

Regeneration and Development Panel Meeting - 19th October 2016
A Tree Strategy for BCKLWN ?

A review of existing BCKLWN 'GI' Policy

BCKLWN Green Infrastructure Study 2010

The Strategic Vision (Chapter 3, page 9) is good

In 2030...

- *West Norfolk has undergone regeneration and growth that complements its high quality historical and natural inheritance;*
- *communities in West Norfolk benefit from quality public spaces and parks with access to the coast and countryside that make the area special;*
- *West Norfolk is meeting the challenges of climate change;*
- *people will be less reliant on the motor car to access places and services; and*
- *West Norfolk still feels like somewhere unique in its own right, based on its own local distinctiveness". (Source: West Norfolk's Sustainable Community Strategy and Core Strategy Regulation 25 Local Development Framework).*

(Parts of this are reproduced in the Core Strategy Appendix 4 - Monitoring Framework)

The 'Strategic Objectives' are vague (and arguably not even objectives)

A number of strategic objectives were identified in Stage One, which sit alongside the GI vision created for the Borough. They include:

- *protecting, restoring and creating woodlands and orchards in appropriate locations;*
- *promoting and improving the marketing of accessible green spaces and routes;*
- *developing and creating recreational and orbital routes around the key centres of King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton;*
- *creating a range of new strategically accessible green spaces in and around King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton;*
- *protecting, enhancing and creating corridors for biodiversity, which link up strategic habitats, within the Borough and adjoining districts;*
- *seeking the creation of multi functional spaces;*
- *designing GI sites to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of Climate Change, integrating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) into major development sites, plus providing appropriate planting within developments and town centres;*
- *maintaining and restoring historic features where possible;*
- *connecting urban and rural settlements and the countryside; and*
- *protecting and, where possible, enhancing railway lines for access and biodiversity.*

For reference:

The aim is about what you hope to do, your overall intention in the project. It signals what and/or where you aspire to be by the end. It's what you want to know. It is the point of doing the research. An aim is therefore generally broad. It is ambitious, but not beyond possibility.

The objectives, and there are usually more than one, are the specific steps you will take to achieve your aim. This is where you make the project tangible by saying how you are going to go about it.

The GI Study did identify 'gaps' in the GI network. eg for Kings Lynn

- *opportunities to cross the A149, to access resources on the east of the town such as Leziat Country Park, Gaywood Valley and Roydon Common National Nature Reserve;*
- *linkages and movement corridors for recreation and wildlife between the town centre and key resources to the north, east and south of the town;*
- *high quality urban landscape within King's Lynn town centre;*

- further GI provision in the south east of the town, especially where urban extensions are proposed; and
- a lack of provision in the north-west of King's Lynn.

... And projects to supposedly address them:

- Project M, which proposes several crossings of the A149;
- the use of proposed new residential areas to include GI, which will develop the network to provide linkages cross the town;
- the creation of a Countryside Sport and Recreation Zone to the south-east of the town (Project F); and
- a number of gateway improvements in the north-west of Kings Lynn, which will incorporate GI.

Chapter 4 – a wish list (?) of 26 'Green Infrastructure Policies'. Advisory? How will they be implemented?

The 'Action Plan': Some projects seem unviable – whilst others are already happening. **There is no real vision or objectives set for small, affordable, incremental improvement of green infrastructure within Kings Lynn and the wider Borough.**

Core Strategy – Policy CS12 Environmental Assets: Mainly broad aims. Only the buffer to Breckland SPA is really 'concrete'.

Core Strategy – Policy CS 14 – Infrastructure Provision: Lists green infrastructure as infrastructure that will be sought through planning obligations.

SADMP – Policy DM15 Environment, Design and Amenity: This policy is mainly aimed at curbing adverse impacts rather than guiding the creation of high quality new environments (or improving existing ones).

SADMP – Policy DM16 Provision of Recreation Open Space: This policy addresses provision of open space in larger residential development. Little or nothing about the qualitative objectives for design of that space or specific landscape elements.

SADMP – Policy DM19 Green Infrastructure:

The Council supports delivery of ...

- The Fens Waterways link – Will this ever happen?
- The Norfolk Coast Path – Already happening through NCC/Natural England
- The former railway route between King's Lynn and Hunstanton – Already a cycle path/footpath – except where conspicuous links already missing?
- Wissey Living Landscape Project – Existing NWT project?

The council will identify a range of green infrastructure enhancements to support new housing ...
Half of the policy seems to be about where delivery of infrastructure will not be necessary.

SADMP – Policy DM22 Protection of Local Open Space:

Says loss of open space unacceptable unless adequately compensated. (Are BCKLWN following own policy?) Refers to 'Local Green Space' designations from NPPF – which in practice doesn't boil down to much. Difficult to nominate private land unless owner wants to protect it anyway – and public land generally has some implicit protection already?

SADMP - Site Specific Policies:

Little specific requirement: Provision of 'informal open space' and path links. 'A contribution to greenspace in the area'.

Policy E1.13 Kings Lynn Green Infrastructure: *Opportunities will be sought ...*

Lynnsport seems to be net loss of public open space. Although the 'Open Space Strategy' (2016) identifies plans for childrens playgrounds there is no specific landscape 'vision'.

Some more specific requirements for landscape provision at the strategic sites at West Winch, South Wootton, Knights Hill (from neighbourhood planners / developers?).

On line on the BCKLWN Planning Portal there is some additional general guidance about TPO's, Conservation areas, Biodiversity, High Hedges, Tree Surveys.

So it is my view that we need some additional policy or guidance to define a clearer vision of what we want to achieve:

a strategic plan showing where we have identified 'weaknesses' in the GI network and where there are quantifiable opportunities to address those weaknesses.

We need clear policy relating to green infrastructure within public land assets - so that our public estate sets exemplary standards that others can follow.

achievable goals and objectives for all types of development site (large or small) so that they can sustainably contribute to the wider whole.

and we need to think about robust policy that will address new challenges (like tree disease, climate change and economic challenges ...

What might a successful Tree Strategy include?

Foreword: Short punchy message (preferably from known local 'tree champion')

Introduction: Brief summary of what the tree strategy is, why it is required, what the local situation is, what the principal local issues are and culminating in the key aims of the strategy (ideally not more than 5 or 6). (The introduction could refer to some of the overarching international / national legislation on sustainability and climate change).

Objectives and Policies: (with reference to relevant legislation as required).

General commitment to trees and high quality environment (national, regional, local policy)

Survey, analysis, locally appropriate strategy (regional and national policy)

Pro-Active Management of public trees: inspection; tree management, standard of tree works (BS doc's etc)

Risk Management: (Prioritisation / emergency works etc) (Health and safety legislation etc)

Tree Protection Policies: (TPO's , CA's, presumption against felling etc) (TCPA 1990 etc)

Sustainability Policies: Tree planting and establishment; Management of veterans;

Biodiversity; Recycling materials etc (National, regional and local policy)

Community: Consultation; participation; education; enquiry response; partnerships; tree wardens; special events; fundraising; advice for private landowners. (national, regional, local policy).

Special Policies: Highway and Street trees; Development sites; Public open space; Residential areas; Woodland; Hedges, Rural areas etc (national, regional, local policy)

Action Plan: With actions, timetables, responsibilities, and (ideally) budgets

Monitoring: Performance Indicators, Review and Development.

Conclusion: Closing statement; Contacts.

Critical for success:

- It must be adopted – it must have political support and it must be clear that all stakeholders have to take its policies into account when formulating their own policies and protocol.
- It is linked to other strategies and policy – eg the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans.
- It considers all stakeholders and integrates them into the strategic management process.
- The need for the strategy is clearly explained, the value of trees is promoted, the benefits of pro-active management vs reactive management are made clear. What trees are, or are not, covered by the strategy should also be defined.
- Clearly stated goals, objectives, actions, responsibilities and a programme are indicated.
- Performance indicators and a monitoring and review process is defined.
- Essentially - is the purpose of the document clear, and then is it fit for this purpose.

Some other documents worth reviewing:

Leicester City Council:

www.leicester.gov.uk/media/179114/tree-protection-guidance-spg-october-2003

South Cambridgeshire

www.scambs.gov.uk/content/trees-and-development-sites-spd

www.scambs.gov.uk/content/landscape-new-developments-spd

Lichfield

www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Council/Planning/The-local-plan-and-planning-policy/Supplementary-planning-documents/Downloads/Trees-landscaping-Development-SPD

Bristol

www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34508/Tree+Management+Policies

www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/239427/Tree+planting+obligations.pdf

Norwich

www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/file/2291/landscape_and_trees_spd

South Norfolk

www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/planning/media/SNorfolk-Guide-interactive-full-version.pdf