

Agenda Item No: 14

Green Infrastructure Strategy Review - Update

To: **Cambridgeshire Horizons Board**

Date: **1st July 2010**

From: **Delivery Manager**

Purpose: **The report will update Board Members on progress with the Green Infrastructure Review – 2nd draft and to identify key issues arising through the Review process.**

Recommendation: **For information and steer – The Board is invited to note progress with the Green Infrastructure Review and to provide a steer on key issues including the partnership approach and timetable for the Review.**

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to update Board Members on progress with the Green Infrastructure Review – 2nd draft and to identify key issues arising through the Review process requiring guidance or decision.

2.0 Background

During January – March 2010, a public consultation on the first draft of the revised Green Infrastructure Strategy was undertaken. Over 800 individual comments were submitted and early analysis of the comments identified strengths as well as some key areas for improvement.

A report to Horizons Board in March 2010 considered the Green Infrastructure Review including its key drivers. The vision, aims and objectives and spatial framework were described and early feedback from the consultation identified four key areas for improvement including structure, evidence base, accessibility and relationship to the existing Green Infrastructure Strategy.

In addition, forward governance arrangements for the Review project were agreed.

3.0 Progress Update

During April – June, key issues arising from the consultation have been discussed with Stakeholders. Responses are being worked up and feedback organised to those individuals or organisations who requested a response.

Individual meetings have been held or arranged with the Local Authorities to discuss their specific comments and agree a way forward. Meetings held to date have been very positive and constructive and shaped the key issues below.

One area of work that is not being picked up by the Green Infrastructure Strategy but which generated public interest is agriculture and food production in Cambridgeshire. This theme is of growing interest to the public and the role growth plays promoting and supporting local food production. Members' views on bringing forward a paper identifying the opportunities on the growth sites to support local food production are sought.

Strategic issues

3.1 Purpose and Role of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Review

The role of the Green Infrastructure Strategy Review is likely to increase in significance as an evidence base and infrastructure plan, if the abolishment of the Regional Spatial Strategy and Planning Policy Statements (PPS) are progressed as currently suggested.

A recent Report on Integrating Green Infrastructure policy into key regional economic and sustainable development strategies (Green Places magazine, Issue 64, p26-30)

identified the following analysis of Green Infrastructure planning and described the strategic relationship between the different levels of Plan. Please see Appendix A.

The consequences of the changes to the planning system on the Green Infrastructure Review and how the Review may need to respond to these changes will be discussed at the next Project Team meeting.

3.2 Partnership Document

The first version of the Green Infrastructure Strategy 2006 was published by Cambridgeshire Horizons as one of four of its Quality of Life Strategies. It engaged broad involvement from key stakeholders and as part of the process the Green Infrastructure Forum was set up to oversee the delivery of the Strategy. The Forum developed out of the Steering Group that had originally been set up to oversee the production of the 2006 Strategy.

The ambition of the GI Review to have a wider role as an evidence base and infrastructure plan brings a different partnership approach to the development, production and delivery of the 2nd edition. This has been touched on, in part through discussions on the governance of the project at Horizons Board in March 2010 and in project meetings.

The key change is the transition for Local Authorities and Natural England from the role of consultee in the Review process to becoming partners with Cambridgeshire Horizons in promoting the consultation of the Review with stakeholders.

Key issues being taken forward through the Project Group and Forum

3.3 Ambition of the Review

During May, the scope of the Review has been examined by stakeholders to determine if the ambition of the Review is manageable and to also provide clarity on what the strategy will and will not do.

The consensus opinion is that overall the ambition of the Review is good and achievable. In addition, the Cambridgeshire approach, to embed Green Infrastructure within planning policy and to identify a clear delivery strategy is being seen as the model for the second generation of Green Infrastructure Strategies that will come forward. CABE (Anne Jaluzot) and Natural England (Catherine Cairns) are keeping a watching brief on progress with the Project.

3.4 Clarity on the Scope and Spatial Framework of the Green Infrastructure Review

Early feedback on the consultation identified that greater clarity on the scope of the Review was required. The following key points have generated further discussion:

- Natural England's ANGST (Accessible Natural Greenspace) standards e.g. what size of accessible natural greenspace is under consideration

- the difference between Green Infrastructure types (or themes) and the outcomes or benefits that may result e.g. health, climate change
- what's not in the Review and what is

3.4.1. ANGST Standards

The Review currently looks at the top two levels of ANGST provision – this means accessible natural green space greater than 100 and 500 hectares in size with a catchment of 5km and 10km respectively. The inclusion of ANGST provision of over 20 hectares is now recommended (dependent on costs) as it provides a fuller picture of accessible natural green space for the Districts.

3.4.2 Investments, themes and benefits

The promotion of GI and its multi-functionality has created significant debate during the review process. There is agreement that GI provides benefits to sectors including health, climate change, economy etc and that this must form part of and shape the strategy. The challenge has been how to present this, the language that is used and the distinction between what is a GI theme e.g. biodiversity, landscape, gateways and what is a GI benefit e.g. health, climate change etc. Please see Appendix B, a diagram identifying how the spatial framework for green Infrastructure can fit together.

The concept of a 'Strategic Network' –bringing all the significant issues together on one map - is under discussion. It is envisaged that this will include:

- Strategic sites
- Key sites/issues from each theme
- Hot spots – where through the layering of the different themes, areas of confluence or multi-functionality can be identified
- Identification of areas for GI investment to bring forward benefits to climate change, health or the economy

3.4.3 Area Frameworks

In areas of significant growth or change, the concept of looking more closely at these areas to map existing Green Infrastructure and future opportunities has been discussed. There is agreement that this is a useful tool for inclusion in the Strategy.

Five area frameworks are proposed as a first phase:

- Northstowe area
- Cambridge Fringes
- St.Neots
- East Cambs – Soham, Ely and Littleport
- Wisbech

3.4.4 What is not covered in the Review?

The public consultation identified a variety of issues for either inclusion or removal from the scope of the Review. The Review will not:

- Assess and analysis local needs for sport, recreation and informal open space
- Generate policy for Local Planning Authorities
- Cover agriculture and food production
- Include private gardens

3. 5 Structure and Evidence base

The Structure of the GI Strategy Review document has been redesigned. The key changes include:

- Each Local Authority will have its own section
- The Strategic section will provide the framework for local ambition
- The Strategic Network has been added
- The logic of the document improved

The following improvements to the evidence base have been identified.

- Inclusion of the following themes – historic environment, landscape character, key ‘countryside access gateways’, existing Green Infrastructure and green spaces
- Analysis of the data to be more focused on Cambridgeshire and its issues

4.0 Project management

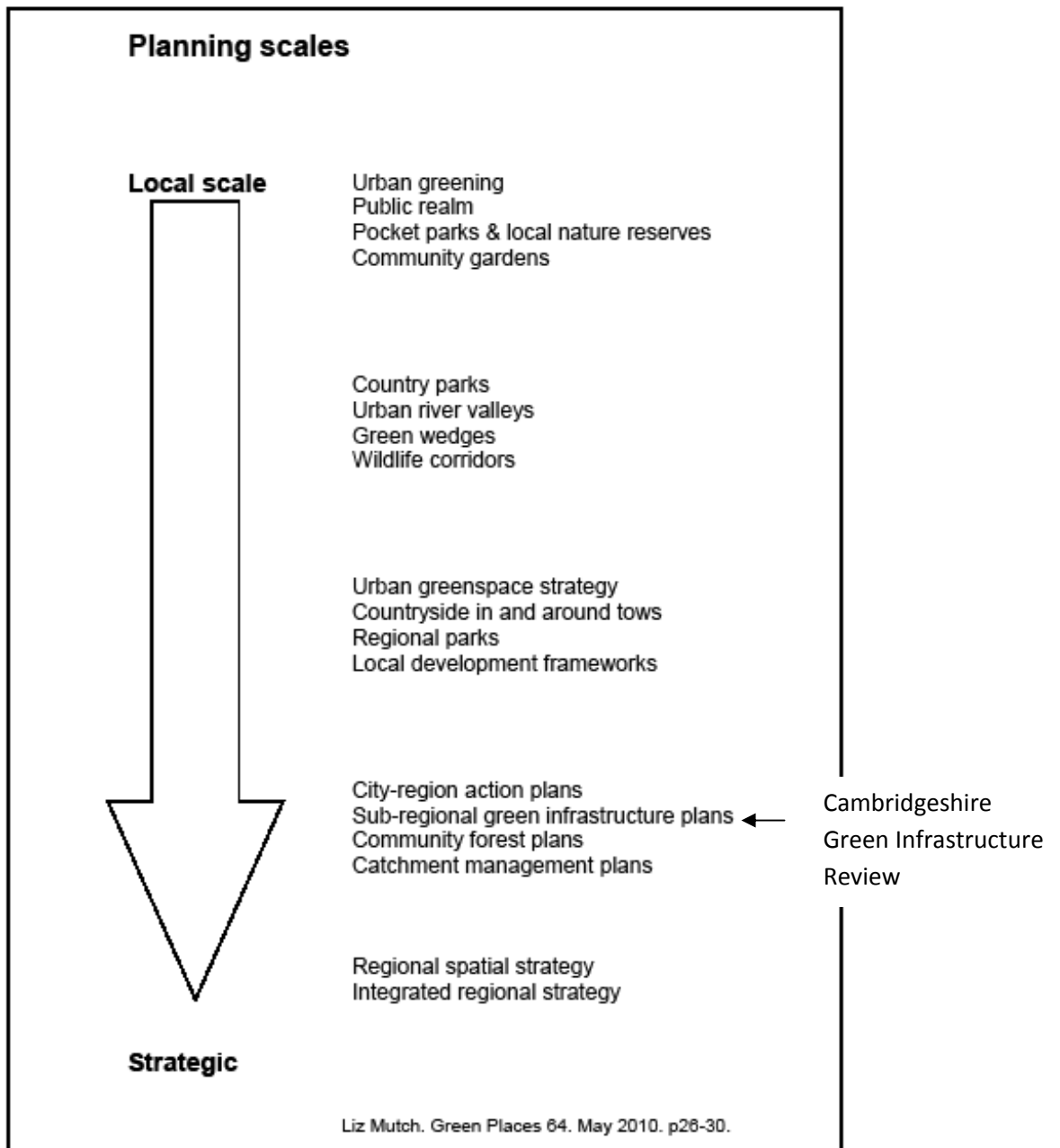
The keys issues above, generated by the consultation, have required significant discussion with Partners. The timetable for the draft 2nd Edition, originally expected to be presented to July Board has slipped. The current timetable is that a 2nd draft will be ready early September 2010 for Local Authorities to consider through formal member processes during September – November 2010.

The 2nd draft for public consultation will then be brought to Horizons Board in December 2010 prior to a second public consultation currently planned Jan-Feb 2011.

4.0 Recommendations

See recommendations on the cover sheet.

APPENDIX A: Diagram 1: Green Infrastructure Planning Scales



Appendix B: An Emerging Spatial Framework

