
REPORT FOR: MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS PANEL

Subject: Harrow Green Grid

Key Decision: No

Responsible Officer: Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director Place Shaping

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Bill Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Business

Exempt: No

Decision subject to Call-in: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report informs the Panel of the emerging work on the Harrow Green Grid, part of the London Wide Green Grid which forms a key part of the future spatial vision within the Harrow LDF Core Strategy. It briefly outlines the aims of the Green Grid and sets the scene for a presentation of the initial findings to this Panel.

Recommendations:

That in the light of the presentation comment on any issues arising from the project that officers should take into consideration in developing the Green Grid for consultation.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To enable officers to develop the consultation draft of the Harrow Green Grid in a way that accommodates opportunities and priorities identified by the MDP membership.

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The Councils Sustainable Community Strategy adopted in April 2009 contains six key themes. Four of these six themes reflect, in varying degrees, an interest in how open spaces across the borough are used, managed and maintained to promote health, well-being and a safe and inclusive environment for all. This reflects widespread and continued interest in the way that open space is managed and used across the borough.

1.2 Alongside the concept of the regionally significant Area for Intensification for Harrow and Wealdstone contained in the Draft Replacement London Plan, the spatial vision for Harrow, set out in the Draft Core Strategy provides that: -

“The Borough's network of open spaces will have been successfully linked up as part of a grid of green infrastructure providing opportunities for residents, thriving biodiversity, natural drainage, a counter to the urban heat island effect and partial mitigation of local light and air pollution. There will have been a net increase in the Borough's green infrastructure as opportunities to add to the grid will have been identified and implemented.”

1.3 The concept of a “network” of spaces connected to the key areas for change (such as the intensification area and district centres/strategic housing locations) through a “green grid” is already established in East London, as well as further afield. Creating local networks based upon a range of green spaces (or potential spaces) and the potential linkages between them and the intensification area whilst encouraging and promoting managed use and/or access provides an opportunity to combine the interests and resources of the wide range of agencies and groups to deliver improved amenities for all Harrow residents and businesses.

1.4 By asking questions about what the space is for, what role it plays (or could play) in Harrow or in London and for whom and thinking about whom, it is possible to identify layers of overlapping interests and investment that already exist within individual programmes. This, in turn, provides opportunities to combine or blend programmes and resources to deliver additional value from such space and to prioritise and manage interventions to bring maximum benefit.

1.5 The Mayor of London published proposals earlier in the year for an all London Green Grid led by the London Development Agency. Over the autumn and New Year, the GLA and its partners will be working through a series of river catchment based groups towards a pan London Green Grid. A meeting in Harrow on 22nd October included representative from all 6 west London Councils, plus Camden and Barnet alongside representatives of the GLA, Environment Agency,

Natural England, Sustrans, British Waterways, Walking and environmental groups.

- 1.6 Officers from Harrow have already engaged with the LDA's Green Grid team to ensure that the aspirations for Harrow's Green Grid are capable of being captured as part of this regional project and that any opportunities for regional funding can be effectively exploited. An outline green grid for the Borough has already been developed, ahead of a wider document covering this part of London. In addition, the Planning Division have been engaging with officers across the Council, notably in the Community and Environment team, and within the Environment Agency to explore the scope for aligning existing resources and programmes in a way that positively contributes towards the green grid objectives.
- 1.7 From the outline "green grid" a series of potential projects have already been identified that support either the development of the grid or the effective use of spaces or linkages within it. Subject to the comments of the Panel, it is proposed to develop these projects into a fully worked through schedule of projects and to then undertake targeted consultation with external parties on the framework in the winter. Discussions with officers meanwhile will continue in order to optimize the opportunities for the alignment of internal expenditure, around the emerging framework.

2. Options considered

- 2.1 The development of a green grid is not required by statute. In that regard, the project is optional. The continued interest in and need for management of green infrastructure will not diminish. In the absence of a Green grid or similar strategic plan, departments and agencies could continue to make decisions and investment on the basis of their own specific priorities and service demands.
- 2.2 Whilst it may be appropriate to continue to pursue individual programmes for investment in public spaces across the borough, it is considered that the creation of a green grid provides an opportunity to align programmes and the endeavours of a range of public, private and voluntary agencies towards a common purpose. In so doing, the delivery of a strategic network of spaces and the scope to promote wider and improved management and use of such spaces will contribute significantly to the well-being of Harrow's residents and businesses in the future.

3. Current situation

- 3.1 Officers have drafted an outline green grid in partnership Design for London/LDA. It is proposed to consult on this draft green grid over the winter in order to be able to publish a local Green Grid in the spring that will allow the progressive alignment of existing investment

programmes of the Council and strategic agencies whilst supporting/enabling S106 negotiations and the targeting of appropriate grant regimes by the Council and its partners.

- 3.2 Publication of the Harrow Green Grid will also act as an important step on the realisation of the spatial vision for the Borough set out in the draft core strategy.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The work to date on preparing the Harrow Green Grid is being led by the Landscape and Biodiversity team within the Planning Division and is contained within the 2010/11 work programme for that team. The costs associated with the project, notably the project support provided by DFL on mapping and presentation are contained within the existing contracted support arrangements between Harrow and The LDA. Project specific funding for future implementation of Green Grid projects is subject of a capital bid, currently under consideration. In the event that such bid is not successful, the programme and resource commitment to it will need to be re-considered alongside other project priorities within the Divisions budget planning process.

5. Risk Management Implications

- 5.1 The principal risks associated with the project arise from the willingness of partners within and outside of the Council to embrace the concept of a green grid for the borough. Harrows green grid plays a supporting role as part of the evidence base underpinning the Core Strategy. Failure to deliver the project, at the present time, poses limited financial risk to the authority.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The creation of a Borough Wide Green Grid is not considered to have any material equalities implications in its own right. Existing programmes being undertaken in the spaces identified within the draft green grid may be affected (either positively or negatively) by proposed projects or changes arising from a re-appraisal of the contribution and role of that specific programme or activity. This impact will however need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The objective behind a borough wide green grid, in promoting access to and enjoyment of the borough's spaces, is consistent with reducing inequality of access between different groups in the borough.

7. Corporate Priorities

- 7.1 The development of a borough wide green grid is consistent with the draft vision promoted at Cabinet on 7th October and with two of the four associated Council priorities; "Keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe" and "Ensuring united and involved communities: a Council that listens and leads"

7.2 The development of a Borough Wide Green Grid is a corporate priority within the Place Shaping Directorate for the current financial year

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Kanta Hirani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 26 October 2010		
Name: Abiodun Kolawole	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 27 October 2010		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Stephen Kelly Divisional Director. Tel 020 8736 6149. Internal ext. Email Stephen.Kelly@Harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers: None.