

Committee:	Date:
Open Spaces and City Gardens Committee Planning & Transportation Committee	9 th December 2014 13 th January 2015
Subject: The City of London Open Space Strategy–draft Supplementary Planning Document	Public
Report of: The Director of Open Spaces The Director of the Built Environment	For Decision
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This report is a follow-up report to that dated 2nd June and 10th June 2014, and explains the consultation process regarding the production of the draft of the City of London Open Space Strategy.</p> <p>Following a period of public consultation, proposed changes have been added where appropriate. Comments from the consultation have been summarised and collated and responses to these are illustrated at Appendix 1.</p> <p>Members are asked to agree the final draft City of London Open Space Strategy and allow its adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document within the City of London Local Plan as shown in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <p>Approve the final draft of the City of London Open Space Strategy Supplementary Planning Document, appended at Appendix 2, for adoption and publication.</p>	

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. As a result of the 2008 strategy, a number of objectives outlined in the document's aims and objectives have been achieved mainly through the pedestrianisation of roadway to create high quality open space. There has been an increase of one hectare of accessible open space, four new play areas have been installed as well as additional seating and exercise features, a hundred trees have been planted and where new planting schemes have been implemented these have been designed to encourage biodiversity and wildlife. There has also been an increase in Sky Gardens as a result of planning conditions and an increase in the range and variety of seasonal events and activities to suit the diversity of the users of open spaces in the City.

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. On 2nd June and 10th June the Open Spaces Committee and the Planning and Transportation Committee respectively, approved the Draft City of London Open Space Strategy (CoLOSS) and agreed its content for public consultation. This consultation took place between the months of June to September this year.

The Consultation Process

6. To achieve a worthwhile process, the following stakeholder groups were consulted:
 - Residents, through events such as the Guildhall resident consultations and working groups such as the City of London Access Group and the Friends of City Gardens;
 - City of London Members;
 - Key officers from across City of London departments;
 - Garden users, through the City Gardens and City of London website and through the extensive database of contacts, the latter held by the City Gardens Section;
 - Key organisations and agencies throughout the industry for example the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum; and
 - Neighbouring boroughs.
7. The consultation period triggered approximately sixty comments from seventeen respondents. Those received were wide ranging, some of which have been addressed and added to the Strategy. Comments received and the City Corporation’s responses are included in Appendix 1.
8. The draft CoLOSS, can be seen in Appendix 2. The published document will include photographs and will be in an accessible format to enable people with visual impairments to have it read to them electronically.

The Way Forward

9. The draft CoLOSS is intended to be realistic. The targets outlined in the Five Year Action Plan, as seen in Appendix 3, rely on external funding and development opportunities as well as support from other departments and stakeholders. The Five Year Action Plan will not be published as part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance, but will be referenced in the Open Spaces Business Plan which will provide an annual summary of progress. An Open Spaces audit will be undertaken and reviewed in 2018 in order to feed into a full review of the CoLOSS scheduled for the following year.

10. 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 adapt the City's open spaces into a generic national strategy template.

Financial Implications

11. 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.

Other Significant Implications

12. The production of an Open Space Strategy fulfils key requirements highlighted within the City's Local Plan, notably Core Strategic 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.

13. 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

14. The Chamberlain, the City Surveyor, Community and Children's Services, Environmental Services and the City Solicitor have consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated.

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: Comments and responses from the consultation period (June – September 2014)

Appendix 2: Draft City of London Open Space Strategy SPD December 2014

Appendix 3: Open Spaces Strategy, Five Year Action Plan 2014

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