

Item No. 13.	Classification: Open	Date: 29 January 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Southwark Open Space 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

Over the next fifteen years it is predicted that Southwark’s population will increase significantly. Much of our planning work is rightly focused on where we can build the thousands of new homes we require to support this. However, it is also essential that we also consider the infrastructure we need to protect and enhance the experience of living in Southwark – this open space strategy is an important part of this.

The open space strategy aims to strike a balance between land needed for new homes with the protection of existing and creation of new open spaces. Open spaces account for just over 20% of the total land area of Southwark and the opportunity for creating new open spaces is limited, with the proposed new park in the Elephant and Castle being the most significant. The strategy therefore also sets out opportunities and priorities for existing open spaces to be improved and makes proposals for some areas which are not currently protected from development to be given that protection.

However this document is an evidence base and a strategy and cannot in itself deliver these improvements or designate land as protected open space. We will take forward the actions proposed in the strategy by seeking funding from a variety of sources including s106 to enhance the identified open spaces and take forward the proposals for protecting more open spaces in our forthcoming New Southwark Plan development plan document, work on which will start this year.

RECOMMENDATION

That cabinet

1. Adopt the revised open space strategy (Appendix A) and note the consultation report (Appendix B), equalities analysis (Appendix C) and the sustainability appraisal (Appendix D).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The open space strategy is a borough-wide strategy, the aim of which is to balance land supply which is needed for regeneration, with the protection and creation of open space.
3. London Plan policy 2.18 requires boroughs to prepare an open space strategy, undertake audits of all forms of green and open space and assess need. This is consistent with national planning guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Open spaces 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 spaces 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 2003 and 2010 Open Space Studies. As part of this work, all spaces which are currently protected as open space were audited and additional spaces capable of meeting the Southwark Plan criteria for protecting open spaces were identified.
5. 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 planning policy documents.

CONSULTATION

6. Regulation 13 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012) and our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) 2007 set out consultation requirements for planning policy documents. Whilst the open space strategy is an evidence base document, and therefore cannot set new policies, the findings of the strategy will be used to inform the policies set out in our future planning documents. We therefore consulted on the strategy in line with the requirements set out in our SCI.
7. The consultation report (Appendix B) sets out the consultation that has been carried out on the draft open space strategy. During the preparation of the open space strategy and prior to publication, 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.
8. The draft open space strategy was published on 17 January 2012. In all, the document was available for public consultation for a period of 16 weeks (17 January - 8 May 2012), which complies with the standards in the council's Statement of Community Involvement. As well as making the document available on the web and in local libraries, around 3000 consultees in the planning policy database were notified and invited to submit comments.
9. In addition, officers presented the strategy at all the community councils in March 2012. Officers also attended meetings with Southwark Pro-Active Strategic Group, Elephant Amenity Network, Southwark Living Streets, Bankside Open Spaces Trust, Safer Communities and Southwark Friends of the Earth. Four workshops were also held locations across the borough between March and May 2012.
10. We received approximately 588 representations on the draft strategy from 77 respondents. A significant number of the responses received related to a request for the inclusion of a recommendation to protect open space at Lorrimore Square Gardens. We received comments on the support for amendments to the boundaries of Victory Row Park and Salisbury Row Park. One representation was also received about the need for protection of the Spinney next to Dulwich

Upper Wood. A number of representations supported the provision of additional open space at the Dulwich Hospital site.

11. We received a number of representations on the need to provide further information on the characteristics of green links in the borough and to include a borough wide map of these links.
12. Several respondents stated that housing amenity areas should be protected by planning policies. We also received two representations on the need to include a recommendation to protect against the over-use of open space, especially in relation to Peckham Rye Park and Common.
13. Transport for London and the Port of London Authority submitted comments on the need to provide more detail on the River Thames as an important open space in the borough. English Heritage submitted comments requesting more detail on the heritage value of open spaces. Natural England commented on the benefit of including more detail about the importance of open spaces and green links in relation to climate change mitigation.
14. Transport for London stated that references to Crossbones Graveyard should be less detailed and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority requested the de-designation of Grotto open space and Grotto podium.
15. Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST) submitted comments on the need to include more detail on the importance of open space in the north of the borough for tourism and business uses. BOST also commented on the need to give open space protection to the garden at the Tate and for the Diversity Garden on St James Road.
16. The draft open space strategy was taken to Planning Committee for comment on 24 April 2012. The committee noted the strategy and had no comments on the content of the document.
17. The main changes which are proposed to the open space strategy, following consultation, are set out in paragraphs 30-34 below. The consultation report (Appendix B) includes a more detailed summary of all the comments received during consultation as well as an appendix which includes the full responses and our officer comments on how we have taken these comments into account in preparing the final open space strategy.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

18. The open space strategy identifies Southwark as 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 significant increase in the population projected 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.
19. The open space strategy sets out a vision and objectives for the borough. The vision is 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.”

20. As well as setting out the vision and objectives for the borough, the open space strategy identifies key needs and priorities for the different types of open space. The strategy sets provision standards for public parks and natural green space and highlights the key priorities for investment and improvement. The different types of open space addressed in the strategy 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 amenity space.
21. The strategy was informed by an assessment of the quality of open spaces. This was carried out using criteria derived from the Civic Trust Green Flag standard assessment. 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.
22. The strategy was also informed by consultation with residents. During May and June 2011, 750 residents were interviewed to find out about their use of and attitudes towards Southwark’s open spaces and outdoor sports facilities. 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%).
23. 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 in the borough.
24. The strategy also takes into account need for open space, generated by varying levels of social and economic deprivation, access to private back gardens, child density, health and other factors.
25. Two of the key targets in the strategy include accessibility of parks and level of public park provision per 1000 people. The strategy identifies 400m (approximately a 5 minute walk) as a recommended accessibility standard for parks. This is consistent with the London Plan. 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.

26. With regard to public park provision, there is currently 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 0.72ha of public parks per 1,000 population by 2026 due to the projected increase in population. The strategy therefore targets maintaining public park provision at a minimum of 0.72ha per 1000 people. 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) and 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.
27. 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.
28. The Southwark Plan and Core Strategy protect many open spaces from inappropriate development. The open space strategy itself cannot be used to protect open spaces. However, where additional spaces which are not currently protected have been identified, the strategy recommends that these be considered for protection in the future when the New Southwark Plan (the successor to the Southwark Plan and Core Strategy) is being revised.
29. In view of the limited opportunity to create new open spaces the strategy focuses on improving existing open spaces. It recommends that 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, improving children's play facilities and incorporating food growing opportunities where appropriate. The strategy identifies several potential funding contributors to improvements including the community infrastructure levy, s106 planning obligations as well as council budgets.
30. Following consultation a number of changes have been made to the draft strategy. The main changes have comprised the inclusion of more information about green chains, networks and grids and further detail on the different characteristics of green links. Additional information has also been added on the heritage value of open space and on the importance of open space for climate change mitigation.
31. We received several responses on the need to include more detail on the importance of the River Thames in Southwark and so we have amended the open space strategy to reflect this.
32. We have also updated the document in light of the publication on the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition, we have included in the local context section a reference to the draft Cemetery Strategy, the draft air quality improvement strategy and action plan and a reference to the byelaws for pleasure grounds, public walks and open spaces.
33. We have also made some factual updates to the figures on the amount of natural greenspace and park provision in the borough. This is mainly the result of

switching some of the typologies used to categorise open space. In order to make the open space strategy easier to use, we have included a schedule of the planning designations for all our open spaces in Appendix 2 of the strategy.

34. In addition, a number of changes are proposed to the sub areas described in the strategy. These are as follows:

- Bankside, Borough and London Bridge: We have included a recommendation for the Tate Diversity gardens to be protected as other open space. We have also included a recommendation to investigate the potential for improvements to Mint Street Park (OS14).
- Elephant and Castle: We have included a recommendation to amend the boundary of Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park to include a section of the site in the south east corner which was previously a children's paddling pool. We have also included a recommendation to amend boundary of Victory Community Park to the south to cover the area previously occupied by a pub.
- Bermondsey and Old Kent Road: We have included a recommendation to amend the Salisbury Row park boundary to connect up the existing protected open space. We have also included a recommendation to remove Bermondsey square from its protected designation as other open space.
- Canada Water: We have made some minor amendments to the sub-area strategy to include a recommendation to improve the range of facilities at Durand's Wharf and to correct the recommendation for Kings Stairs Gardens to refer to OS28.
- Aylesbury and Walworth: We have included a recommendation for Lorrimore Square gardens to be protected as Borough Open Land. We have also amended references throughout the document to refer to Surrey Square Park as opposed to Surrey Square.
- Camberwell: We have amended the sub-area strategy to include a green link in the west of the area.
- Peckham and Nunhead: We have amended the sub-area strategy to remove the reference to Brimington Estate Allotments and Flaxyards. We have also amended the strategy to correct the names of OS106 to Bellenden Road Tree Nursery and OS112 to Highshore open space.
- Dulwich: We have amended sub-area to include a recommendation for the Spinney to be protected as Borough Open Land. We have also amended this sub-area to include a recommendation to improve the entrance in the south west corner at Belair Park.

Community impact statement

35. The purpose of the planning 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 space strategy will help to ensure that the policies set out in the planning documents achieve this.

36. An equalities analysis (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.

37. We have tested the sustainability impacts of the strategy through the sustainability appraisal (Appendix D).

Equalities analysis

38. An equalities analysis (Appendix C) has been carried out alongside the preparation of the open space strategy to assess the impact the strategy will have on groups with protected characteristics. The equalities analysis identified a number of key issues to be considered in the preparation of the final strategy. One of the most significant issues that the equalities analysis 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.
39. Open spaces improvements can also result in improvements to 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.
40. 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.
41. 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

42. Although not a legal requirement, a sustainability appraisal (Appendix D) has been prepared to help identify the environmental, social and economic impacts of the open space strategy. The SA appraised the draft strategy against sustainable development objectives (SDOs). This found that overall the strategy would have a positive impact on 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).
43. In some cases the strategy will have no significant impact on the sustainability objectives. The SA identified a potential neutral impact for SDO15 (To provide everyone the opportunity to live in a decent home). 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 housing need whilst continuing to protect our open spaces.

Financial implications

44. 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 agree the final version of open space strategy and note the related appendices to the report.

45. 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.
46. 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.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

47. The position was previously covered by Planning Policy Guidance whereby councils were required to undertake assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. PPG 17 was replaced in March 2012 by the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework.
48. Paragraph 73 of the NPPF provides that "Planning Policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area." The approach in the NPPF is therefore broadly similar to the previous approach contained within PPG 17.
49. As outlined in the report, the London Plan Policy 2.18 sets out certain requirements on London Boroughs with regard to open spaces and by producing and agreeing the final version of the open space strategy, the council is taking steps to comply with this requirement.
50. It should be noted that paragraph 74 of the NPPF re-affirms that open space, sports and recreational facilities should only be built upon in very limited circumstances.

Departmental Finance Manager REGFIN0070

51. The financial implications have been noted.
52. There are no financial implications expected to arise from the adoption of the contents of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background paper	Held at	Contact
Statement of Community Involvement 2008 http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=4250&Ver=4	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 0207 525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces evidence base report 2010 http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=4250&Ver=4	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 0207 525 5471
Southwark Open Spaces evidence base report 2012 http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2948/open_space_strategy_2012	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Sandra Warren 0207 525 5471

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix A	Southwark Open Space Strategy (circulated separately to cabinet members and available on the website)
Appendix B	Consultation report (available on the website) http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/856/planning_policy/2535/open_space_strategy
Appendix C	Equalities analysis (available on the website) http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/856/planning_policy/2535/open_space_strategy
Appendix D	Sustainability appraisal (available on the website) http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/856/planning_policy/2535/open_space_strategy

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Fiona Colley, Regeneration and Corporate Strategy	
Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Juliet Seymour, Planning Policy Manager	
Version	Final	
Dated	17 January 2013	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team		17 January 2013