conserving and enhancing our landscapes, heritage, and sense of place.
- 2.7 The draft Green Infrastructure Strategy includes a draft action plan, with projects identified through the *Green and Blue Infrastructure Evidence Report* and in consultation with DDC Officers. The public consultation will invite respondents to propose additional projects for inclusion in the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- 2.8 It is anticipated that scoping of projects within the Green Infrastructure Strategy action plan will include the identification of project partners and stakeholders to take the work forward in partnership, in addition to identifying delivery mechanisms, indicative timescales for delivery, potential challenges, and consideration of potential funding streams.
- 2.9 The draft Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies three Core Actions that are within the scope of the Council's remit to undertake. The three Core Actions are:
1. Develop and implement a Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document.

¹ <https://www.doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk/uploads/pdfs/dover-green-and-blue-infrastructure-strategy-evidence-report-may-2022.pdf>

2. Develop and implement a Biodiversity Design Code for new development.
 3. Develop, promote and implement a Habitat Management Strategy for Biodiversity in public open spaces, including DDC land and property.
- 2.10 Once completed, these will become fundamental elements of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, which will be used to:
- Demonstrate adherence to Local Plan policies by ensuring that new development incorporates appropriate biodiversity enhancements and delivers biodiversity net gains that contribute effectively to the District's green infrastructure network.
 - Identify projects appropriate for inclusion in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and provide options for off-site delivery of net gain for developments.
 - Provide a framework to integrate green infrastructure principles throughout DDC and embed these principles into projects managed by DDC.
 - Identify opportunities for working with partners, communities and residents to inspire and deliver projects that will contribute to delivering more, improved and better-connected green infrastructure across the District.

3. **Consultation Strategy**

- 3.1 The proposed public consultation will cover a 6-week period, inviting consultees to comment on the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy, the proposed approach to implementation, and to identify additional projects (ongoing or proposed) for inclusion in the action plan.
- 3.2 Town and parish councils were previously consulted in 2019 during the development of the *Dover Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Evidence Report*. The proposed public consultation will provide the opportunity to review and update their previous input.

4. **Next Steps**

- 4.1 On completion of the consultation, a summary of the responses will be prepared, alongside commentary on those comments and suggested amendments to the Strategy in response to the comments, including potential additions to the Action Plan, if appropriate.
- 4.2 The post-consultation version of the Green Infrastructure Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for adoption.

5. **Identification of Options**

- 5.1 Option One – to approve the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 1) for consultation.
- 5.2 Option Two – Not to approve the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 1) for consultation.

6. **Evaluation of Options**

- 6.1 The preferred option is one, because the consultation will engage stakeholders and the public in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and encourage the identification of additional projects for inclusion in the Action Plan, ensuring that its ambition for the protection and enhancement of the District's green infrastructure network can be taken forward in a coordinated manner with a strong partnership foundation. The consultation

and subsequent adoption will help DDC to meet legislative requirements, National Planning Policy Framework aims, and ensure that new development is guided to fulfil the intentions of the emerging Local Plan policies.

- 6.2 Not to approve the Green Infrastructure Strategy for consultation would leave DDC with no strategic oversight for the delivery of green infrastructure within the District, and would also mean there is no mechanism to support the delivery of development proposals to achieve the vision and objectives set out in DDC's emerging Local Plan, or the application of the policies within it.

7. **Resource Implications**

- 7.1 Consultation on the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy will be carried out with existing officer resource.
- 7.2 There will be officer resource required to develop the Core Actions and to help facilitate the delivery of other projects identified in the proposed action plan, which will include detailed scoping and identification of potential funding streams.
- 7.3 The development of the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy will be supported by KCC's Biodiversity Net Gain Officer (recently appointed), a two-year post joint-funded by all Kent local planning authorities using the 2021/22 Defra BNG grant.
- 7.4 The delivery of actions will need to be supported using wider corporate resource, initially involving the use of officer time and expertise for project scoping, including the identification of potential partners/stakeholders, delivery mechanisms and potential funding streams.
- 7.5 To deliver an effective, multifunctional green infrastructure network across the District, DDC may need to make financial commitments to some of the projects delivered through the action plan. Possible funding streams, and any potential for DDC contributions, will be explored and identified as the actions are developed into project proposals; section 3.7 in the Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 1 to this report) highlights potential funding mechanisms.

8. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 8.1 The implementation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy will contribute to and support the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

9. **Corporate Implications**

- 9.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment.
- 9.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 9.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report regarding consultation of the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>
- 9.4 Other Officers (as appropriate): The Principal Climate Change and Sustainability Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy, February 2023

Appendix 2 – Consultation Approach

11. **Background Papers**

Green and Blue Infrastructure Evidence Report (Bayne and Seijo, 2022)

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