



Item 17

Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: 23 June 2010

Report of: Frank Campbell, Havant Borough Council

Subject: PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy

SUMMARY

The Draft PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy has been amended following consultation with internal and external partners. The report has also been considered by the PUSH Sustainability and Community Infrastructure Panel and has been endorsed by the Panel. This report explains the key issues raised in the consultation and the response of the strategy Commissioning Group to those comments. It is now recommended for adoption as a policy framework document.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:-

1. ADOPTS the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy as a Policy Framework Document; and
2. AGREES that the process of appointing a Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator is now initiated.

INTRODUCTION

1. The draft PUSH Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy was approved for consultation with partners by the Joint Committee at its meeting in November 2009. The Strategy was widely circulated and over 200 individual comments and many general comments were received from 19 different organisations. Those comments have been reviewed by the Strategy Commissioning Group, and the Strategy amended accordingly. The comments have not been included with this report, however they are available on request.

THE CONSULTATION

2. All of the respondents were supportive of the principles underpinning the Strategy, welcoming its publication and the commitment of PUSH to Green Infrastructure. Many of the comments addressed points of detail such as typographical errors, factual inaccuracies, and the change of status of documents or Acts of Parliament over time. These amendments have been made. In addition, there were comments on aspects that had not been included in the Strategy, or were inadequately addressed. Where it was deemed to be of strategic importance additions to the document were made. Examples of this were the lack of recognition of the importance of water as a recreational resource, and the absence of reference to the Chichester Harbour AONB in the same context as the two National Parks. Finally, concerns were raised about three of the individual projects and their aspirations, which could be in direct conflict with nature conservation interests. These have been deleted from the Strategy, and a statement added that the list of projects is not exhaustive and it is expected that others will come forward during the lifetime of the Strategy.
3. The general support for the Strategy was tempered by strongly expressed concerns on two fronts: the ability of the Strategy to meet the requirements of local authorities in addressing the Habitat Regulations through their Local Development Frameworks (mainly raised by organisations representing wildlife interests); and the lack of a clear commitment to implementation (raised by a range of organisations).
4. With regard to the Habitat Regulations, PUSH has consistently stated that the Strategy is a vital contributor to addressing the requirements of the Habitat Regulations and the impact of growth on European sites (the Natura 2000 network), but that it cannot be the vehicle for doing so. The proposals and recommendations in the Strategy draw heavily on existing Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) and research, but at this time there is insufficient evidence to quantify the nature and scale of potential risks to the Natura 2000 network from planned growth. Consequently it is not possible to define with precision the quantum of alternative green space required to mitigate the risks of impact. PUSH has separately commissioned an assessment of the impact of the level of proposed growth on the Natura 2000 network and the results of that work will not be available for at least a further year. Once available it will be for individual local authorities to determine, within the context of the Strategy what type, location and scale of mitigation needs to be undertaken. The status of the Strategy in relation to the Habitat Regulations therefore remains unchanged.

5. Consultees regarded a commitment to implementation to be a fundamental requirement of the Strategy, and that the draft lacked the clear statement of commitment that was expected. It is through an Implementation Plan that the details of individual projects, their feasibility, the identification of potential conflicts of use, the potential for mitigating impacts on European sites, the financial and human resource needs, responsibilities and timescales would be identified. A section has been added to the Introduction to set out the commitment of PUSH to appoint a GI co-ordinator and establish a GI Partnership to write an Implementation Plan in collaboration with key partners. In particular, this additional section makes the link between the Implementation Plan and the requirements of the Habitat Regulations, and so serves to address some of the concerns raised regarding the HRA.
6. The Sustainability and Community Infrastructure Delivery Panel considered the comments on the draft Strategy at the meeting on the 18 May 2010 and confirmed its support for the Strategy as now amended in response to the consultation comments.
7. In its draft form, the Strategy has been referenced in the Core Strategies of two PUSH local authorities. It has been recognised as an appropriate policy framework for the development of more detailed local GI work and cross-boundary working by the Planning Inspectors undertaking the Core Strategy examinations.

Implementation of the Strategy

8. In order to make good progress in taking forward the implementation of green infrastructure as proposed in the strategy it will be essential to secure dedicated resource to manage the programme of work that is necessary. In anticipation of this need the Sustainability and Community Infrastructure Delivery Panel has already included a proposal in its approved 2010/11 action plan for the implementation of green infrastructure which identifies the need for dedicated resource. Also the Delivery Panel included provision in its 2010/11 budget funding of £50,000 to cover the cost of appointing a Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator. The appointment is anticipated to be made on the basis of a secondment from one of the PUSH authorities or one of PUSH's environmental partners. It is therefore suggested that the process to put in place this secondment is now initiated.
9. The Delivery Panel would also continue to be the managing panel for the work of the co-ordinator and the monitoring of the Implementation Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

10. Following wide consultation the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy has been amended to take account of the concerns of consultees where these can be accommodated. It has been demonstrated to provide an appropriate framework for the preparation of policy in Local Development Frameworks and a sound basis for the implementation of Green Infrastructure in South Hampshire.

RECOMMENDATION

11. It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:-

- (a) ADOPTS the PUSH Green Infrastructure Strategy as a Policy Framework Document; and
- (b) AGREES that the process of appointing a Green Infrastructure Co-ordinator is now initiated.

Appendices:

Appendix A - [Final Strategy](#)

Appendix B - [Strategy Appendices](#)

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