

Item No. 14.	Classification: Open	Date: 24 January 2012	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Southwark Open Spaces Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All wards	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

Southwark has a wealth of open space of different types including woodland, parks, community farms, Thames-side paths, and sports pitches. In a recent survey people were asked to rate the quality of open spaces across all open spaces in the borough. The majority of respondents rated all categories of open space in Southwark as being good or very good.

However, with a projected population increase of 19% over the next fifteen years and limited opportunities for the creation of new space, it is essential that the council maintains and improves the existing network of high quality open spaces.

The draft open space strategy provides a clear framework for the provision of open space in the borough. This will make up an important part of the evidence base needed in the preparation of planning policy documents. As well as setting out the vision and objectives for the borough, the open spaces strategy identifies key needs and priorities for the different types of open space. The strategy sets standards of open space for each type of open space and highlights the key priorities for investment and improvement.

If cabinet approves the recommendations this draft will go out for public consultation with a view to agreeing a final version of the strategy in September 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That cabinet

1. Approve for consultation the open spaces strategy (Appendix A) and note the consultation plan (Appendix B), equalities impact assessment (Appendix C) and the sustainability appraisal (Appendix D).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The London Borough of Southwark is preparing an open spaces strategy for the borough. The aim of the project is to prepare a strategy that balances land supply for regeneration with the protection and creation of open space.
3. London Plan policy 2.18 requires boroughs to prepare an open spaces strategy and undertake audits of all forms of green and open space and assessments of need. This is consistent with national planning guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) note 17 (Planning for open space, sport and recreation).

Open space strategies should be both qualitative and quantitative and have regard to the cross-borough nature and use of many of these open spaces. They should cover all forms of open space, including privately owned open space and the interrelationship between these spaces. London Plan policy 2.18 also requires open space strategies to identify priorities for addressing deficiencies and set out positive measures for the management of green and open space.

4. In preparing the strategy, the council has reviewed the existing evidence base including the last open space study for the borough which was carried out by Scott Wilson in 2003, the subsequent open space audit (carried out in 2005) and the evidence base work undertaken in the open spaces study in 2010.
5. As part of this work, all spaces which are protected in the local development framework (LDF) were audited and additional spaces capable of meeting the criteria in the LDF were identified.
6. The final open space strategy is intended to provide a clear framework for the provision of open space in the borough. This will make up an important part of the evidence base needed in the preparation of LDF documents.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The open spaces strategy finds that Southwark is a borough that has a wealth of open space of different types including woodland, parks, community farms, Thames-side paths, and sports pitches. In total, Southwark has 207 open spaces which comprise some 595.9ha of land in the borough and accounts for 20.6% of the total land area. With a projected population increase of 19% over the next fifteen years and limited opportunities for the creation of new space, it is essential that the council maintains and improves the existing network of high quality open spaces.
8. The open spaces strategy sets out a vision for the borough to “encourage a diverse network of sustainable open space of high quality which meets the needs of those living and working within the borough and encourages the development of more inclusive communities, safeguards natural resources and cultural heritage, improves access to natural green space, provides recreational and educational opportunities and helps to promote sustainable development.”
9. A number of objectives have been set out in order to help us achieve this vision including protection of open space from development and ensuring new development includes provision of new open space where appropriate.
10. As well as setting out the vision and objectives for the borough, the open spaces strategy identifies key needs and priorities for the different types of open space. The strategy sets standards of open space for each type of open space and highlights the key priorities for investment and improvement. The different types of open space include: networks, chains and grids, parks, children’s play areas and spaces for young people, natural and semi-natural green spaces, allotments and community gardens and housing amenity space.
11. The quality of open spaces was assessed using criteria derived from the Civic Trust Green Flag standard assessment which looks at the range and condition of facilities within each open space. This scoring is also consistent with the GLA guidance. For an open space to achieve the Green Flag standard the minimum quality standard required of a site is 66%. The average quality score for all

spaces assessed in the borough is 71.3%, which is the equivalent of 'good' under the green flag scoring system and shows that the majority of open spaces in the borough would meet the Green Flag standard.

12. The strategy identifies areas deficient in access to all public parks. Park deficiency areas have been derived by considering pedestrian access to any form of public park. A catchment of 400m is shown around all parks, as this is the overall standard recommended for access to all parks by the GLA. Those areas of the borough which are deficient in public parks are defined as those which are further than 400m from any form of public park. The strategy shows that the vast majority of the borough is within the recommended catchment area for public parks, although some parts of North Dulwich, as well as parts of Sydenham Hill are outside of the recommended catchment area.
13. The strategy identified that there are clear variations between the amount of open space available within each sub-area, as well as the amount of open space which is publicly accessible. Bankside has the lowest amount of open space, with just 9ha, 8.7ha of which is publicly accessible, while Dulwich has the most with 245.5ha of open space. However, this is reduced considerably when access is taken into account, with just 94.5ha of open space which is publicly accessible, although this is still the largest amount of publicly accessible open space of any of the borough's eight sub-areas.
14. The strategy identified that there is currently 0.91ha of park provision per 1,000 population in the borough. If the current quantity of park provision was maintained, this would mean the borough would have 0.76ha of public parks per 1,000 population by 2026 due to the projected increase in population. When compared with other boroughs, it can be seen that Southwark has a lower level of public park provision than boroughs such as Wandsworth (which has a provision of 2.54ha/1000) or Haringey (1.73ha/1000). Southwark has a higher level of provision than Islington which has 0.28ha per 1000 population. Southwark also has a higher amount of open space than other Inner London boroughs of Westminster, Lambeth and Tower Hamlets in terms of total open space per population.
15. An integral component of the Southwark open space strategy was to engage with residents of the borough to determine their use of and attitudes towards Southwark's open spaces and outdoor sports facilities. The findings of the survey form an important part of the open space needs assessment. During May and June 2011, 750 residents were interviewed in the residents' survey. Quotas were set for age, gender and sub-area to ensure a balanced, broadly representative sample of the borough's population. Interviews were conducted at a range of times to target both working and non-working respondents.
16. The findings of the residents' survey reveal that the most popular types of open space visited by Southwark residents are Metropolitan Parks and large open spaces with 69% of all visits. The most common reason for visiting large open parks and open spaces are walking (47%), fresh air (38%), children's play (32%), and exercise (26%).
17. Respondents were asked to rate the quality of open spaces across all open spaces in the borough. The majority of respondents rated all categories of open space as being good or very good, however some categories performed better than others indicating perceptions vary according to the type of open space. Those categories rated as being the highest quality sites are allotments (92%),

large open spaces (86%), the Thames path (88%), natural green space (80.3%) and children's play (81%). Categories with a higher proportion of poor or very poor ratings include housing amenity areas (11%), smaller local parks (5%), outdoor sports facilities (5%) and children's play (6%). There were no major differences between sub-areas.

18. There are a number of objective indicators which influence the open space needs of individual parts of the borough. Key findings of the consultation with local stakeholders were used to inform an analysis of need across the borough and at the sub-area level. This included an assessment of need indicators such as the demographic profile, the population density, household type and composition, child densities and health. In order to derive an indicator of composite open space need, a number of different need indicators were overlaid to identify areas of greatest need. These were identified as being located in the sub-areas of Elephant and Castle, Aylesbury and Camberwell. It will be particularly important to ensure access to good quality open space within these areas of high need.
19. In view of the limited opportunity to create new open spaces the strategy focuses on improving existing open spaces. Consistent with government guidance, the strategy has identified a series of open space standards. The purpose of these standards is to give adequate levels of provision for each type of open space within the borough based upon the existing needs and future needs of the borough up to 2026. It is recommended that the council adopts a borough-wide standard for the provision of 0.76ha park space per 1,000 population and a standard of 1.51ha of natural green space per 1,000 population.
20. Over the next 15 years, development will put additional pressure on existing open spaces. It is therefore important that development proposals help to improve open space provision. The council currently uses section 106 planning obligations to ensure that developments make a financial contribution to improving open space provision. In the future, the council may consider requiring development to contribute to open space provision through the community infrastructure levy (CIL). The potential to use council budgets or other funding if this becomes available should also be investigated.
21. Using these contributions, the strategy recommends the council prioritises improving the quality of spaces, including using green flag criteria in the case of larger parks, improving the range of facilities which are available in open spaces to increase their value to local people, improving their nature conservation value to help bring all parts of the borough up to the natural greenspace standard, improving children's play facilities and incorporating food growing opportunities where appropriate.
22. Occasionally, it may be appropriate to negotiate the provision of publically accessible open space on a development site. Area-based LDF documents will be used to identify opportunities for new open spaces. The site allocations development plan document will also identify sites on which on-site provision of open space will be required.
23. In addition, the strategy sets out other proposals to address open space deficiencies across the borough which include:
 - Investigate the potential to introduce new habitat creation at existing open space

- Encourage green roofs and living walls as part of development proposals
- Improve the quality and role of amenity space, including introducing small scale improvements to encourage biodiversity
- Encourage roof gardens, including publicly accessible spaces, at new and existing developments where possible.
- Encourage the development of further community gardens, potentially within areas of new development and within housing amenity sites.
- Increase provision of trees throughout the sub-area especially along key links between spaces.

24. The borough wide recommendations are summarised in an action plan which is included in the strategy. Within the strategy, further recommendations have also been set out which seek to relate the general principles to different sub-areas in the borough. These recommendations will be taken forward in the area based LDF documents.

Community impact statement

25. The purpose of the local development framework is to facilitate regeneration and deliver the vision of Southwark 2016 in a sustainable manner, ensuring that community impacts are taken into account. The open spaces strategy will help to ensure that the policies set out in the LDF documents achieve this.
26. An equalities impact assessment (Appendix C) has been carried out alongside the preparation of the strategy to assess the impact this will have on the different equality target groups.
27. We have tested the sustainability impacts of the strategy through the sustainability appraisal (appendix D).

Equalities impact assessment

28. An equalities impact assessment scoping report (Appendix C) has been carried out alongside the preparation of the open spaces strategy to assess the impact strategy will have on groups with protected characteristics. The equalities impact assessment (EQIA) identified a number of key issues to be considered in the preparation of the final strategy. One of the most significant issues that the EQIA identified was that the needs of those with disabilities, young families and older people will need careful consideration to ensure open spaces are safe and accessible.
29. Open spaces can lead to increased pedestrian and cycle routes which can have a positive impact on those with lower incomes, promoting more sustainable means of travels for no cost which can lead to health improvements and increased access to employment.
30. Improvements to open spaces are likely to have a positive impact on all groups with protected characteristics however the needs of more vulnerable groups will need to be considered to ensure everyone has equal access to these spaces. It is important that new open spaces and public spaces are safe and well used in order to ensure more vulnerable groups feel able to visit these spaces without fear of crime and victimisation.

31. The provision on new and improved open spaces can bring positive benefits, especially for younger people and those on lower incomes who may not be able to afford more organised physical activity, helping to encourage sport and recreation which can lead to health improvements and a better quality of life.

Sustainability appraisal

32. A sustainability appraisal (Appendix D) has been prepared to help identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of the open spaces strategy. The preparation of a scoping report was the first stage of the sustainability appraisal to assist in the preparation of the strategy and its sustainability appraisal. The scoping report set out the sustainability objectives and indicators that will be used to measure the impacts of the policy upon sustainable development. Baseline information was gathered to draw attention to key environmental, social and economic issues facing the borough, which may be affected by the strategy.
33. The next stage of the process involved appraising the proposed strategy against the sustainability objectives. This identified that overall the strategy would have a positive impact in the sustainability objectives, especially SDO 13 To protect and improve open spaces, green corridors and biodiversity. Other indicators that scored positively included SDO5, To promote social inclusion, equality, diversity and community cohesion and the environmental objectives SDO6, To reduce contributions to climate change, SDO7 To improve air quality in Southwark and SDO14 To reduce vulnerability to flooding.
34. In some cases the strategy will have no significant impact with the sustainable objectives. Where the SA identified potential shortcomings for SDO15, To provide everyone the opportunity to live in a decent home. However, open spaces are considered to be important infrastructure that help to contribute to the quality of life and should be protected from development for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The core strategy sets out policies for delivering housing in the borough to help meet the housing need whilst continuing to protect our open spaces.

Financial implications

35. This report is recommending to cabinet to approve for consultation the Open spaces strategy (Appendix A) and note the Consultation Plan (Appendix B), equalities impact assessment (Appendix C) and the sustainability appraisal (Appendix D).
36. There are no immediate financial implications arising from the adoption of the contents of this report. Cabinet is at this stage being asked to simply approve the open spaces strategy in its current form and note the related appendices to the report.
37. The cost of preparing the strategy report as well as any additional work required to finalise it will be contained within existing planning policy team budgets without a call on any additional funding. There are no risks to other council budgets.
38. Any specific material financial implications arising from the consultation exercise that cannot be contained within the existing planning policy budgets will be subject to separate reports for consideration and approval.

Consultation

39. During the preparation of the open space strategy, a stakeholder workshop was held in July 2011 and a telephone survey of 750 residents was undertaken. The results of these consultation events and those undertaken during the previous 2010 study have been used to inform the final strategy.
40. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008) and our statement of community involvement 2007 set out consultation requirements for LDF documents. Whilst the open spaces strategy is not an LDF document, the findings of the report will be used to inform the policies set out in our planning documents and therefore we will consult on the strategy in line with the requirements set out in our SCI.
41. The consultation plan (Appendix B) sets out the consultation that will be carried out on the open spaces strategy. The open spaces strategy will be published on 17 January 2012. In all, the document will be available for public consultation for a period of 12 weeks (17 January 2012 – 10 April 2012), which complies with the standards in the council's statement of community involvement. Formal consultation will take place between 28 February 2012 and 10 April 2012. As well as making the document available on the web and in local libraries, the council will write to around 3000 consultees in the planning policy team's database. In addition, the council will offer to present the strategy at community council's across the borough, will arrange a workshop with stakeholders such as Friends of Parks Groups and will be available to attend meeting with other organisations as required.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

42. PPG 17 includes a requirement for local authorities to undertake assessments of existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. It specifically states that *'local authorities should also undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use made of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs (such as charges) and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities. Audits of quality will be particularly important as they will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.'*
43. The Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is proposed to replace a range of Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes. The strategy is considered to be in conformity with the draft NPPF as paragraph 128 recognises the importance open spaces and requires planning policies to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in a local area. The information gained from assessment of needs and opportunities should be used to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities. This approach in the draft NPPF is not considered to be considerably different from the approach taken in PPG17 and its companion guide. The only difference is the potential for new designation of Local Green Space.

44. London Plan policy 2.18 states that in the LDF preparation the council should follow the guidance in PPG17 and undertake audits of all forms of green and open space and assessments of need. These should both be qualitative and quantitative, and have regard to the cross-borough nature and use of many of these open spaces. In addition the policy requires that boroughs produce open space strategies that cover all forms of open space and the interrelationship between these spaces. The objective is to identify priorities for addressing deficiencies and should set out positive measures for the management of green and open space.
45. The core strategy recognises the importance of open spaces in Strategic Policy 11 which provides that the council will improve, protect and maintain network of open spaces and green corridors that will make places attractive and provide sport, leisure and food growing opportunities for a growing population.
46. The Open Spaces Strategies Best Practice Guidance produced by the Mayor of London and CABI provides that a draft strategy should contain the following elements:-
- (i) A revised vision for open spaces
 - (ii) A brief summary of the national, regional and local context
 - (iii) The results of the audit
 - (iv) A description of local needs and demand
 - (v) A statement of key issues to be addressed
 - (vi) A spatial plan or series of plans outlining the spatial strategy
 - (vii) Strategic policies related to both planning and management
 - (viii) An action plan
47. The action plan should include the following elements:
- (i) Actions
 - (ii) Relevant policy
 - (iii) Leadership/responsibility
 - (iv) Partners involved
 - (v) Start and completion dates
 - (vi) Indicators/measures of success
 - (vii) Estimated cost (capital and revenue)
 - (viii) Funding sources

Equality Impact Assessment

48. The Equality Act 2010 brought together the numerous acts and regulations that formed the basis of anti-discrimination law in the UK. It provides for the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Most of the provisions of the new Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010 (“the 2010 Act”).
49. In April 2011 a single “general duty” was introduced namely the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Merging the existing race, sex and disability public sector equality duties and extending the duty to cover the other protected characteristics namely age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation, (including marriage and civil partnership).

50. The single public sector equality duty requires all public bodies to “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation”, “advance equality of opportunity between different groups” and “foster good relations between different groups”.
51. Disability equality duties were introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 which amended the Disability Act 1995. The general duties in summary require local authorities to carry out their functions with due regard to the need to:
- (a) “Promote equal opportunities between disabled persons and other persons;
 - (b) Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
 - (c) Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
 - (d) Promote a positive attitude towards disabled persons;
 - (e) Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
 - (f) Take steps to take account of disabled person’s disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons”
52. The carrying out of an EqIA in relation to policy documents such as the open spaces strategy improves the work of Southwark by making sure it does not discriminate and that, where possible, it promotes equality. The EqIA ensures and records that individuals and teams have thought carefully about the likely impact of their work on the residents of Southwark and take action to improve the policies, practices or services being delivered. The EqIA in respect of the open spaces strategy needs to consider the impact of the proposed strategies on groups who may be at risk of discriminatory treatment and should have regard to the need to promote equality among the borough’s communities.
53. Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires sustainability appraisal of the economic, social and environmental sustainability of plans in DPDs and as the open spaces strategy will form part of the LDF a sustainability appraisal was recommended. A sustainability appraisal was prepared to ensure the wider impacts of the open spaces strategy are addressed. The sustainability appraisal provides a sound evidence base for the open spaces strategy and forms an integrated part of the plan preparation process.
54. Part 3D, paragraph 17, the individual member for transport, environment & recycling may agree broad consultations arrangements in relation to his area of responsibility. However, as the open spaces strategy cuts across the whole of the borough, it was considered that it would be appropriate for the consultation draft to be approved by cabinet. Under Part 3C, paragraph 20 the adoption of preferred options of development plan documents are reserved to full cabinet and as the open spaces strategy will form part of the evidence base for the local development framework

Finance Director

55. This report recommends that the cabinet approve for consultation the open spaces strategy, notes the evidence base, the consultation plan, equalities impact assessment and the sustainability appraisal.

56. The finance director notes that there are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. Officer time to effect the recommendation will be contained within existing budgeted revenue resources.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background paper	Held at	Contact
London Plan 2011	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 020 7525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces strategy 2003	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 020 7525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces Audit 2005	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 020 7525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces Study evidence base report 2010	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 020 7525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces Strategy – evidence base 2011	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 020 7525 5471

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Southwark Open Spaces Strategy (circulated separately on a supplemental agenda)
Appendix B	Consultation Plan (available on the website)
Appendix C	Equalities Impact Assessment (available on the website)
Appendix D	Sustainability Appraisal (available on the website)

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive	
Report Author	Tim Cutts, Acting Head of Planning Policy	
Version	Final	
Dated	12 January 2012	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	13 January 2012	