

Title of Report	Adoption of Green Infrastructure Strategy and Local Nature Recovery Plan	
Key Decision No	CHE S164	
For Consideration By	Cabinet	
Meeting Date	26 June 2023	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Caroline Woodley Cabinet Member for Families, Parks and Leisure	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All	
Key Decision & Reason	Yes	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.
Implementation Date if Not Called In	6th July 2023	
Group Director	Rickardo Hyatt Group Director Climate, Homes & Economy	

1. Cabinet Member's introduction

- 1.1. I am delighted to bring the Green Infrastructure Strategy and Local Nature Recovery plan forward for adoption by Cabinet. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is central to our vision for a greener and healthier Hackney. It sets out to improve residents' general health and well-being; make Hackney more resilient to the impacts of climate change; protect green open space; and enhance biodiversity and ecology, proposing green links and wildlife corridors across the borough. It recognises a wealth of opportunity in transforming streets and the public realm, enhancing our parks and green spaces, and working in partnership to champion, implement and care for urban greening.
- 1.2. These potential improvements and opportunities have already, throughout the consultation process, caught the imagination of residents, volunteer groups and colleagues across the council and across services. The Strategy presents both the wealth of green infrastructure that we enjoy in Hackney, with really special sites of importance for nature conservation, but also the stark contrast of our greenest wards to those that seem almost intractably grey. It emphasises the potential dangers to residents if we fail to address the need for increased canopy cover, greater surface drainage and more

resilient planting to withstand the threats of air pollution, urban heat islands, flood and fire. We need to meet these challenges strategically, with confidence, with urgency, and with social justice, equity and resident engagement informing every step.

- 1.3. We have demonstrated our firm commitment in Hackney to tree planting, and are further committed to increasing our tree canopy cover, building out where necessary to make space for trees, and to depave and improve drainage on our streets with sustainable urban drainage systems, or rain gardens. This contributes to our overarching approach to address air pollution levels, provide shelter, reduce heat-related illness and mortality, and build resilience against flood damage.
- 1.4. We also recognise the importance of cleaning and greening our canals and rivers, and working in closer partnership with the bodies entrusted to protect these waters and with the ecologists and numerous volunteers in Hackney who are dedicated to nature restoration.
- 1.5. Following consultation, we are pleased to bring the vision date for the Strategy forward to 2030 and to strengthen our objectives and proposals in respect of biodiversity and nature. The finalised Strategy references Biodiversity Net Gain, which as part of the Environment Act will be an added planning requirement from November 2023 for new major developments - where all planning permissions granted in England, with few exceptions, will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain.
- 1.6. We are aligning the Strategy with the Council Implementation Plan, which forms part of the Climate Action Plan and was adopted by Cabinet in May 2023.
- 1.7. We are emphasising our focus on the Local Nature Recovery Plan, and its core principles to protect what is best, increase connectivity between the best habitats, and create new habitat and features for wildlife.
- 1.8. We are heartened by the high levels of support demonstrated in responses to the consultation, and acknowledge the detailed insight provided on specific projects proposed within the Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Plan. We affirm that recommendations will be used to inform and shape future delivery.

2. Group Director's introduction

- 2.1. This report requests approval to adopt the revised Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) - Appendix 1, subsequent to assessing the responses from the recent public consultation. It also requests approval to adopt the Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) - Appendix 2. The GIS and LNRP will help to underpin a more integrated and holistic green infrastructure response that can be championed and delivered by a range of stakeholders including

major landowners within the Borough, adjacent boroughs (where relevant) and, with the help of regional and central government and our communities.

- 2.2. Although the Borough is densely developed and populated, Hackney remains one of the greenest inner London boroughs. Hackney's parks and green spaces vary in size, ranging from large areas of Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), such as Hackney Marshes, to informal pockets of amenity grassland around housing estates. This network of open space, combined with the Borough's street trees, gardens, wetlands and waterways, and built green features, such as green roofs and walls, form the green infrastructure network. By being effectively planned, designed and managed it can provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits.
- 2.3. The GIS demonstrates how the policies in the Council's Local Plan 2033, in combination with other Borough strategies such as the Transport Strategy, can make a significant contribution to increasing and improving green infrastructure across Hackney. It provides an overarching approach to green infrastructure and will inform a series of operational plans, which set out actions for improving specific elements of green infrastructure; in particular, parks through the annual action plans of the Hackney Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, wildlife habitat through the Hackney Local Nature Recovery Plan and trees in the public realm through a forthcoming Hackney Urban Forest Plan. Analysis of the responses from the public consultation on the GIS has indicated significant endorsement of the vision, objectives, opportunities and potential projects identified within the GIS.
- 2.4. The Environment Act 2021 stipulates the need to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies. In London the GLA recommends that these are in the form of borough plans. Hackney's LNRP is focused on improving the borough's ecological health to conserve nature and help wildlife flourish. But as an integral part of a borough-wide GIS, it will also help to ensure that planning, designing, and managing spaces for nature can benefit people too by helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change and creating healthier, more liveable neighbourhoods. The projects and interventions identified within the LNRP can be delivered by the Council, with its key partners and stakeholders, on land that it owns or over which it has influence through planning designations and controls, or partnership agreements. We are proud to be one of the first boroughs to develop such a plan in London.
- 2.5. The LNRP also highlights some of the fantastic examples of community-led projects that are delivering local nature recovery at the neighbourhood level through collaboration between residents, tenant management organisations and private landowners under the guidance of local environmental groups. These efforts extend the reach of the Council whilst also being able to secure funding to deliver projects.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 3.1. **Approve the final Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) attached as Appendix 1;**
- 3.2. **Approve the final Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) attached as Appendix 2; and**
- 3.3. **Delegate authority to the Group Director for Climate, Homes and Economy to make any amendments to the Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) and Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) as necessary.**

4. Reason(s) for decision

- 4.1. More than 40% of the borough's land is classified as green cover, made up of parks, open spaces, gardens and other green areas. The Council has long recognised the significant impact that green infrastructure (including quality parks and green spaces) can have on the achievement of its vision and objectives, and has therefore placed a high priority on developing and improving them over the last decade or so. The development of a Green Infrastructure Strategy also reflects an earlier manifesto commitment to develop a Public Realm Infrastructure Plan and was identified as a recommended action arising from the Local Plan evidence base open space assessment work. The development of a Local Nature Recovery Plan meets the commitment to update the Council's earlier Biodiversity Action Plan, as well as new requirements under the Environment Act 2021 for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
- 4.2. Climate change is accelerating ecological decline and can exacerbate the pollution of our air and water. Changing weather patterns and shifting seasons disrupt ecological cycles, air pollution gets worse during heatwaves and summer storms wash contaminants into our rivers and canals. Protecting, improving and increasing the Borough's green infrastructure can tackle some of these problems, while also helping to reduce temperatures and flood risk. Spending time outdoors in green spaces or good quality public realm has proven benefits for both physical and mental health, and can help overcome isolation and increase opportunities to connect with others, but can be curbed by poor air quality, noise or lack of shade or shelter.
- 4.3. Green infrastructure is therefore integral and essential to the Borough's resilience, meeting its future challenges and the delivery of its wider strategies, both at a community and individual level. Green infrastructure has a key role to play in:
 - **Cooling the Urban Environment and Improving Air Quality:** Urban green infrastructure, particularly spaces with significant tree cover and/or large water bodies, have always played an important role as places to seek respite from high temperatures and large canopied trees can significantly reduce temperatures at street level by providing shade;

- **Encouraging Walking and Cycling:** Walking and cycling more results in better physical health and is the main way Londoners get their physical activity. Green infrastructure in cities can promote alternative transportation methods - pleasant quiet or car free routes can encourage people to walk or cycle instead of driving. Parks and green spaces play an important role in providing through-routes / active travel routes;
- **Enhancing Biodiversity and Ecological Resilience:** There are benefits in enhancing natural processes for the benefit of people and wildlife, conserving the most special landscapes habitats and species;
- **Improving Health and Wellbeing:** There are significant public health benefits of green infrastructure, particularly quality parks and green spaces. The Natural Solutions to Tackling Health Inequalities (2014) report indicated that better health is related to access to green space regardless of socio-economic status;
- **Improving Access to Nature:** Access to Nature is an important aspect of the health benefits of green infrastructure – especially in relation to mental health. In a densely populated borough like Hackney it is incredibly important to provide access to nature for residents;
- **Improving Community Cohesion:** As London's and Hackney's populations grow and experience demographic changes, parks and green spaces will play a more vital role in promoting community and cultural cohesion. Parks and green spaces have always been places where people and cultures mix and build communities. Cultural festivals, events and public art bring different communities together in shared spaces, building a sense of place and of shared values;
- **Managing Flood Risk:** Green infrastructure interventions play an important role in reducing flood risk by absorbing, storing or dispersing flood water; and
- **Population and Changing Demographics:** Hackney's increasing population means that the amount of green space per person is essentially reducing over time. It is vital that new areas of green space are identified to meet this growing demand, and that green space is factored into new developments.

- 4.4. The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, supported by an ambitious vision to rebuild a greener Hackney in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The GIS and LNRP are some of the key tools to addressing the need to adapt to a changing climate, as well as protecting and enhancing nature.
- 4.5. Alongside the GIS and LNRP is the Hackney Climate Action Plan (CAP), the first holistic borough-wide plan to address the climate and ecological crisis, bringing together the various strands into one overall document. Three of the

five themes are particularly relevant to the beneficial role of green infrastructure and nature.

- Adaptation - ensuring that we are prepared for and resilient to the impacts of the climate emergency, protecting our most vulnerable residents;
- Transport - reducing emissions from the transport network, improving air quality and helping residents live active and healthy lifestyles; and
- Environmental Quality - maximising the potential for biodiversity in our green spaces, reducing pollution and helping local ecosystems thrive.

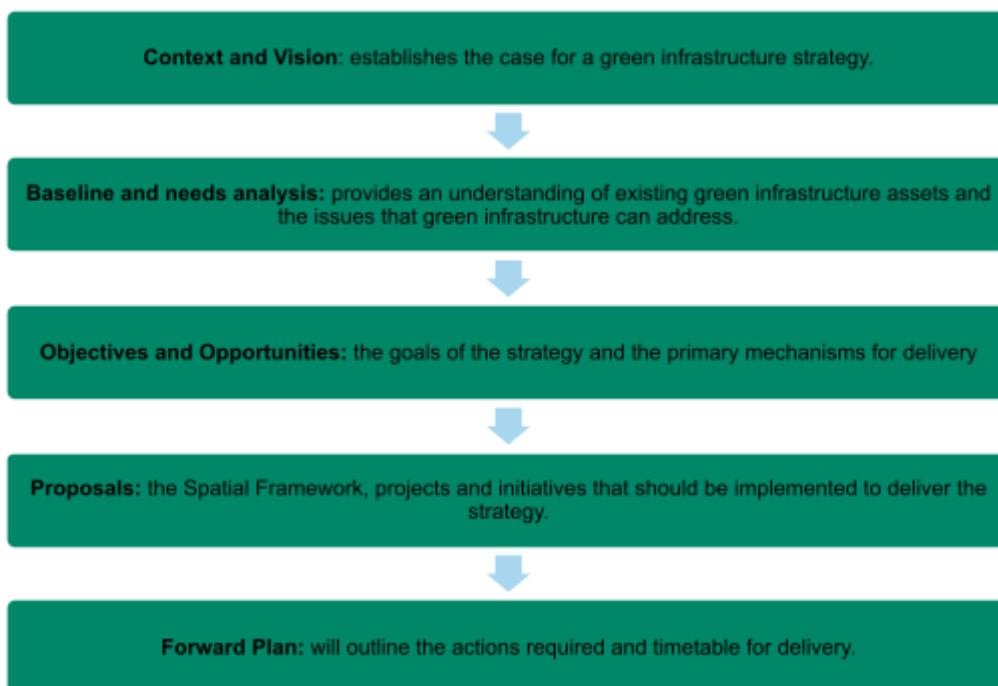
Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 4.6. This is a time of significant change in the Borough. The forecast population growth over the next 20 years and the Council's targets set as part of the declaration of a climate emergency, will require the Borough's green infrastructure to provide an increased range of functions and benefits in the coming years. In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of Hackney's green infrastructure; in particular the need for open spaces that allow people to socialise and exercise outdoors.
- 4.7. The term green infrastructure describes the network of parks and green spaces, trees and woodlands, rivers and wetlands, and new green features in the urban environment such as green roofs and walls. This network can be planned, designed and managed to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits that support more sustainable, liveable and resilient neighbourhoods. The GIS identifies:
- what green infrastructure is present;
 - the functions it performs;
 - the benefits this provides to address local needs, as well as more strategic objectives; and
 - how these benefits can be maintained and optimised through a more integrated approach to protecting, enhancing and creating green infrastructure.
- 4.8. Maintaining and improving green infrastructure is a cross-cutting issue. The green infrastructure network is multi-functional and provides multiple benefits that can contribute to the delivery of the statutory duties and objectives of all parts of the local authority. Therefore, Borough services that are responsible for highways, housing, health, planning and resilience, are important stakeholders and delivery partners, in addition to the service and officers responsible for the management of parks, green spaces and trees.
- 4.9. In addition, a green infrastructure network almost always spans administrative boundaries; so it is necessary to understand the spatial distribution and function of a borough's strategic green infrastructure assets

in relation to the strategic green infrastructure in neighbouring boroughs. Where features, such as river corridors, need to be considered at a catchment scale to fully understand flood risk for example, green infrastructure may need to be considered at a sub-regional scale.

4.10. Many green infrastructure assets will not be owned or managed by the Council. Some, such as railway lines-sides, or grounds of schools or hospitals, will be owned and managed by other public bodies, or non-profit, charitable, or non-governmental organisations such as housing associations and environmental organisations. Other assets might be in private ownership including, for example, private gardens, reservoirs, and most green roofs. Although the Council may not have any direct responsibility for these assets, their existing and potential value and function in supporting the objectives of the GIS should be recognised, as appropriate, in order to influence the plans and decisions of other owners and managers of green infrastructure. In particular, many of these assets might be especially important for establishing better connections that will improve the function of the overall network.

4.11. The structure of the GIS is set out below:



Vision, objectives and opportunities within the Green Infrastructure Strategy

4.12. The vision for the GIS is:

'By 2030 Hackney will be a series of liveable neighbourhoods that are resilient to the effects of climate change, provide a biodiverse network for wildlife to thrive and support the physical health and mental wellbeing of residents'

4.13. The GIS identifies a number of key objectives:

- To improve residents' health and well-being;
- To be more resilient to the impacts of climate change;
- To reduce deficiency in green open space; and
- To enhance biodiversity and increase ecological connectivity.

4.14. It also identifies a number of strategic opportunities:

Modifying existing parks and amenity green spaces: Parks have to provide a wide-variety of functions and services. Traditionally these have focused on sport, recreation and conservation of landscape heritage. But the need to address public health, climate and the ecological crisis suggests that the design and management of parks needs to shift to respond to these more contemporary demands. Further, there are over 200 housing estates within Hackney, many of which include areas of amenity green space with limited function. Maximising the range of benefits this green space provides has the potential to improve the function and overall resilience of the Borough's green infrastructure. This could include, subject to consultation with estate residents, structural planting to provide a barrier to air and noise pollution, provision of areas for community food growing, rain-gardens to store and release stormwater run-off, and wildlife gardens to improve contact with nature amongst others.

Transforming streets and public realm: Streets and civic spaces comprise a considerable part of the existing public realm. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and School Streets that reduce the dominance of traffic provide an opportunity to create greener areas of the public realm. Examples include - green links and corridors, pocket parks, street trees and SuDS amongst others.

Promoting urban greening: Regeneration and development provides an opportunity for more targeted and coordinated delivery of green infrastructure that goes beyond the incremental 'site by site' greening that will be delivered as development comes forward in the rest of the Borough. This is particularly relevant especially within Opportunity Areas and parts of the Borough covered by Area Action Plans.

Local Nature Recovery Plan

4.15. Alongside the widely publicised climate emergency there is also an increasingly severe ecological crisis. The State of Nature (England) report published in 2019 indicates that England's biodiversity is continuing to decline.

4.16. Conserving wildlife in urban areas is both a challenge and a necessity. A challenge because there are multiple competing land-uses in urban areas, exacerbated by high population density and intense recreational demand on

existing parks and green spaces. A necessity because not only is there a moral responsibility to provide space for wildlife, but also because making space for nature has benefits for people too, not least for improving public health and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

- 4.17. Hackney has a long-tradition of conserving wildlife, much of it led and delivered by community groups and volunteers. Abney Park Cemetery was declared a statutory Local Nature Reserve in 1993 and the first Hackney Biodiversity Action Plan was published in 2012. Between then and now wildlife conservation has been bolstered by a range of projects and initiatives including: changes in parks management to allow for the establishment of wildflower meadows; the creation of Woodberry Wetlands nature reserve; an extensive tree-planting programme; an increase in biodiverse green roofs and many community-led projects aiming to increase opportunities for wildlife in parks, on housing estates, along the canal, and in private gardens.
- 4.18. Central Government has indicated that it requires local authorities to prepare Local Nature Recovery Strategies to help reverse biodiversity decline. In London the Greater London Authority recommended that these are Local Nature Recovery Plans (alongside plans for parks and the 'urban forest'), that are delivery plans for a comprehensive and integrated Green Infrastructure Strategy. An LNRP is a component part of a wider GIS and operationalises the nature conservation, biodiversity and ecology objectives of the GIS.
- 4.19. Hackney's Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) in Appendix 2 has the Borough's Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) as the foundation of a local nature recovery network. Their continued protection and appropriate management is a prerequisite for ensuring local nature recovery.
- 4.20. The local nature recovery network in Hackney is based on three key principles:
 - to protect what is best;
 - to increase connectivity between the best habitats; and
 - to create new habitat and features for wildlife to augment existing good quality habitat and to strengthen connectivity.
- 4.21. The Borough is divided into five 'nature recovery areas' which identify opportunities for projects and interventions that can help make ecological connections that protect, augment and connect the SINC network through, for example, enhancements to parks, wildlife-friendly planting in amenity green-spaces, and urban greening in new developments. The plan also identifies a range of plant and animal species that are classified as flagship species, which require particular measures to conserve and protect locally important populations, or which can be indicators of local nature recovery as the plan is implemented and they become more widespread across the Borough.

4.22. The LNRP is not an exhaustive suite of projects and proposals. It provides a framework which will improve ecological connectivity across the Borough based on a core network of protected and well-managed SINCs. With this framework in place everyone with influence on the design and management of land (including the built environment) can make a contribution to making Hackney richer in wildlife. The LNRP provides examples and links to further guidance to aid those wanting to support this ambition.

Revising the draft GIS

4.23. A public consultation was carried out to gather feedback on the draft GIS. The consultation opened on 10 February 2022 and ran for six weeks until 23 March 2022. The revised GIS (Appendix 1) takes account of the comments and feedback received during this process. There were high levels of support for the vision and objectives and proposals, as well as some caveats. Further, more detailed insight was provided on specific projects and recommendations, which will be used to inform and shape future delivery.

4.24. A draft of the LNRP was appended to the public consultation for the GIS. Although this wasn't a formal part of the consultation, a number of detailed comments and suggestions were received, generally from those with a specialist knowledge of ecology. These have been reviewed as part of the GIS consultation responses.

4.25. A public consultation report on the draft GIS was produced in May 2022 and a revised GIS was produced subsequently, based on analysis of the consultation responses. The analysis encompassed a review of all consultation responses by external consultants, with key updates incorporated into the revised GIS. These are summarised below:

- Revising the vision date to 2030 from 2040 based on responses and emphasising biodiversity more significantly in the vision statement;
- Strengthening objectives in respect of biodiversity and nature;
- Minor revisions to objectives, opportunities and suggested project proposals amongst others;
- Reference to Biodiversity Net Gain as part of the Environment Act, which will be an added planning requirement in November 23 for new major developments and was not included in the draft GIS;
- Alignment of key projects with the three year Council Implementation Plan which forms part of the CAP; and
- Updating the sections on governance, monitoring and reporting to better reflect a focus on the LNRP.

Forward Plan

4.26. As part of the process of developing the draft GIS, an outline forward delivery plan was produced based on the opportunities and projects

identified in the GIS. This was not included in the public consultation materials, being at an early stage of development, as well as wanting to enable a more open framed consultation process on the vision, opportunities and objectives so as to shape the content of the final delivery plan. Since then a Climate Action Plan has been developed supported by a Council Implementation Plan.

4.27. Key themes of the CAP align well with the objectives of the GIS and LNRP, with three particularly relevant to the beneficial role of green infrastructure and nature.

- Adaptation - ensuring that we are prepared for and resilient to the impacts of the climate emergency, protecting our most vulnerable residents;
- Transport - reducing emissions from the transport network, improving air quality and helping residents live active and healthy lifestyles; and
- Environmental Quality - maximising the potential for biodiversity in our green spaces, reducing pollution and helping local ecosystems thrive.

4.28. The original outline forward plan will therefore be reviewed with internal service colleagues post adoption of the GIS/LNRP, so that key Council projects in the GIS and LNRP are captured in the Council Implementation Plan within the CAP. These will reflect where capital funding has already been committed, such as activities associated with the recent transport settlement from TfL, plus also more aspirational activities such as the potential green links identified with the GIS and further tree planting programmes in areas of need. The Council Implementation Plan will be part of the appendices of the annual report on progress with decarbonisation commitments at Full Council in July 2023, and is initially for a period of three years, but will extend annually to tie in with the CAP period up to 2030.

4.29. A period of three years is to:

- Provide a sharper focus on the key actions needed now to maintain momentum; and
- Recognise that future funding settlements and levels of other external grant funding are likely to be extremely unpredictable and hence longer timeframe commitments would be at high risk.

5. Details of alternative options considered and rejected

5.1. Do nothing was rejected as it goes against the Mayor's strategic priorities, alongside an earlier manifesto commitment to produce a Public Realm Infrastructure Plan as well as update the Biodiversity Action Plan. The preparation of a GIS was also referenced as part of the findings within the Local Plan evidence base for open space assessment.

- 5.2. An earlier option to produce a more defined delivery focused implementation plan for the public realm alone was rejected. It was felt that this would be too narrow and operational in focus and unlikely to reflect the need for a more strategic cross cutting approach that clearly articulates a vision and direction of travel for the Council and key partners.
- 5.3. In respect of the LNRP an earlier option was to update the Biodiversity Action Plan. This was discounted due to:
- Shortcomings noted with the earlier Biodiversity Action Plan which contained a very detailed set of conservation measures for priority habitats and species without clear ownership;
 - The lack of its alignment with other strategic documents prepared by the Council.
 - The need for a more pragmatic delivery focused approach, providing spatially specific actions and/or recommendations to enable and accelerate nature recovery.
- 5.4. Alternative recommendations for the GIS were also considered and either modified or rejected.
- A Council only focussed GIS - would not robustly make linkages with others to deliver a boroughwide multi partner response; and
 - Relying on separate policies and plans without an overarching approach was considered too fragmented and cross cutting benefits likely to be reduced.

6. **Background**

Policy Context

- 6.1. In November 2022, the Council adopted its Strategic Plan, 'Working Together for a Better Hackney' that sets out the ambitions for the Council for the next four years, as well as the challenges it faces, describing how it needs to respond and change, working with residents, businesses and partners. The GIS and LNRP are aligned with the Mayor's priorities in particular 'For a greener healthier Hackney', synopsis in italics below but also the priority 'For a fairer, safer Hackney'.

'We will continue to lead the way in the fight against climate change, working towards a net zero Hackney, with cleaner air, less motor traffic, and more liveable neighbourhoods. We will transform adult and children's social care, tackle physical and mental health inequalities and continue to support, value, and give voice to our older and disabled residents.'

The GIS supports the delivery of a number of key Council strategies and plans such as the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, Local Plan, Hackney Transport Strategy, Air Quality Action Plan and Parking and Enforcement

Plan, amongst others. The relationship with key national and regional policy is summarised below:

Environment Act 2021

- 6.2. The Environment Act commits the government to reverse the decline of nature by 2030. It also places specific requirements on local authorities, including delivery of 'biodiversity net gain' through the planning system to start in November 2023, a strengthened 'biodiversity duty' which will require local authorities to review their operational and decision making process, strengthened Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) duties, and the implementation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. In respect of the latter obligations, the Council has produced a Local Nature Recovery Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 6.3. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. Paragraph 8, section b, articulates the Government's environmental objective:

“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy .”

London Plan

- 6.4. The London Plan was adopted in March 2021 and sets out the policy framework for the development of London over the next 20-25 years.
- 6.5. Chapter 8 focuses on Green Infrastructure and Natural Environment. Policy G1 'Green Infrastructure' states that London's network of green and open spaces should be protected and enhanced, and that boroughs should prepare green infrastructure strategies to identify key green infrastructure assets and opportunities for strategic green infrastructure interventions. Chapter 8 goes on to list policies that provide greater detail on specific aspects of green infrastructure, including: trees and woodlands, natural habitats and greening of the built environment.

London Environment Strategy

- 6.6. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 sets out environmental improvement and sustainable development as core to the London Mayor's role. They also have a duty to publish a 'London Environment Strategy' which covers an assessment of – and policies related to – biodiversity, waste management, climate change mitigation and energy, climate change adaptation, air quality and ambient noise.
- 6.7. The London Environment Strategy provides an overarching framework for the protection, management, and improvement of London's environment,

including London’s green infrastructure and natural environment. It sets out the mechanisms available to the Mayor, and the initiatives the GLA will deliver, to protect, enhance and increase London’s green infrastructure. This includes policies and programmes to:

- Green streets and buildings, by increasing the extent of green roofs, green walls and sustainable drainage;
- Develop programmes and projects to ensure that London’s urban forest is maintained and expanded;
- Develop a biodiversity net gain approach for London; and
- Promote wildlife-friendly landscaping in new developments and promote the concept of natural capital accounting to encourage more investment in green infrastructure.

Equality Impact Assessment

6.8. Hackney Council and its decision-makers must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010), which requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- 3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.9. Hackney is home to an estimated 259,200¹ people and c23,000 businesses, with the population likely to grow to 291,555 people by 2030². It is considered that because the scope of the GIS is borough-wide, all members of the public, residents, workers and visitors to the Borough, as well as business and partner organisations will be potentially affected. The following table shows the relevance of the positive or negative impacts of the GIS on the following equality strands or protected characteristics groups:

Table 1: Relevance of the GIS outcomes on each of the protected groups

	Age	Disability	Gender reassignment	Pregnancy & Maternity	Marriage & CP	Race	Religion or belief	Gender	Sexual Orientation
Relevance	High	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	Medium	Low

¹[Census Briefing, 2021](#)

²[Greater London Authority, 2020](#)

6.10. Tables 2 and 3 provide an assessment of the objectives in the GIS and whether they would have an overall positive impact or negative impact on different equality groups, and on cohesion and good relations, whilst noting that many people may identify with more than one protected characteristic. For example, young people may fall under the sexual orientation group, disability group, and the race groups.

Table 2: Potential GIS outcomes and the potential positive impact on each protected group

Key Outcomes	A	D	GR	PM	MC	R	Re	S	SO	Comments
Improve residents' health and well-being	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	These groups, like all other residents, should benefit from increased options to live active and healthy lifestyles. There is potential to impact on levels of cardiovascular disease
Enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	These groups, like all other residents, should benefit from maximising the potential for biodiversity in green spaces and helping local ecosystems thrive. There is potential to enable better mental health.
Reduce deficiency in access to open space	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	These groups, like all other residents, should benefit from increased options to live active and healthy lifestyles. There is potential to impact on levels of cardiovascular disease and mental health.
More resilient to the impacts of climate change	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	These groups, like all other residents, should benefit from ensuring that the borough is better prepared for and resilient to flooding. These groups, like all other residents, should benefit from ensuring that the borough is better prepared for and resilient to urban heating whilst improving air quality. There is potential to impact on levels of cardiovascular disease and general health

Table 3: Potential GIS outcomes and the potential negative impact on each protected group

Key outcomes	A	D	GR	PM	MC	R	Re	S	SO	Comments
Improve residents' health and well-being	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	There is no evidence found to show that these actions would have a potential impact on these characteristics.
Enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	There is no evidence found to show that these actions would have a potential impact on these characteristics.
Reduce deficiency in access to open space	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	There is no evidence found to show that these actions would have a potential impact on these characteristics.

More resilient to the impacts of climate change	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	There is no evidence found to show that these actions would have a potential impact on these characteristics.
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Key: Y: Yes; N: No.

A: Age; D: Disability; GR: Gender reassignment; PM: Pregnancy and maternity; MC: Marriage and Civil Partnership; R: Race; Re: Religion or belief; S: Sex; and SO: Sexual orientation.

- 6.11. A key outcome of the GIS as stated in its vision (see 4.12) is to create more liveable neighbourhoods. It is therefore anticipated that all groups would experience a positive impact including those with protected characteristics, ensuring the environment is more resilient to climate extreme events (heatwaves, drought and flooding), increasing active travel, reducing exposure to poor air quality, as well as increasing access to green spaces and the potential to participate in community groups that provide volunteer resources for the enhancement of green spaces.
- 6.12. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
 - Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and
 - Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.
- 6.13. The adoption and implementation of the GIS should therefore pay due regard to the equality considerations highlighted, to ensure that the Council is compliant with its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.14. The Council will continue to consider the impact on all protected characteristics during the ongoing development and implementation. Where appropriate it will undertake additional engagement with the community or more detailed equality analysis where negative impacts on specific protected characteristics have been identified.

Sustainability & Climate Change

- 6.15. Many of the outcomes associated with delivering the GIS can accrue as societal benefits, also known as ‘co-benefits’. These co-benefits have wide ranging value through:
- Local economic stimulus through improved more resilient places with well-designed green infrastructure that make a significant contribution to the character of the urban realm;

- Improved health outcomes reducing the ongoing cost of healthcare services;
- Helping to adapt to the impacts of climate change by improving Hackney's resilience to climate change-induced extreme weather events, such as floods and heatwaves and contributing towards fighting the borough's poor air quality; and
- Aiding nature recovery: green infrastructure networks support a wide range of wildlife with the majority of species using a range of semi-natural and amenity green spaces and the areas of open water in the Borough, the built environment can provide wildlife habitat too.

Consultation

- 6.16. The consultation survey was open for 6 weeks from 10 February 2022 and until 23 March 2022. It involved an online survey hosted on Citizen Space. A press release was published on Hackney Council's website on 10 February 2022 to promote the consultation. Promotion was also done on social media and through existing Council networks and contacts.
- 6.17. The results from the consultation have been set out in an attached Consultation Report, Appendix 3. The report also provides a breakdown of the mix of respondents according to factors such as age, religion, ethnicity, and their relationship to the Borough. A total of 65 responses were received.
- 6.18. The consultation was promoted in the Council's magazine, Hackney newsletters including Greener Hackney, parks and housing newsletters, and was featured on the Council's Consultation Hub website. The consultation was shared widely with stakeholders and Council networks.
- 6.19. It should be noted that the consultation respondents were self-selecting and not wholly representative of the demographic of Hackney. The key points were the high percentage of respondents who gave their ethnic background as White, the high percentage that stated having no religious belief and the very low response rate from those aged under 25. Some of the key findings were:
- The percentage of respondents was split fairly evenly between males (52%) and females (48%);
 - Most respondents were aged between 25 and 64, with the age group 45-54 representing the highest numbers of respondents (33%) followed by the age group 35-44 representing (24.5%). Those aged over 65 made up a small percentage (8.8%) of the respondents. Despite being a significant proportion of young people in Hackney, there were no responses from those under 25 and indicates that more work will need to be done to engage this age group going forwards, most likely in respect of specific topic areas of stronger interest;

- The majority of respondents described their ethnicity as 'White' (89%). 79.2% of the respondents indicated that they had no religious belief or were atheist. This is a much higher proportion than in the Borough population as a whole (36.3%) and meant that respondents who stated that they hold religious beliefs were under-represented. The percentage of respondents who stated that they have a disability was 10.2%. This is higher than the figure for the Borough (14.3%). All baseline figures form 2021 Census; and
- The housing tenures stated by respondents were: either owned outright or being bought on a mortgage (72.4%), rented - Council/Housing Association (5.2%), private (13.8%). This suggests that private homeowners were heavily represented in the respondent mix, considering that Hackney has one of the lowest levels of home ownership in the country (24.6%) noted in the 2021 Census.

Risk assessment

- 6.20. The development of a GIS and LNRP has been publicly stated in previous annual updates on progress with decarbonisation commitments to Full Council in July each year. Failure to adopt the GIS post public consultation and the LNRP would potentially present a reputational risk to the Council.
- 6.21. There are a number of key risks both for the Council and more widely which could impact on the success of the GIS and LNRP noting that currently, not all the necessary infrastructure, finance and regulation is in place to enable the changes needed.

Finance

- 6.22. Local areas have a huge role to play in delivering green infrastructure and enhancing biodiversity, however they do not have the funding they need. Central government must provide more certainty on its long-term funding plans for key areas such as nature recovery, active transport and climate adaptation. Without this, it is impossible for local areas to play their part in making places more resilient and healthier better places to live. Whilst the Council has been successful in securing funding over a number of years to improve its parks and green spaces in particular, a more robust settlement is needed that reflects the priority of the climate and ecological crisis.
- 6.23. It should be noted some of the Council's major funders such as Transport for London (TfL) continue to face uncertainty with their longer term finances. Recent financial settlements for the Council's Transport Local Implementation Plan 2023-2026 have been significantly lower than previous years and it is not possible to state what level of funding will be granted for future years. However, the Council continues to work closely with TfL and is ready to respond as new funding initiatives are announced to ensure it can continue to deliver green initiatives across the Borough.

Policy and regulation

- 6.24. Proposals by the Government to review environmental standards as part of post Brexit implementation present risks if regulation and policy are loosened so as to negatively impact on local area objectives to improve environmental quality.

Stakeholder engagement and governance

- 6.25. The success of the GIS and LNRP depends on the involvement of many of Hackney's stakeholders, as well as central and regional government; the Council plays a critical role, enabling the civic leadership for the collective effort needed.
- 6.26. Plans for future external governance are outlined in the GIS but will be largely focused on the biodiversity aspects where the impact of local engagement and delivery will add significant value.
- 6.27. Monitoring of progress on the GIS will be mainly through the headline indicators that will be developed for the CAP and contained in the updated annual report for the CAP in July 2024. Existing Council plans such as the Local Plan and Transport Local Implementation Plan and other strategies and plans that deliver on the projects and opportunities that are outlined in the GIS will also play a role.

7. Comments of the Group Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

- 7.1. This report recommends the adoption of the Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) and the Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) and has no immediate financial implications.
- 7.2. These strategies support an integrated and holistic green infrastructure response for the Council and a range of stakeholders including major landowners within the Borough, sets a framework to deliver on the Council's vision for a greener and healthier Hackney and aligns with the Council's Climate Action Plan ambitions.
- 7.3. The Council's investment in its green spaces will be informed by these strategies and will be contained within existing approved capital and revenue budgets; any future investment requirements will be considered as part of the Council's medium term financial planning.

8. VAT implications on land and property transactions

- 8.1. Not applicable.

9. Comments of the Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services

- 9.1. A key decision is a Cabinet decision which is likely to:

- i) Result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decisions relates, or
 - ii) Be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the Council.
- 9.2. Recommendation 3.1 of this report recommends that Cabinet approves the final Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 9.3. Recommendation 3.2 of this report recommends that Cabinet approve the final Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) attached as Appendix 2 to this report.
- 9.4. Currently the Mayor's scheme of delegation reserves to the Mayor and Cabinet approval of: all corporate policies and strategies and all formal service strategies. The Mayor and Cabinet are permitted to approve the recommendation set out in Paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of this report.
- 9.5. The recommendation set out in 3.3 of this report recommends that Cabinet Delegates authority to the Group Director for Climate, Homes and Economy to make any amendments to the Green Infrastructure Strategy (GIS) and Local Nature Recovery Plan (LNRP) as necessary. Paragraph 2.2 (Sub-delegation of Cabinet Functions) i) of the Cabinet Procedure Rules states that "*If the Elected Mayor delegates functions to the Cabinet, unless they direct otherwise, then the Cabinet may delegate further to a Committee of the Cabinet, to an officer, to any joint arrangements, to another authority or to area committees*". Cabinet is therefore permitted to approve and delegate functions as per the recommendation in 3.3 of this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Green Infrastructure Strategy 2023-2030

Appendix 2 - Local Nature Recovery Plan 2023-2030

Appendix 3 - Consultation report on draft Green Infrastructure Strategy

Exempt

N/A

Background documents

[Draft Green Infrastructure Strategy](#)

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