

HERITAGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 20th September 2006

Authors: Report by the Senior Archaeological Officer/Treasurer

A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To consider the role of the historic environment in planning for cultural and green infrastructure.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Forum is invited to:

- a) **CONSIDER how the historic environment can best contribute to planning for cultural and green infrastructure and how the sector's profile could be raised.**
- b) **COMMENT on the attached brief for the County's Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan**

C. RESOURCES

- 3 The resources for cultural and green infrastructure are required for infrastructure schedules currently being prepared by local authorities.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

4. The concept of planning for green infrastructure is relatively new having been developed in the last few years as an environmental response to the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. Green infrastructure has been defined as a "network of multi-functional greenspace, provided across the Sub-Region. It is set within, and contributes to, a high quality natural and built environment and is required to deliver "liveability" for new communities"¹. Green infrastructure has the potential to realise the public value of heritage and reconcile at least some of the tensions between development and conservation – many examples of good practice can be found in the Milton Keynes linear parks. Public support was demonstrated by the recent Heritage Open Day event at Quarrendon, which attracted over 500 visitors.

¹ *Planning Sustainable Communities. A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands. 2005.*

5. Although normally considered to include heritage sites, in practice green infrastructure plans have often been driven by countryside, recreation and nature conservation agenda. Through a proposed strategic green infrastructure plan, the opportunity exists in Buckinghamshire to give the historic environment a more prominent role in defining local sense of place and character. A number of key opportunity sites have already been identified, most notably at Boddington Hill (Wendover); Quarrendon (Aylesbury) and Whaddon Chase but major delivery and resource challenges lie ahead. In the south there are more established sites as at Burnham Beeches, Langley Park and along the Chiltern scarp (e.g. at Whiteleaf Hill and Ivinghoe Beacon). Comments are invited on the brief and on other opportunities. Ideas for integrating built heritage and museums into this emerging concept would be appreciated.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Brief for Buckinghamshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

PROJECT BRIEF

September 2006

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Buckinghamshire County Council wishes to prepare a “Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan” for the County that articulates a clear vision and spatial strategy for green infrastructure in the county that promotes and enhance’s the special character of Buckinghamshire. The Plan will comprise a Map and supporting text that will illustrate existing assets and the potential for new green infrastructure related to growth pressures allocated to the area by the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy and the South East Plan (Consultation Draft). The study is required to support infrastructure plans being prepared by Buckinghamshire County Council and partners with a view to informing local development frameworks, community plans and future funding bids.

The study will utilise the definitions and principles of Green Infrastructure set out in *Planning Sustainable Communities: A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands* and have regard to the multi-functional roles of green space set out in *The countryside in and around towns: A vision for connecting town and country in the pursuit of sustainable development* (Countryside Agency 2005).

BACKGROUND

The regional and sub-regional development context for Buckinghamshire is set out in the Draft South East Plan. In the period 2006-2026, the Plan envisages the construction of 16,800 new dwellings at Aylesbury and 4,400 in other parts of Aylesbury Vale plus the possibility of urban extensions from Milton Keynes into adjacent parts of the Vale, in which context proposals for 7,500 houses at Newton Longville have been put forward by the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee (*MK2031 Growth Strategy*). The southern parts of the county are significantly constrained by the Chiltern AONB and Metropolitan Greenbelt designations but in addition to the above, 6000 houses are proposed in Wycombe District as part of the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Sub-Region. Outside of these sub-regions, lower levels of growth are envisaged.

The Draft South East Plan contains a range of objectives which can be addressed by green infrastructure: it recognises (that positive and high quality management of the region’s open countryside should be encouraged and supported (Policy C3); that green infrastructure should accompany new development (Policy BE1); that biodiversity and wildlife should be protected and habitats restored (Policy NRM4); that woodland should be protected and promoted (Policy NRM5); that Local Development Documents should address urban-rural fringe issues (Policy BE4) and that policies should support the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment (Policy BE7) and the contribution of parks, open spaces, physical recreation and cultural facilities to shaping healthy communities (Policy S3). The scale of growth at Milton Keynes/Aylesbury makes it important that opportunities for tourism,

sport and recreation-related development are identified and fully integrated into development plans (Policy TSR7).

Local Development Frameworks are currently in preparation by District Councils that will determine the precise location of growth and associated infrastructure as well as setting out core planning policies. Preliminary work has been undertaken by the Countryside and Heritage Group to identify areas of potential for green infrastructure creation or enhancement. This work has informed an infrastructure schedule prepared for Aylesbury Vale Advantage, the local delivery vehicle for growth in Aylesbury Vale District. Related work has informed the development of the North-West Green Arc and Milton Keynes Growth Strategy. Emerging from these studies are the related concepts of “Green Infrastructure Action Areas”; “Countryside Access Hub”; “Green Infrastructure Opportunity Areas” and “Strategic Access Links” defined as:

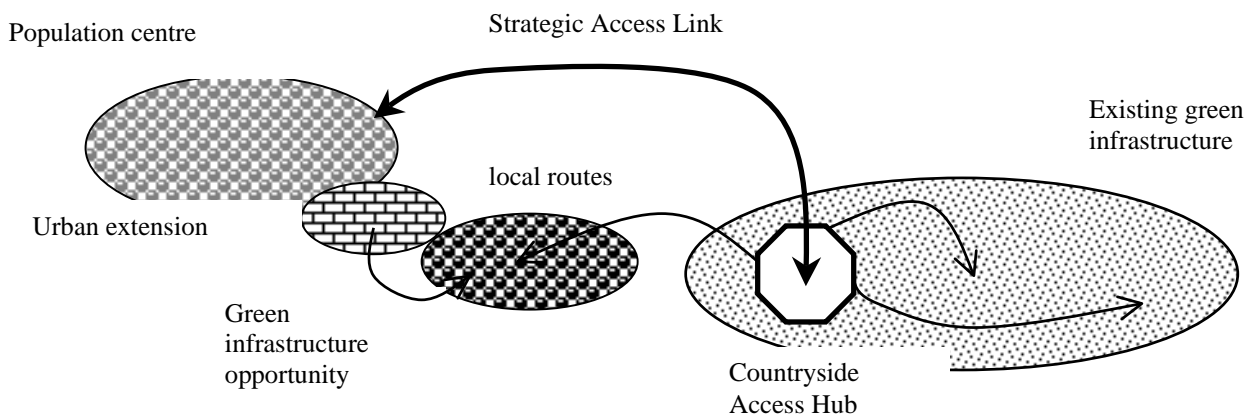
Green Infrastructure Action Area – these are priority areas for the creation and enhancement of green infrastructure. Three areas have been identified in the preliminary study: South Buckinghamshire Woods and Heaths serving existing communities in South Buckinghamshire, Hillingdon and Slough and providing for the Western Corridor Sub-Region; Aylesbury Environs providing for existing and new communities in Aylesbury and Milton Keynes Western Flank providing for existing and expanded communities on the west side of Milton Keynes and at Buckingham and Winslow. Within each Action Area there will be a need to consider in more detail the definition of:

Countryside Access Hub – a “gateway” to the countryside providing visitor facilities, information etc and local access routes to existing or proposed green infrastructure. Examples would include existing visitor centres at Black Park, Burnham Beeches and Wendover Woods. Existing Hubs may be in need of enhancement whilst other locations may have the potential to develop into a Hub.

Green Infrastructure Opportunity Area – locations where there is an opportunity and need to create new green infrastructure, or enhance existing. New green infrastructure will seek to either address to a general deficit in a locality or increase the quality or diversity of the “offer” from a existing hub. Analysis of the range of functions and benefits from each hub will be a critical factor as will be proximity and relationship to growth areas. It will be important to take full account of the historic and natural environments of each area to ensure that proposals respect and reinforce the special local characteristics of the Buckinghamshire landscape thus securing a real “sense of place”.

Strategic Access Link – these are existing or proposed new links between population centres and hubs. They should promote sustainable transport through cycling and use of public transport and will need to have regard to the Local Transport Plan and Rights of Way Strategic Access Plan.

Conceptual Plan of relationships within an Action Area (NB: each area may require more than one hub)



The consultants first step will be to take these concepts together with an outline map and other information supplied by the Client to create a short well-illustrated non-technical green infrastructure consultation paper aimed at elected members, partner organisations, parish councils, community groups etc. This paper should explain the overall concept of green infrastructure, provide a general overview map of the county explaining the overall strategy and selection of Action Areas. For each Action Area a generalised conceptual plan should be produced identifying existing infrastructure and proposed new and enhanced provision. An outline of the further steps should be provided together with an opportunity for comments. It is envisaged that the next step will involve further data gathering and analysis to refine the needs and opportunities assessment in order to inform a more robust and complete Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan, including indicative costs.

METHODOLOGY

The study will be based upon the general methodology for developing a Strategic Framework and Delivery Programme set out in *Planning Sustainable Communities: A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands* (p. 26-28). The Client envisages two stages:

Stage 1: Production of green infrastructure consultation document. Provision of data and overall concepts by Client to be worked up into consultation paper. This stage will be restricted to limited analysis of existing data to meet tight deadlines.

Stage 2: Collection of new data to enhance BCC data-sets. Enhanced analysis, including consideration of matters arising from consultation. Production of Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan.

In order to achieve the above, the Consultant will need to:

1. Assess the type, quantity, quality and accessibility of existing strategic-scale green infrastructure assets. In stage 2, the consultant should make provision for enhancing the existing data sets with regard to the nature, accessibility, function and benefits² of key assets.
2. Assess the provision of green infrastructure within agreed catchments of the county's main population centres considering both the current situation and the projected situation in 2026. This will enable comparative measures of provision to be made between communities and also comparison with national benchmarks (e.g. Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) Toolkit) and the identification and quantification of deficits.
3. Identify opportunities for enhancing existing and creating new multi-functional green infrastructure addressing a variety of functions and benefits. Opportunity analysis should consider existing historic and natural assets; landscape character; sense of place; potential for (re)creating priority habitats; strategic access opportunities; educational potential and wider sustainability issues. Detailed issues of land ownership and economic viability are beyond the scope of this study but regard should be had to available information and expert opinion to ensure that proposals are "realistic" in the sense that they are worthy of taking forward as site or area specific Delivery Plans. Sufficient work should be done on costs to inform an Infrastructure Schedule for the South East Plan.
4. Produce a Draft Buckinghamshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan for consultation. Undertake consultation and revise as appropriate. Publish final Plan.

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER

1. The project will cover the whole of the modern county of Buckinghamshire, covering the Districts of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe. It will have regard to published plans covering adjacent and overlapping areas (e.g. Milton Keynes; Chiltern AONB Management Plan and Colne Valley Regional Park Action Plan). It will cover the period of the South East Plan (2006-2026).
2. Data is available in GIS format (see list below). The Countryside and Heritage Group is currently developing a "Buckinghamshire Environmental Character System" (BECS) which will feed data into the study. The consultant must be able to receive, manipulate and analyse GIS data.
3. The consultant will also be provided with a range of published and draft BCC reports relevant to the study (e.g. Buckinghamshire Landscape Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan; Historic Environment Assessments for the

² For a systematic approach to analysis of functions and benefits see also *Thames Gateway Green Infrastructure Guidance*.

Growth Areas; Outcomes from local Green Infrastructure Workshops etc.) Relevant external reports and policies should be referred to (e.g. South East Forestry Plan).

4. It is a requirement that data captured in digital format compatible with the Client's systems. Digital data generated by the project must be compatible with systems used by BCC (i.e. Microsoft Word, Excel and Access and for GIS data Arc GIS version 8.3.)
5. The Project Manager will be the Consultant's main contact for the study. The consultant will be expected to work closely with the Countryside and Heritage and Strategic Plans Groups at Buckinghamshire County Council.

OUTPUTS AND PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

The outputs should be presented in paper and digital copy. All outputs must be provided in draft form for client approval in sufficient time to meet required deadlines.

The green infrastructure consultation paper and final strategy is envisaged as being in 4 A3 pages written in plain English, well-illustrated with generalised maps. A technical report will also be required setting out the policy context, consultation and analysis undertaken to arrive at the final plan.

Enhanced GIS data must be returned to the client in an agreed format suitable for use by the client.

CONDITIONS AND STANDARDS OF THE WORK

Buckinghamshire County Council is the commissioning body (or 'Client') for the study and will appoint a Project Manager. Consultants tendering for this project will be required to produce a Proposal which:

- outlines the Consultant's understanding of the brief
- provides details of relevant qualifications and experience (including examples of previous GIP work and demonstration of GIS-capability)
- identifies any assumptions or observations made by the Consultant
- set out how the Consultant intends to meet the objectives of the study including identification of the key elements of and stages within the project, how the Consultant will interact with the Project Management Group.
- identify how the Consultant will meet the requirement for information arising from the study to be made available in digital format
- set out how interim and final outputs will be presented
- confirm adherence to the required timetable, provide project plan identifying appropriate consultation meetings and key milestones
- provide two independent referees with experience of the consultant's work, preferably on similar projects
- set out the Consultant's fees and estimates for the delivery of the study. Separate costs should be provided for stages 1 and 2. The client reserves the right to commission only part of the work set out in the brief.

Methods, timetable, outputs and reporting will be as specified unless varied by written instruction issued by the Project Manager.

Copyright: the findings from the study will be the property of the Client. The use of this information by the Consultant for any purposes other than those specified in this document will require the written consent of the Client.

OUTLINE TIMETABLE

Tender submissions received by Client	18 September 2006
Award of contract	22 September 2006
Completion of stage 1	30 October 2006
Completion of stage 2	15 January 2007

BCC PROJECT TEAM

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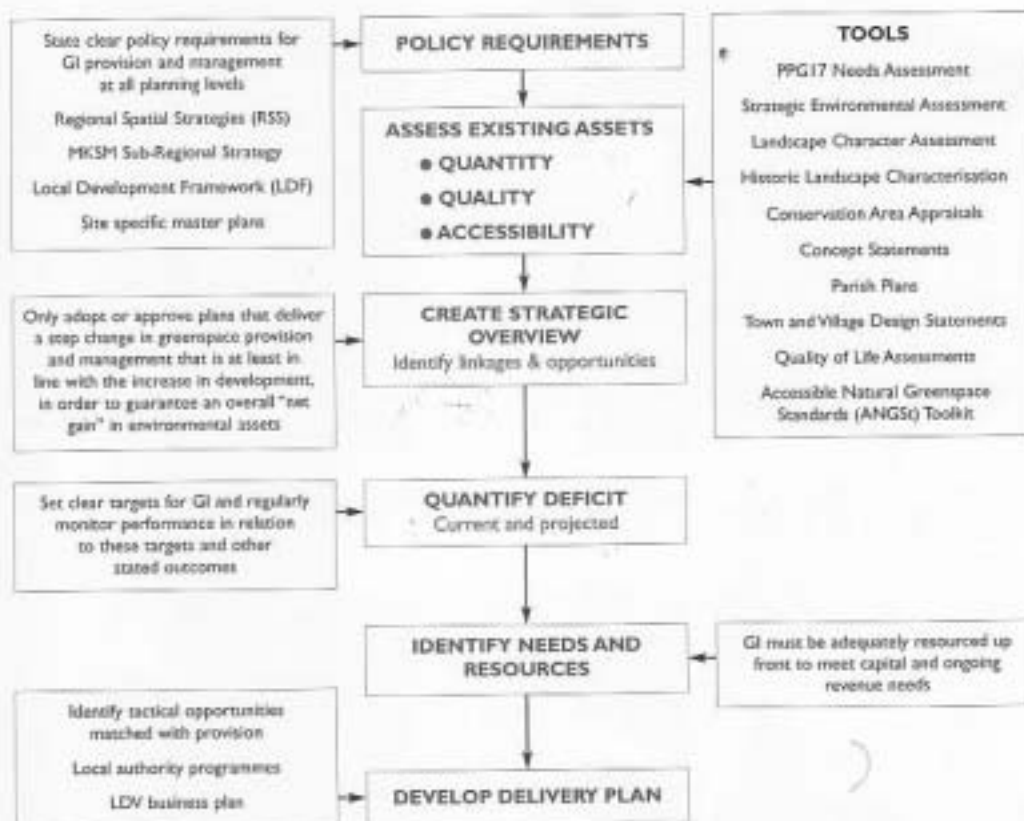
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APPENDIX 1 – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK METHODOLOGY (From *Planning Sustainable Communities: A Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands*)

Strategic Framework and Delivery Programme



A net gain in GI should be secured by applying the following sequence of actions

- i. Protect and enhance all existing natural and historic assets wherever possible
- ii. Significantly improve the management of existing GI
- iii. Provide for the creation and management of new GI assets to meet identified needs
- iv. If GI is created as compensation for the loss or damage of an existing asset, the aim must be at least to create an equivalent asset. However, it must be recognised that some assets are irreplaceable.

APPENDIX 2 – KEY DATASETS (indicative)

Type of data	Existing data sources	Data holder	Format
Natural Environment	SSSI	BCC/CIT	GIS Arc View shape file
	County Wildlife Site		GIS Arc View shape file
	BBOWT Reserve		GIS Arc View shape file
	RSPB Reserve		GIS Arc View shape file
	National Nature Reserve		GIS Arc View shape file
	Local Nature Reserve		GIS Arc View shape file
	Biodiversity Action Plan		Report
Historic Environment	Scheduled Ancient Monuments	BCC/CAS	GIS Arc View shape file Designation papers
	Conservation Areas		GIS Arc View shape file Conservation Area Appraisal (partial)
	Registered parks & Gardens		GIS Arc View shape file Designation papers
	Historic Landscape Character		GIS Arc View shape file County and Growth Area Reports
	Listed Buildings		GIS Arc View shape file Designation papers
	Archaeological Notification Areas		GIS Arc View shape file

Type of data	Existing data sources	Data holder	Format
Strategic Access	Open Access Land	BCC/RoW	GIS Arc View shape file
	Forestry Commission Land		GIS Arc View shape file
	National Trust Land		GIS Arc View shape file
	RoW Promoted Routes		GIS Arc View shape file
	Rights of Way Definitive Map		GIS Arc View shape file
	Rights of Way Improvement Plan		Report?
Strategic Planning	Chiltern AONB		GIS Arc View shape file
	Greenbelt		GIS Arc View shape file
	Local Landscape Designations		GIS Arc View shape file
	Population data	tbc	?
Transportation	Local Transport Plan		
Physical geography/Landscape	OS Mastermap	GIS	GIS Arc View shape file
	Floodplains		GIS Arc View shape file
	Geological Data	tbc	GIS Arc View shape file
	Buckinghamshire Landscape Plan	BCC/CIT	Report