

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	13 January 2011
Subject:	Harrow Green Grid
Key Decision:	Yes Effect on communities living or working in 2 or more wards
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Trehern, Corporate Director Place Shaping
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Keith Ferry, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Development and Enterprise
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Draft Harrow Green Grid

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report seeks agreement for consultation on the emerging draft green grid for Harrow.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to: Approve the draft Harrow Green Grid for public consultation.

Reason: To enable consultation with interested parties on the outline green grid to support its continued development to enable the more effective

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

The Council's 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.

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 by 2026: -

“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.”

This report therefore reflects recent work on the development of a green spaces “network” based upon the wide range of existing spaces (and future potential spaces) in the borough. Alongside the development of a list of potential projects to “enhance” the network, the project also aims to support and promote improved management of green spaces within the existing resources available through more joined up inter agency working between the Council and its many partners.

Project description

With over a quarter of all land in the borough comprising public or private green space, Harrow's residents potentially have access to a wide range of formal and informal public spaces and woodland. In some cases these spaces are physically or visually linked by roads, footpaths and bridleways or other corridors such as rivers and culverts, large verges or tracks. Despite this informal “network” the use and awareness of green space across the borough and of the way in which the Council and wider public interests tie up differing agendas to enhance the management and accessibility of green space to residents and visitors is often variable.

Alongside the promotion of regeneration and growth, within the central area for intensification, Harrow's core strategy seeks to celebrate the range of amenities provided across the borough by more explicitly placing the borough's green spaces as part of a "Green Grid." This reflects aspirations at the Regional level, within the GLA for an All London Green Grid, and successful work outside of London and overseas on new Regional Parks comprising "connected" places and spaces.

Developing a Harrow Green Grid was an agreed corporate priority within Place Shaping. The outline Green Grid and list of *potential* projects (subject to consultation) appended to this report has been developed by the Planning Division's Landscape Architect and Biodiversity Officer following conversations with the culture, open spaces, parks and sustainable transport teams. The outline grid that has evolved is nevertheless incomplete, and would benefit from input from a wide range of external agencies, particularly those that operate in the third sector, in order to create an inclusive and shared understanding of the opportunities that remain in the borough for improved connectivity and co-ordinated working to help guide future investment in green infrastructure, whether via S106/CIL, grants, or the capital and revenue projects delivered by the Council or its partners.

At this stage, the schedule of projects forming the green grid has been developed internally based upon internal consultation and site assessment by officers in Place Shaping. The appended project schedule is therefore a draft schedule, reflecting opportunity rather than a suite of fully developed proposals. The purpose of consultation will therefore be to seek challenge on both the structure and extent of the emerging "grid" and the details of existing or new projects that might complement the objectives of a green grid for Harrow. Meanwhile, work on the Pan London Green Grid is also taking place with neighbouring boroughs. Although this project is at an early stage, an initial workshop in Harrow led by Design for London with neighbouring boroughs suggests that the rollout of the green grid has the potential to open up new opportunities for residents within the borough to access spaces and networks of additional amenity value, beyond the borough boundary.

Options considered

The implementation of a Harrow-wide Green Grid is not a statutory obligation. The do nothing option would see the need for choices around future maintenance and capital investment in parks, spaces and linkages continue to be decided on the basis of existing patterns of use.

The development of a Harrow Green Grid nevertheless forms part of the future spatial vision identified for the borough within the Core Strategy. The Council would therefore be expected to demonstrate how its spatial vision, including a green grid, would be delivered, if the Current LDF regime continues.

The current timetable would however see the Harrow Green Grid proposal precede the potential Pan London Green Grid project, albeit in a format that is consistent with that approach. It is possible to delay further progress with this project to await the sub regional green grid currently being promoted by the

LDA/Design for London. It remains unclear however, with the integration of the LDA and Design for London into the GLA, whether this project will continue into 2011/12.

Given that the project itself involves no new funding and does not create any new liabilities, only the tighter management and alignment of existing funding regimes at this stage, there is considered to be no reason why the benefits outlined below should not be “harvested” sooner.

The early implementation of the project meanwhile offers benefit to Harrow including

1. An opportunity for greater financial efficiency amongst the agencies responsible for managing and promoting use of the borough and its green spaces and assets. In addition, the cost of key strategic projects in a published Green grid should enable
2. Scope for the more effective capture of developer contributions through CIL/S106 or the New Homes Bonus as part of the emerging infrastructure delivery plan. Importantly, the “investment” in improving, managing and promoting access to green space
3. A clear demonstration of Harrow’s commitment to its green spaces and their effective long-term management to benefit both to existing residents and potential future investors in the area and their families.
4. Opportunities to bid (potentially jointly) for funds from grant awarding bodies for projects identified in the schedule based upon a concerted, long-term strategic programme.
5. An effective tool for engaging with and supporting the wide range of agencies that operate in the voluntary and community sector with a long-term strategic programme of projects.

Implications of the Recommendation

Resources, costs

The cost of developing the green grid is already represented within the embedded cost of managing green spaces across the Council and its partners. There are arguably significant opportunity costs being lost through greater alignment of funding streams towards improved outcomes.

The Council’s current commitment to managing green space amounts to circa £1.5m pa. The identification of projects within the green grid reflects the uncertainty of current funding regimes and the need to in some cases cluster projects in a way that realise real differences to the residents of Harrow, as opposed to partial, and incomplete delivery over several years.

A capital bid of 200K per annum for 3 years beginning 2011/12 is currently under consideration. The purpose of this programme bid is to enable both direct project delivery (and a clear commitment to the early realisation of benefits from the project) but also and importantly for some of the larger projects, to enable bids for external grant regimes to be made on the basis of match funding.

The proposed consultation arrangements, reflecting the specialist nature of the project, would involve targeted engagement with statutory agencies and those specific groups with an interest in green infrastructure, plus the Local Agenda 21 group and Greener Harrow. A widespread statutory consultation exercise (as required for all LDF documents) is not proposed.

Staffing/workforce

The Green Grid has been developed in the Place Shaping Directorate with the support of the LDA/Design for London. The Consultation on the Green Grid can be managed within existing staff resources in Place shaping. The implementation of a Green Grid may require new ways of cross directorate working within the Council, to ensure that the scope for effective tie up of funding can be achieved, but is not anticipated at this stage to require additional funding. Given that the Green Grid itself will be represented by a strategic diagram, changes in staff resources through the "Better Deal for Residents" programme should be capable of accommodation through adjustment to the programme and project timetables. Opportunities to secure support for a permanent and dedicated officer to manage the green grid on the basis of grant (or capital) funding, will be explored by place shaping as part of the ongoing review of staff resources within the directorate.

Community safety

The more effective management and promotion of green infrastructure, and its wider use, is considered to have potentially positive impacts upon community safety.

Financial Implications

Each capital project within the Green Grid will have an estimated cost and funding source. The total estimated value of green grid projects within the project cannot be identified until the consultation stage has concluded. The appended schedule seeks to identify potential areas for work and engagement, against a strategic grid, rather than to provide detailed costings.

The Council currently has completed S106 planning agreements for contributions that provide for the following:

Sport	£427,300
Public open space	£330,000
Parks	£22,000
Greenbelt	£195,200
Drainage	£44,100
Community	£125,600
Total	£1,144,200

Depending upon the outcome of consented schemes, developments not yet started are scheduled to contribute the following to projects:

Public Open space	£162,300
Parks	£483,800
Highways	£1,375,600
Green belt	£260,000
Community	£473,400
Total	£2,755,100

In addition to capital funding, the Council spends some £1.5m directly on maintenance of parks and open spaces in addition to tree planting schemes and play area enhancement.

Consultation with the Environment Agency suggests that maintenance by them on watercourses exceeded £100K in 2010/11, ignoring one off capital projects.

The identification of the value of investment in green infrastructure (and related green grid elements such as heritage) by the voluntary sector in Harrow is much more difficult to ascertain but represents a considerable additional investment.

Future growth in the borough identified within the core strategy alongside incentives to deliver new housing through the proposed New Homes Bonus and incentives under the Localism Bill have the potential to further increase resources applied to green grid projects. Separate but related funding streams including the proposed capital funding bid for Heritage and associated bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, for Headstone Manor and the Cedars Hall project, on MOL, could further increase the scale of investment in the green grid over the medium term.

Performance Issues

The more effective management of investment into green infrastructure is consistent with the overarching objectives of the better deal for residents programme. There are no current performance indicators directly associated with the Harrow Green Grid although delivery of a draft green grid is a corporate priority for the Place Shaping Directorate for this financial year

Environmental Impact

There is no specific requirement for the preparation of a Green Grid under environmental legislation. The acknowledgement of and strengthening of existing and potential networks encompassing natural habitats is nevertheless promoted by and consistent with Planning Policy Statement 9. More effective management of the improvement and use of green infrastructure to support mode shift, healthy lifestyles and the improved use of green infrastructure to manage the effects of climate change should support the Council's

commitment set out in the Nottingham Declaration and enable better use of the environmental resources available to the community.

The development of the Green Grid should support the Council's climate change strategy by introducing adaptations to changes in the climate that are expected to take place. E.g.. more frequent and intensive rainfall, and hotter summers.

The Green Grid is not an explicit proposal covered by the Environmental Assessment regulations. The project is consistent with and captures the Council's obligations for management of biodiversity in accordance with NI 197 where four costed management plans for Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), which are important hubs within Harrow's Green Grid, have been prepared in order to achieve positive conservation management (and improve public access).

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

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. Harrow's 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.

Equalities implications

Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? No

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.

Corporate Priorities

The development of a borough-wide green grid began under the former administration and was associated with the corporate priority around building stronger communities. The proposed green grid is nevertheless considered to align clearly with the draft vision outlined 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”

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Kanta Hirani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 6 December 2010		
Name: Abiodun Kolowale	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 9 December 2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 6 December 2010		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 8 December 2010		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Stephen Kelly, Divisional Director Planning
Tel: 020 8736 6149

Background Papers:

- 1: Draft Green Grid diagram
- 2: Draft Green Grid Project List
- 3: Harrow Draft Core Strategy November 2009
- 4: Draft Replacement London plan 2009

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE