

City of London Complementary Land Use Appraisal Terms of Reference

12/06/2025

1. Introduction

The City of London Corporation (CoLC) manages a number of greenspaces in and around London which are located outside of the Square Mile. Most of these greenspaces are held by the CoLC in its capacity as the sole trustee of the charities, but some assets are held by the CoLC in its corporate capacity with the aim of supporting charity objects, operations and/or funding, henceforth described as 'Complementary Land'. Complementary Land assets are not charity assets, instead being owned by the CoLC and held in City's Estate or City Fund.

Land held by the NE Charities is managed and administered in line with the objects of the relevant charity, which generally require the preservation of these greenspaces in perpetuity for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. Complementary Land is not restricted to these objects, but its purpose originally and historically has been to support and protect the land which is subject to those charitable objects. For instance, many Complementary Land assets are essential for operational purposes and host buildings and facilities such as farm buildings and offices. However, a large area of Complementary Land around the northern sections of Epping Forest is a mosaic of tenanted farmland, grassland, woodland or other open space and is not directly covered by the restrictions of the Epping Forest Act. Similar assets exist at other Natural Environment sites but not to the same scale as at Epping Forest.

Complementary Land parcels and the built assets on them may provide opportunities for income, environmental buffering and improvements, commercial ventures, recreation, operational uses and other projects. They may also present opportunities for housing or other development. In order to fully inform decisions over these assets a full impartial assessment by an external consultant is proposed, which will consider all relevant criteria and associated risks, constraints and obligations. This document sets out the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for a Complementary Land Use Appraisal.

2. Membership

The Task and Finish Group will be chaired by Rob McNicol, Assistant Director Planning Policy & Strategy, and will report to the Executive Director Environment, Katie Stewart. The following stakeholders will be represented on the Group: City Surveyor's, the City Bridge Foundation (Central Funding and Charity Management Team), Planning, Transformation, Comptrollers & City Solicitors, and the Natural Environment Division (including Superintendents). Representatives from Town Clerk's, Chamberlains and the Climate Action Programme will be invited into meetings as needed. The Task and Finish Group will engage with Member representatives throughout the process to test the draft Policy and to develop the approach and content at key stages of the process.

3. Purpose

A methodology will be established for appraisal of Complementary Land parcels and their associated built assets and the Task & Finish Group will oversee an independent appraisal of all Complementary Land parcels according to the agreed criteria, ultimately identifying preferred option(s) for each land parcel and making recommendations to relevant senior officer boards and committees. Key objectives are:

- 1) To define what Complementary Land needs to provide to support the Charities now and reasonably foreseeable future, having regard to the intention of why the complementary land was originally purchased, its history, and current use(s);
- 2) To quantify and value options for future use, with regard to corporate, charity, local, environmental, financial priorities and strategies;
- 3) To assess the potential viability of each site alternative use, e.g. housing, commercial development or other development, and/or for natural conservation (i.e. biodiversity net gain) of whole or part of those land parcels, in view of the corporation and Charities' priorities; subject to planning permission and taking into consideration such matters as changing National Green Belt policy, Local Plan and new housing targets for local authorities;
- 4) To understand and compile an assessment of constraints and obligations against those land parcels and assets;
- 5) To fully articulate upfront costs and risks alongside opportunities and value (current or potential) for each option;
- 6) To calculate and apply scoring and weighting to each element to assess highest priority opportunities;
- 7) To establish said scoring and weighting as a standard for future plans, disposals and acquisitions.

4. Duration and Resourcing

Engagement of a suitable consultant will take place by June 2025 with completion of the appraisal by end of 2025. It is planned that recommendations to the Task & Finish Group and appropriate Committees will be made by the end of 2025.

This work, in particular the potential for housing or commercial use of these land parcels, has been requested by Policy & Resources Committee and is outside of the budgeted scope of the Natural Environment Charities Review (although the overarching Complementary Land Policy is included within scope). It is estimated that up to £50,000 will be needed to engage a suitably qualified consultancy firm to carry out this independent assessment to the required standard. An application for Transformation funding has been made accordingly.

5. Governance

The appraisal with recommendations for each of the land parcels at each location will be brought to the relevant Natural Environment Management Committees for consideration, to the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee for consultation, and then to Policy & Resources Committee for final approval (as these assets are currently held by the CoLC in City's Estate or City Fund).

Following approval of the assessment and options, delegated authority will be sought from Policy & Resources Committee to manage the implementation of recommended options, alongside any necessary changes to standing orders or terms of reference.

6. Legal Advice

Initial legal advice has been sought from C&CS and external legal advisors; this will be considered as part of developing the methodology for assessment, and through C&CS representation on the Task and Finish Group. Further advice will be obtained as necessary (particularly in relation to understanding constraints, obligations and risks) as work progresses. The level of input needed will be scoped as the methodology of assessment is developed further, and reflected in future funding requests as necessary.

7. Financial Advice

Initial advice on financial arrangements and internal governance mechanisms relating to management of Complementary Land was received during the scoping phase of the NECR. Further advice will be considered through CHB representation on the Task and Finish Group, and obtained externally as required.

8. Meetings and Process

The Complementary Land Use Appraisal Task and Finish Group will meet on a regular basis. An initial report outlining the background, Terms of Reference, timelines and long-term aims was taken to the relevant management to committees for consultation in spring 2025 and their feedback has been incorporated into this document.

9. Funding

This appraisal work is outside the agreed scope of the Natural Environment Charities Review and is a corporate review of non-charitable land and property assets and therefore additional funding will be necessary to support this workstream. A request for Transformation funding has therefore been made.