

Committee:	Date:
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee	02 June 2014
Planning & Transportation Committee	10 June 2014
Subject:	Public
The City of London Open Space Strategy—draft Supplementary Planning Document	
Report of:	For Decision
The Director of Open Spaces	

Summary

This report sets out the background and production of a draft City of London Open Space Strategy, attached at Appendix 1. It lists the ten key strategic objectives that seek to address current and future open space provision and sets out the proposed process for public provision and the timetable therein.

Members are asked to agree to the draft City of London Open Space Strategy being made available for public consultation to allow its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document within the City of London Local Plan.

Following consultation, any proposed changes to the draft SPD will be brought back to Committee for approval and for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the draft text of the City of London Open Space Strategy Supplementary Planning Document, appended at Appendix 1, for public consultation.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London produced its first Open Space Strategy in 2008 as a direct response to The Mayor's London Plan (2004). The Strategy was undertaken using the Mayor of London's best practice guidance to preparing Open Space Strategies, which reflected government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17.

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (issued in 2012) has replaced all of the Planning Policy Guidance documents, but paragraph 73 indicates that "planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the need for open space...". There remains, therefore, a need to prepare an Open Space Strategy and keep this updated through regular monitoring and auditing of open spaces. This draft Strategy has been prepared using the general principles adopted in the City of London Open Space Audit. March 2012 and guidance issued by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Mayor of London in 2009 to assist London Boroughs in preparing Open Space Strategies.

3. The preparation of the draft Open Space Strategy has been an opportunity to review and build on the previous 2008 Strategy and to set a framework for the improvement and long term sustainability of existing and future spaces.
4. CABE's guidance suggests the following should be included:
 - A comprehensive audit of all open space
 - Assessments of local needs and the value of existing open space, including for cultural, educational, structural, amenity, health and biodiversity value
 - Protection by appropriate designation
 - Prioritisation of investment to address identified needs and deficiencies
 - Identification of opportunities for improving access to and the accessibility of open spaces, particularly by promoting transport, cycling, walking and improving access and facilities for disabled people
 - Identification of opportunities for improving linkages between open spaces and the wider public realm

Producing the OS Strategy

5. In March 2012, a detailed audit was undertaken of all open spaces in and around the City, both public and private. The audit sought to establish the existing supply of open space by identifying the amount of different types of spaces. Additional open spaces which are already approved and financially committed through the Section 106 planning obligations were also taken into account, to give a more thorough picture of the supply of open space in the City.
6. The supply of open space was then weighed against the demand based on daytime population and variation of spread across different zones of the City. This allowed for an assessment of need to be drawn up against the quantitative, qualitative and spatial needs identified by the audit. Finally, a vision for open space in the City is proposed, drawing on the above supply, demand and assessment of need. This vision provided a reference for the development of a strategy, based on 10 key strategic themes. Delivery mechanisms were then identified in order to implement the Strategy and a five year Delivery Plan is proposed to guide delivery over the short and medium terms.

Proposals

7. The 10 strategic themes underpinning the Strategy are:
 - Maintain and increase public access to existing open spaces and enhance the quality of these spaces, in terms of both design and management.
 - Increase the amount of high quality publicly accessible open space in order to maintain the existing City-wide ratio of 0.06 ha per 1000 week day day-time population and focus efforts on creating additional publicly accessible open space in the east area of the City, particularly in the Eastern Cluster and the Aldgate area.

- Ensure that all open spaces are designed and managed to be safe and accessible to all and, where appropriate, enabling opportunities for different activities at different times of the day and year.
 - Provide, where appropriate, additional play opportunities (including equipped play areas) that are accessible to all, including disabled children, in existing and new spaces.
 - Ensure that existing and new spaces make a positive contribution to the biodiversity value of the City through appropriate plant choice and habitat creation.
 - Ensure that enhanced and additional open spaces accord with high standards of sustainable and inclusive design, construction and management and take account of the potential changes to City's climate, particularly the urban heat island effect.
 - Increase the provision of private and communal residential amenity space (balconies and roof terraces) and communal amenity space for office workers (including indoor and outdoor gardens) in appropriate locations.
 - Effectively manage the temporary loss of any open space during the construction of projects and ensure that a high quality open space is established as soon as possible following the necessary works.
 - Manage open spaces to recognise their potential contribution to the improved health and well-being of City and wider communities.
 - Increase public awareness and understanding of the different types of open space in and around the City and encourage the City's communities to make the most of open spaces and to help maintain and improve them.
8. At all stages throughout the production process, the Strategy has taken into account the unique nature of the City environment and the challenges faced when trying to fit our spaces (and their needs) into a generic countryside strategy template.

Financial Implications

9. The Strategy recognises the challenges faced by the City in the current fluctuating financial climate and seeks to address these in a realistic way. It recognises that Open Spaces revenue budgets are fully committed and consequently improvements can only occur if new and innovative ways of securing finance are explored, including through S106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The revenue implications of the Strategy are therefore budget neutral.

Community Strategy & Other Significant Implications

10. The production of an Open Space Strategy fulfils key requirements highlighted within the City's Local Plan, notably Core Strategy Policy CS19: Open Spaces and Recreation. Good quality open spaces improve the health of the City's communities and create a pleasant environment which encourages businesses to locate in the City.

11. The provision of high quality open space in the City supports a wide number of key City of London policies and objectives contained within the core objectives of the City of London Community Strategy:

...is competitive and promotes opportunity

To facilitate the opportunity for exemplary, innovative inclusive and sustainable design which respects and enhances the distinctive character of the City.

...protects, promotes and enhances our environment

To reduce our impact on climate change and how to improve the way we adapt to it.

To continue to minimise noise, land and water pollution and improve air quality where this is possible.

To conserve and enhance biodiversity.

...is safer and stronger

To strengthen the City's third sector to further meet the needs of our communities and promote volunteering.

Consultation

12. Throughout the preparation of the draft Strategy, key internal stakeholders have been consulted through meetings, emails and phone conversations. The next step is to take the draft Strategy out to a wider audience, thus fulfilling the formal consultation stage of its production and enabling it to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the Duty to Co-operate and the City's Statement of Community Involvement and will include:

- Residents, through 'roadshow' events such as the Transport Sustainability Forum, Guildhall resident consultation events, and House Group/Estate forums;
- City of London Members;
- Other City of London key stakeholder departments;
- Garden users, through an 'advertising campaign' on noticeboards, e newsletters and through the extensive database of contacts that have expressed interest in the City Gardens over many years (held by the City Gardens section), also through hard copies of the draft Strategy deposited at the City libraries;
- Key organisations and agencies throughout the industry such as CABE and the GLA;
- Contacts within neighbouring boroughs.

13. It is proposed that consultation takes place over the summer, from June to September 2014, with the aim of collating and incorporating comments and reporting back to the Open Spaces Committee and the Planning & Transportation Committee in October with a final draft for adoption.

Conclusion

14. The completion and adoption of a comprehensive revised City Open Space Strategy will ensure that the City is strategically managing its open space portfolio in accordance with regional and national good practice.
15. It also offers an opportunity to clearly set out our aims, objectives and policies on open space in the City in order to help safeguard our existing spaces and ensure that all opportunities to increase provision can be properly considered in the context of a long term strategy.

Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Draft City of London Open Space Strategy SPD June 2014

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