

3 – Policy Context



- 3.1 National policy
- 3.2 Regional policy
- 3.3 County policies/strategies
- 3.4 Local policy

3.1 National policies and strategies

3.1.1 National Biodiversity Strategy: ‘Working with the grain of nature’ (Defra, 2002)

Chapter 6 on Woodland and Forestry contains various key actions (‘What we want to see’, paragraph 6.9) including:

- Take measures to prevent loss or damage to ancient woodland and trees, and their uniquely rich biodiversity, from development and mineral extraction.
- Encourage woodland management which conserves and enhances the rich biodiversity of our native woodland – including promoting the restoration of ancient woodland sites and parkland adversely affected by past conifer plantation
- Improve the evidence on the contribution of woodland, and its associated biodiversity, to people’s quality of life and on the value of the environmental services it provides.
- Secure more high-quality public access to woodland with rich biodiversity. This will enhance people’s enjoyment, provide health benefits and increase public understanding of woodland and the sustainability of wood products.

3.1.2 Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (ODPM, 2005)

Makes specific reference to ancient woodland:

‘Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for the diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. Local planning authorities should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection (e.g. as an SSSI). They should not grant planning permission for any developments that would result in its loss or deterioration... Aged or ‘veteran’ trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals.’ (paragraph 10)

3.1.3 Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green belts (DCLG, January 1995 (amended March 2001))

The use of land in green belts

1.6 Once green belts have been defined, the use of land in them has a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- to secure nature conservation interest, and
- to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.

3.1.4 ‘A Strategy for England’s Trees, Woods and Forests’ (Defra, 2007)

Much of the England Forestry Strategy is of relevance to this project but specific policies of interest in the document include:

28. • pursue opportunities to increase public recognition, enjoyment and understanding of the historic, archaeological and cultural value of trees and forests, particularly of our ancient woodlands and veteran trees.
32. • encourage an early and integrated approach to tree and woodland planting and management in and around our towns and cities to provide a high quality, sustainable resource which reflects local needs and landscape character, and is responsive to change.

Policies

42. • seek a landscape-scale approach to tree planting, woodland creation and management, which takes account of the interaction between trees, woodlands and other land uses, and delivers the benefits of the wider ecosystem services which strategically placed woodland can provide.
- seek a greater role for trees, hedgerows and woodland within more extensive agricultural management systems;
 - address the causes of woodland decline and promote the protection of trees, woods and forests from invasive species, diseases and other damage e.g. from atmospheric pollution;
 - ensure that trees and woodlands are planted and managed (both now and as our climate changes) to protect soil and water resources from erosion and from chemical, physical and biological degradation, in line with the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive and the proposed EU Soil Framework Directive;
 - improve public understanding of the role of woodland products and ecosystem services in dealing with climate change and safeguarding biodiversity;
-
- ensure that planting and management of trees, woods and forests takes account of local landscape attributes, for example as brought together through the Joint Character Areas in England, and contributes to the delivery of the requirements of the European Landscape Convention.

3.1.5 England's Trees, Woods and Forests Delivery Plan 2008-2012 (FC/NE, 2008)

The following are the objectives of the Delivery Plan for 2008 to 2012:

AIM 1: A Sustainable Resource

- To provide and protect a sustainable resource of trees, woods and forests in places where they can contribute most to society.
- To embed trees, woods and forests into wider policies, strategies and programmes.
- To achieve better engagement with owners, managers and local communities.
- To manage more woodland sustainably and improve its economic viability.
- To plant trees and create new woodland in priority places.

AIM 2: Climate Change

- To increase the resilience of trees, woods and forests to climate change.
- To increase the role of trees and woodland in adapting the rural landscape to climate change.
- To enhance the role of street trees and urban woodland in minimising the impacts of climate change on our towns and cities.
- To increase the contribution of trees, woods and forests to climate change mitigation.
- To use trees, woods and forests to help communicate and improve understanding of climate change issues and bring about behavioural change.

AIM 3: Natural Environment

- To increase knowledge and recognition of the contribution of new and existing woodland to the provision of ecosystem services.
- To conserve ancient woods and veteran trees and increase the area of native woodland habitat. Ensure they are resilient to climate change and provide opportunities for people to enjoy woodland wildlife.
- To conserve and enhance the biodiversity associated with non-native trees, woods and forests, and non-woodland habitats and species.
- To conserve rare or threatened species and intervene in appropriate ways to manage the threats to their conservation.
- To enhance the contribution of trees, woods and forests to wider landscapes, and ensure their historic and cultural values are being protected and appreciated.

AIM 4: Quality of Life

- To create more attractive and inspiring places by enhancing the contribution of Green Infrastructure to local environmental quality.
- To increase the use of trees, woods and forests for recreation and physical activity, promoting healthier lifestyles, enjoyment and a greater understanding of the natural environment.
- To enable more people in more places to enjoy the personal and social benefits of trees, woods and forests, contributing to more active, stronger and sustainable communities.

AIM 5: Business and Markets

- To promote the use of wood and timber as renewable materials and help identify market opportunities in sustainable construction and product substitution.
- To strengthen supply chains within the emerging woodfuel industry.
- To increase the use of trees, woods and forests as a basis for leisure and tourism businesses.
- To develop a range of business models that improve the opportunities for woodland owners to pursue viable woodland management.
- To improve recruitment and retention rates for the sector and enhance skills through the provision of accessible and relevant training.

3.1.6 'Keepers of Time: A statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland' (Defra/FC, 2005)

The policies contained within this publication include the following:

- The existing area of ancient woodland should be maintained and there should be a net increase in the area of native woodland.
- Ancient and native woodland and trees should make an increasing contribution to our quality of life.
- Ancient and native woodland should be exemplars of sustainable development and provide opportunities for enterprise and employment.
- The ecological condition of ancient and native woodland should be improved and maintained.
- Rare, threatened or priority species associated with ancient and native woodland should be conserved and enhanced.
- The cultural heritage associated with ancient woodland and veteran trees should be protected and conserved.
- The landscape context of woodland should be improved.

The strategic objectives include:

- Take steps to avoid losses of ancient woodland and of ancient and veteran trees.
- Sustain the total extent of other native woodland (ensuring that gains exceed any losses).
- Support work on the ground to increase populations and/or ranges of priority species.
- Improve our knowledge and awareness of woodland heritage.
- Promote good working practices to ensure valuable features are identified and conserved.
- Ensure that any woodland creation is in keeping with the distinctive local landscape and its history.
- Provide opportunities for public appreciation of woodland history.
- Create new native woodland to extend, link or complement existing woodland and other habitats.
- Create semi-natural habitats in locations where they will benefit species which use both woodland and non-woodland habitats.
- Reduce or buffer the impacts of intensive land uses and development which adjoin ancient or native woodland.
- Work towards creating landscapes that are 'ecologically functional'.
- Ensure the management and creation of ancient and/or native woodland conserves and enhances the natural beauty and character of landscapes.

3.1.7 Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (DCLG, 2007)

KEY PLANING OBJECTIVES (page 10)

9. To deliver sustainable development, and in doing so a full and appropriate response on climate change, regional planning bodies and all planning authorities should prepare, and manage the delivery of, spatial strategies that:

- make a full contribution to delivering the Government’s Climate Change Programme and energy policies, and in doing so contribute to global sustainability;
- in providing for the homes, jobs, services and infrastructure needed by communities, and in renewing and shaping the places where they live and work, secure the highest viable resource and energy efficiency and reduction in emissions;
- deliver patterns of urban growth and sustainable rural developments that help secure the fullest possible use of sustainable transport for moving freight, public transport, cycling and walking; and which overall reduce the need to travel, especially by car;
- secure new development and shape places that minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to climate change, and in ways that are consistent with social cohesion and inclusion;
- conserve and enhance biodiversity, recognising that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change;
- reflect the development needs and interests of communities and enable them to contribute effectively to tackling climate change; and
- respond to the concerns of business and encourage competitiveness and technological innovation in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

3.1.8 The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (DECC, 2009)

Protecting, managing, and growing our forests (page 160)

The Government will support a new drive to encourage private funding for woodland creation. If we could create an additional 10,000 hectares of woodland per year for 15 years, those growing trees could remove up to 50 million tonnes of carbon dioxide between now and 2050 ...

Woodland creation is a very cost-effective way of fighting climate change over the long term, but it requires an upfront investment ... to realise the potential for 2050, we need to see a big increase in woodland creation – and we need to plant sooner rather than later.

.... Well-targeted woodland creation can also bring other benefits, including a recreational resource, employment opportunities, flood alleviation, improvements in water quality, and helping to adapt our landscapes to climate change by linking habitats to support wildlife. The Government will ensure that woodland creation policies continue to respect the benefits and demands of landscape, biodiversity and food security.

3.1.9 The Play Strategy (DCSF/DCMS, 2008)

Embedding play in local government thinking (page 65)

7.2 Local councils have always provided facilities to support children and young people’s play and leisure. The strong emerging evidence on the wide benefits of play, and the clear strength of public feeling on local play opportunities, will make Local Strategic Partnerships want to consider further the profile they currently give to outdoor play facilities in their decision-making. Good play opportunities can improve communities’ quality of life, and developing them is a proven way to

engage with local people. As such, local play provision should be thought of in the context of the local authority's place making role to create sustainable communities.

Supporting active play (page 67)

We are working with the Department of Health to support active play as part of the drive by Children's Trusts to help children lead healthy lives, and through the healthy lifestyle campaign Play4Life

7.13 Active, outdoor play is a key area of interest for public health services locally. The cross-Government strategy Healthy Weight Healthy Lives emphasised the role that active play and travel can have on children's weight. All Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are required to have a plan in place for tackling obesity in under 11s, and 130 local authorities have prioritised child obesity in their Local Area Agreement or local targets. This provides huge incentives for a new focus by Children's Trusts on supporting active, outdoor play.

3.1.10 Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: A Cross Government Strategy for England (Department of Health, 2008)

3. Building physical activity into our lives

A supportive built environment (pp20-21)

There is significant potential for promoting 'active travel', particularly given that 55 per cent of trips by car are under five miles, with 25 per cent under two miles. Promoting walking and cycling as viable alternatives to car use for such journeys could have substantial benefits – not only for promoting healthy weight, but also for climate change, congestion and the wider environment. The methods used by communities that successfully promote active travel include traffic calming, and building more cycle infrastructure. The most successful areas galvanise the whole community, including local businesses, so that everyone contributes.

New guidance from NICE sets out the first recommendations – based on evidence of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness – on how to improve the physical environment in order to encourage and support physical activity ... NICE's recommendations include ensuring that:

- any planning applications for new developments prioritise the need for people to be physically active as a routine part of their daily life

...

- public open spaces and public paths can be reached on foot or by bicycle, and are maintained to a high standard

But if the fabric of our urban and rural spaces is to change so that they encourage healthy living, then we need to go further. A fundamental shift in our built environment will not happen overnight, but there is more that can be done to ensure that health is built more robustly into the fabric of our lives. In particular, the Government will:

....

- encourage local planning authorities, when considering planning applications relating to all types of outdoor space, including open space and playing fields, to support the vision of a more physically active society

3.1.11 Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (ODPM, 2002)

Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well-designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering broader government objectives. These include:

- supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high-quality and well-managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality.
- supporting a rural renewal - the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and wellbeing of people who live in rural areas.
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion – well-planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of wellbeing in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction.
- health and wellbeing - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.
- promoting more sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily-used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well-served by public transport.

Open Spaces

24. In planning for new open spaces and in assessing planning applications for development, local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, to create public open space from vacant land, and to incorporate open space within new development on previously-used land. They should also consider whether use can be made of land which is otherwise unsuitable for development, or procure public use of privately-owned areas of land or sports facilities.

Urban Fringe Areas

25. The countryside around towns provides a valuable resource for the provision of sport and recreation, particularly in situations where there is an absence of land in urban areas to meet

provision. Subject to paragraphs 27-30 below, local authorities should encourage the creation of sports and recreational facilities in such areas and the development of areas of managed countryside, such as country parks, community forests, and agricultural showgrounds. Where planning permission is to be granted for such land uses, local planning authorities should ensure that facilities are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport as alternatives to the use of the car.

Recreational Rights of Way

32. Rights of way are important recreational facilities, which local authorities should protect and enhance. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks.

3.1.12 Encouraging walking: advice to local authorities (DETR, 2000)

Walking for pleasure (page 12)

2.29 We want to create conditions in which people will choose to walk rather than walking only if there is no alternative. It can be done. Walking as a leisure pursuit has shown a steady increase in the last decade. This has been helped by the efforts of many organisations to open up the rights of way network. It is often thought of as a purely rural activity, but people walk for pleasure in urban areas too, for instance around local parks, alongside waterways or in an attractive town centre.

2.30 Recreational walking benefits individuals, and helps build up a culture in which people walk from choice. Renewal programmes and efforts to reduce the impact of traffic on people (particularly in rural areas) should take this into account. We can also learn from the groups involved in promoting recreational walking and apply their experience to wider promotional campaigns.

3.1.13 Public Service Agreements

Heartwood Forest can contribute to the following cross-departmental Public Service Agreements (PSAs), setting out the Government's top priorities that apply over the spending period from 2008 to 2011.

PSA Delivery Agreement 12: Improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people

PSA Delivery Agreement 18: Promote better health and wellbeing for all

PSA Delivery Agreement 21: Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

PSA Delivery Agreement 27: Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change

PSA Delivery Agreement 28: Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

Vision

1.2 The natural environment plays a vital role in supporting a strong economy and a fairer society. It is important not only for its intrinsic value, but also for the wide range of benefits and services it provides for people. A healthy natural environment provides the basic necessities of life such as clean air, clean water and food, as well as raw materials...The beauty and wonder of the natural environment inspires people everywhere.

2.13.3 The role of third sector organisations

3.42 A wide range of third sector organisations play a vital role in helping protect and enhance the natural environment...Voluntary and community organisations actively engage local communities in protecting and enhancing the natural environment through a variety of mechanisms such as volunteering, community groups, partnership working and memberships. These organisations also play a particularly important role in providing education and raising awareness on natural environment issues.

2.13.4 Public engagement

3.49 Individuals have a key role to play in this PSA: everyone can contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. There is a growing interest in environmental protection at individual and community level and the Government will seek to promote this further.

3.51 The Government will seek to increase the number and diversity of people volunteering and getting involved in helping protect the natural environment through supporting volunteering and recording networks.

3.2 Regional policies and strategies

3.2.1 East of England Plan (GOEE, 2008)

The East of England Plan, which was published in 2008, has the following policies that are of relevance:

POLICY T9: Walking, Cycling and other Non-Motorised Transport

Provision for walking, cycling and other non-motorised transport should be improved and developed as part of an integrated strategy for achieving the RTS objectives. Pedestrian, cycle and other non-motorised transport networks should be managed and improved to enhance access to work, schools and town centres, and provide access to the countryside, urban greenspace, and recreational opportunities. Support should be given to completing the National Cycle Network in the region by 2010, and to linking it to local cycle networks.

POLICY SS8: The Urban Fringe

Local authorities should work with developers and other agencies to secure the enhancement, effective management and appropriate use of land in the urban fringe through formulating and implementing strategies for urban fringe areas, working across administrative boundaries where appropriate.

Local Development Documents should:

- ensure that new development in or near the urban fringe contributes to enhancing its character and appearance and its recreational and/or biodiversity value and avoids harm to sites of European and international importance for wildlife in particular;
- seek to provide networks of accessible green infrastructure linking urban areas with the countryside; and
- set targets for the provision of green infrastructure for planned urban extensions.

POLICY ENV1: Green Infrastructure

Areas and networks of green infrastructure should be identified, created, protected, enhanced and managed to ensure an improved and healthy environment is available for present and future communities. Green infrastructure should be developed so as to maximise its biodiversity value and, as part of a package of measures, contribute to achieving carbon neutral development and flood attenuation. In developing green infrastructure opportunities should be taken to develop and enhance networks for walking, cycling and other non-motorised transport.

Local Development Documents should:

- define a multiple hierarchy of green infrastructure, in terms of location, function, size and levels of use, based on analysis of natural, historic, cultural and landscape assets, and the identification of areas where additional green infrastructure is required;
- require the retention of substantial connected networks of green space in urban, urban fringe and adjacent countryside areas to serve the growing communities in key centres for development and change; and
- ensure that policies have regard to the economic and social as well as environmental benefits of green infrastructure assets and protect sites of European or international importance for wildlife.

Policy ENV 2: Landscape Conservation

Throughout the East of England, planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies, programmes and proposals should recognise and aim to protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the nationally-defined countryside character areas

Policy ENV 3: Biodiversity and Earth Heritage

Proper consideration should be given to the potential effects of development on the conservation of habitats and species outside designated sites, and on species protected by law.

Planning authorities and other agencies should ensure that the region's wider biodiversity, earth heritage and natural resources are protected and enriched through the conservation, restoration and re-establishment of key resources by:

- ensuring that new development minimises damage to biodiversity and the earth heritage resource by avoiding harm to county wildlife sites, and wherever possible on development sites, achieving net environmental gains through the retention of existing assets, enhancement measures and new habitat creation;
- promoting the conservation, enhancement, restoration, re-establishment and good management of habitats and species populations in accordance with East of England regional biodiversity targets, and the priorities established in the East of England Regional Biodiversity Network Map;
- identifying and safeguarding areas for habitat restoration and re-establishment, in particular large-scale (greater than 200ha) habitat restoration areas which will deliver human and wildlife benefit;
- identifying, safeguarding, conserving, and restoring regionally important geological and/or geomorphological sites and promoting their good management;
- ensuring the appropriate management and further expansion of wildlife corridors that are important for the migration and dispersal of wildlife, and
- establishing networks of semi-natural green spaces in built up areas, as provided for under policy Policy ENV 1 'Green Infrastructure'.

POLICY ENV4: Agriculture, Land and Soils

In their plans, policies, programmes and proposals planning authorities and other agencies should:

- promote and encourage the expansion of agri-environment schemes to:
 - increase the landscape, historic and wildlife value of farmland in accordance with regional priorities set out in other policies of this RSS;
 - maintain and enhance the resilience and quality of soils;
 - increase public access;
 - reduce diffuse pollution;
- include policies that respond to the changes taking place in agriculture to address issues such as climate change and consumer demands for higher standards of animal welfare and food safety and the implications of resultant development in the countryside;
- encourage the sustainable use of soil resources and, where soil and land have been degraded, maximise opportunities for restoration to beneficial after-uses including agriculture, woodland, amenity and habitat creation schemes in accordance with regional priorities set out in other policies of this RSS;
- encourage more sustainable use of water resources through winter storage schemes and new wetland creation.

Policy ENV 5: Woodlands



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

In their plans, policies, programmes and proposals, local planning authorities and other agencies should seek to achieve an increase in woodland cover both by protecting and achieving better management of existing woodland and promoting new planting where it would be consistent with landscape character. Ancient semi-natural woodland and other woodlands of acknowledged national or regional importance should be identified in local development documents with a strong presumption against development that would result in their loss or deterioration. Aged or veteran trees should be conserved. The nature conservation value of all woodlands is recognised and conversion of any woodland to other land uses should be resisted unless there are overriding public and ecological benefits. Woodland unavoidably lost to development should be replaced with new woodland of at least equivalent area and composition, preferably in the same landscape unit.

New woodland creation should be targeted at:

- schemes for the restoration of derelict or contaminated land and sites formerly used for mineral extraction or industry;
- green infrastructure projects associated with areas planned for significant growth;
- the Thames Chase, Watling Chase and Forest of Marston Vale Community Forests, with the aim of increasing their woodland cover to 30% by 2030;
- planting schemes along transport corridors; and
- schemes to expand and link areas of native woodland and create new wet woodland (which is a priority in this region), to meet regional and local BAP targets.

POLICY LA1: London Arc

(1) Within the London Arc the emphasis will be on:

- (a) retention of long-standing green belt restraint, supported by more positive green infrastructure use of neglected areas in accordance with green belt purposes; and
- (b) urban regeneration, including the promotion of greater sustainability within the built-up areas, particularly measures to increase the use of non-car modes of transport.

3.2.2 Regional Economic Strategy 2008-2031 (EEDA, 2008)

Its vision is,

By 2031, the East of England will be:

- internationally-competitive with a global reputation for innovation and business growth
- a region that harnesses and develops the talents and creativity of all
- at the forefront of the low-carbon and resource-efficient economy and known for: exceptional landscapes, vibrant places and quality of life
- being a confident, outward-looking region with strong leadership and where communities actively shape their future

One section in particular relates to the region's landscape:

3.6 Spatial Economy (page 82)

Priority 2: Increasing economic gain from the region's distinctiveness and vitality
... Protecting and enhancing our green infrastructure is central to securing sustainable communities. Accessible networks of high-quality parks and other green spaces that link urban and rural areas provide diverse benefits to communities. The region should seek to create distinctive areas within and between cities and towns, enhance biodiversity, provide opportunities for leisure activities and deliver a sense of place and community.

Priority 4: Adapting the region's places to meet the challenges and opportunities of climate change

... enhancing the use of quality green space and promoting the connectivity of natural landscapes.

3.2.3 Regional Environment Strategy for the East of England: 'Our environment, our future' (EERA/EEEF, 2003)

Woodland is specifically referenced as a key asset for biodiversity:

'Woodlands comprise the second largest land-use in the East of England, covering 7.3% of the land area.'

Specific reference to improving community access and involvement can be found in:

SA11: Enhance biodiversity

Achieving the aim:

- Access to, and understanding of, local greenspace should be improved, and the role of the voluntary sector in managing both our best and local sites promoted.
- Both small and large-scale initiatives should be encouraged that enhance biodiversity whilst providing employment, recreational opportunities, and economic returns.

SA14: Increase Understanding and Ownership of Environmental Issues

Achieving the aim:

- Agencies, local authorities, and other institutions with responsibilities for environmental issues should work together more closely, and with business and local communities, to increase awareness, and encourage joint ownership of environmental issues, with the aim of achieving improvements to all aspects of the environment.

3.2.4 East of England Biodiversity Delivery Plan 2008-2015

The East of England Biodiversity Forum has just published its Delivery Plan for the region and the Woodland Trust is named as a partner on a variety of its Actions. The following are just some of the key areas that relate to the project at Heartwood Forest:



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

Challenge 1: Networking Nature

Heartwood Forest is part of a landscape-scale approach to conservation. It will protect and enhance the existing ancient woodland and create habitat and ecosystem linkages across the landscape, improving the environmental quality of the intervening countryside and adjacent urban areas.

Challenge 2: Realising biodiversity's true value

Objective 1: Increase knowledge and positive attitudes towards biodiversity

Action 3: Communicate benefits – Use landscape-scale projects to communicate biodiversity and its benefits to people

Objective 3: Encourage people's involvement with local biodiversity projects

Action 2: Volunteers and training – Promote opportunities for individuals and community groups in biodiversity monitoring, surveying and practical conservation work

Regional biodiversity targets

The Regional Biodiversity Targets are being revised and have not yet been signed off. However, the target for native woodland creation is likely to be 6,444ha by 2015.

Previously the East of England Biodiversity Forum agreed a set of seven priority Regional Habitat Biodiversity targets in order to help achieve UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets. Among the seven is:

Semi-natural woodland

UK HAPs included: lowland wood-pasture and parkland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland (most ancient woodland) and wet woodland.

The targets are as follows:

Maintain: 100% of existing resource

Restore: 1700ha by 2010

Create: 1400ha by 2010

Regional Biodiversity Network Map

The East of England Biodiversity Forum has produced a map which identifies where there are opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within the region (see attachment for the map and its component layers). Heartwood Forest lies in an 'Urban biodiversity deprivation area' around the city of St Albans and lies in an area identified as offering opportunities to 'Buffer fragmented habitats'.

3.2.5 Woodland for Life: The Regional Woodland Strategy for the East of England (EERA/FC, 2003)



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

Recreation and Access (pp17-18)

What is being done for recreation and access?

Many woodlands with public access are being established all over the region (particularly within the three Community Forest areas), but there is scope for much greater provision, especially close to residential areas both urban and rural.

Opportunities for recreation and access.

A number of opportunities exist to enhance the recreation provision of the region:

- improving the quality of recreation and information on the location of accessible woodlands, increasing access in existing woodlands, particularly those in leasehold by the Forestry Commission or in private ownership. This may require financial support and guidance on how to manage public access,
- planting of new woodland where existing accessible woodland is unavailable. This will particularly be in urban-fringe areas. It will be important to build on the expertise developed within the Community Forests,
- encouragement of public participation in woodland creation and management to foster a sense of involvement and responsibility,
- good design to ensure developments incorporate publicly accessible green space with substantial tree cover, and
- providing formal recreation facilities in larger woodland areas; these should be self-financing as far as possible.

Initiative for Recreation and Access

QL1 Support a strategic approach to access provision, to ensure that woodland is an integral part of wider green space and access strategies and programmes.

Health (pp19-20)

Opportunities for health.

A wide range of initiatives could be undertaken that would have health benefits, among which are:

- promote moderate outdoor exercise and conservation work for health,
- facilitate new hospital developments being set within well-landscaped grounds,
- increase the availability of accessible woodland near to where people live and work, thereby increasing accessibility to a wider range of socio-economic and other groups.

Initiative for Health

QL2 Raise the awareness of the benefits of woodland for health and wellbeing.

Landscape (pp21-22)

Opportunities for landscape.

Version: Final



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

In light of possible climate change and the roles trees and woods may play in flood control and energy production, existing landscape strategies may need to be reassessed, including the current general presumption against woodland planting in river valleys.

Initiative for Landscape

QL3 Enhance, with trees and woodland, the aesthetic qualities of areas of the East of England that have suffered landscape degradation.

Community engagement (pp22-23)

Opportunities for community engagement.

The lessons learned and expertise gained in community involvement and participation could be widely disseminated.

- Greater community participation in the management of woodlands could be encouraged.
- Ensure tree and woodland issues are actively considered in Community Strategies and by Local Strategic Partnerships.
- Establish funding sources to allow community purchase of land for woodland creation

Initiative for Community Engagement

QL4 Support community engagement in woodland issues.

Urban fringe and built environment (pp28-29)

Opportunities for the urban fringe and built environment.

- Continued tree and woodland planting in the urban fringe throughout the region to provide a wide range of benefits.
- Develop the 'Green Arc' proposal to link the London fringes of Essex and Hertfordshire through a mosaic of woodlands and other habitats.

Initiatives for the Urban Fringe and Built Environment

SP1 Promote sustainable developments set within well-designed green space of which trees and woodland play a functional part.

SP2 Improve protection of existing woodland and trees.

Soils (pp53-54)

Initiative for Soils

NE2 Promote woodland planting and management to help protect other natural resources as part of integrated sustainable land management.

Biodiversity (pps57-59)

Opportunities for biodiversity.

- Develop opportunity maps for habitat restoration and re-creation that include both woodland and non-woodland habitats.
- Heighten awareness of the importance of trees and woodlands in biodiversity, particularly within urban areas.
- Ensure woodland SPAs, SACs and SSSIs are brought into favorable condition.

Initiatives for Biodiversity

NE3 Promote the establishment and management of woodland within an integrated functional landscape to protect the historic environment and enhance biodiversity.

NE4 Help deliver Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans particularly through the management of native or ancient woodland, wood pasture and veteran trees.

3.2.6 A Regional Health Strategy for the East of England 2005-2010 (EERA, 2005)

Theme A: Health in Sustainable Communities

- Strategic Priority 1: To ensure that the social, economic and environmental foundations of healthy lifestyles are designed creatively into new and existing communities in the East of England, recognising the range of factors that contribute to health outcomes
- Strategic Priority 2: To provide infrastructure and sustained support to build social capital, particularly among those communities (geographical communities, communities of interest and potentially vulnerable groups) which are experiencing poor health outcomes, recognising the key role of family and community relationships and the need to support them
- Strategic Priority 3: To make it possible for communities to 'choose health' positively and more easily, recognising the general importance of access, appropriate information and health literacy, but also harnessing the particular opportunities linked to the 2012 Olympics/Paralympics in encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Theme B: Health at Key Life Stages

- Strategic Priority 4: To ensure that children and young people in the East of England can get off to a healthy start in life, linking in with the National Service Framework for children, young people and maternity services, and recognising the five key outcomes set out in Every Child Matters (ECM)
- Strategic Priority 5: To encourage better health for people in the East of England throughout their working lives, recognising the links between people's health and the range of experiences relating to work and workplaces, and worklessness
- Strategic Priority 6: To support people in the East of England in 'active ageing' and adding years to life, linking in with the National Service Framework for older people, highlighting the needs and opportunities linked to an ageing population, and recognising and supporting the contribution made by older people to all aspects of life in the East of England.

Theme C: Health in a Connected Region

...

- Strategic Priority 9: To understand and plan for the impacts of climate change and the more sustainable use of resources within the region, in terms of health and health-inequality issues, embracing the imperative to formulate a clear regional response in terms of adaptation and mitigation, and linking, particularly, to Strategic Priority 1.

3.2.7 'Sustainable Futures: Integrated Sustainability Framework for the East of England' (EERA, 2009)

Vision

To promote and enhance the environmental, economic and social wellbeing of the East of England, and ensure a better quality of life for everyone – now and in the future.

East of England Sustainable Development Objectives

1. Promote sustainable growth within environmental limits.
2. Reduce poverty and inequality and promote social inclusion.
3. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. Adapt to the impacts of climate change.
5. Promote employment, learning, skills and innovation.
6. Increase resource efficiency and reduce resource use and waste.
7. Conserve, restore and enhance the region's natural and built environment.
All life is dependent on a high quality environment. Clean air, water and soil provide the basic life-support system for the East of England. Our landscapes, towns and villages, historic features as well as wildlife and natural resources are crucial for our wellbeing and sense of place as well as for their own intrinsic value.
A high quality natural and built environment:
 - helps to define regional identity and distinctiveness;
 - offers access to green space and contact with nature and history, providing people with a variety of recreational and health benefits;
 - provides environmental resources including minerals, food, water, energy and soils;
 - provides environmental services including flood-risk management, regulation of local air quality and opportunities to adapt to a changing climate; and
 - creates the conditions needed to attract inward investment and retain resident businesses.

8. Move goods and people sustainably.
9. Meet the needs of the changing regional demographic.
10. Provide decent, affordable and safe homes for all.

3.2.8 Regional Social Strategy – the strategy to achieve social inclusion throughout the East of England (EERA, 2007)

Strategic Objective 6: To support the development of sustainable communities

3.1

ii) Neighbourhoods and the environment (page 78)

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates the strong links between nature and social wellbeing. The natural environment where biodiversity thrives is an essential part of the quality of life of local communities and has an important role to play in 'liveability' improvements. There are also opportunities in towns and cities to create habitats through new development, with some innovative schemes showing that biodiversity can be conserved and even enhanced as a consequence of urbanisation and development.

Research suggests that contact with nature makes an important contribution to our mental wellbeing, such as by reducing stress levels (SO6: 7). The planting of trees and woodlands along roads can help to mitigate some of the effects of air pollution, especially in deprived areas. There is a need to increase levels of visual contact with 'nature' by creating gardens and urban tree planting, for example. These issues are considered in more depth in both the Regional Environment Strategy and Regional Woodland Strategy, which include specific actions relating to the promotion of social inclusion.

3.2.9 Regional Housing Strategy for the East of England 2005-2010 (EERA, 2005)

High quality homes and environments (page 5)

...

Within existing residential areas, action to meet the Decent Homes Standard needs to be complemented by action on the quality of the environment surrounding homes: the 'liveability' of each neighbourhood. This should include bringing empty homes back into use, reusing derelict land and properties and providing more green space.

Quality environments and regeneration (pp34-35)

6.37 Problems of condition and disrepair may not be limited to single dwellings, but extend into neighbourhoods and impact on quality of life. Local environments are



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

important in shaping people's attitudes and delivering opportunities for greater involvement and opportunity. The term 'Liveability' has been coined to encompass environmental quality, the use and management of public and open space, that can in turn be allied to a community safety agenda.

6.38 A key part of creating homes within high quality environments is the use of 'green infrastructure', 'the sub-regional network of protected sites, nature reserves, green spaces and green way linkages...it should operate at all spatial scales from urban centres through to open countryside'.

6.39 The Government has recognised the crucial role of green infrastructure in delivering sustainable communities. The plan for developing the Thames Gateway includes 'Greening the Gateway' to create a 'positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life for those who live and work there.'

6.40 The Regional Social Strategy states that there should be 'strategic networks of green space that benefit physical and mental wellbeing, particularly in areas of deprivation'.

... 6.45 RHS should ensure that 'green space' has a place in plans to improve liveability of areas in developing recommendations on design and quality for existing neighbourhoods.

3.3 County policies/strategies

3.3.1 Hertfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy – ‘Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future’ (Hertfordshire Forward, 2008)

The Hertfordshire SCS has identified 9 key areas of concern and sets out both long-term objectives and short-term improvements to address them:

- Jobs, prosperity and skills;
- Safer and stronger communities;
- Children and young people;
- An ageing population;
- Health and wellbeing;
- Housing, affordable housing and quality neighbourhoods;
- Transport and access;
- Sustaining Hertfordshire's unique character and quality of life; and
- Promoting sustainable development.

Safer and Stronger Communities (page 7)

... The biggest contribution to reducing crime is to have strong supportive communities. Although our communities and neighbourhoods are places where most people consider they get along well with one another, if we do not help build community cohesion there is the potential for this to unravel in future. Despite the county's affluence and the fact that most enjoy a good quality of life, this is not the case for some of the most vulnerable in society. Disparities in wealth - the gap between the so-called 'haves' and the 'have nots' is an important issue and we need to ensure such people have access to good opportunities and do not feel marginalised.

At 11.1%, the proportion of ethnic minority residents in Hertfordshire is lower than the national average and is concentrated particularly in Watford and Hitchin. However a major issue we face over the forthcoming years is the growth in housing and thus new people and new communities. Nationally we are seeing large numbers of economic migrants arriving in the country and a higher than average proportion settle in Hertfordshire. The number of gypsies and Irish travellers is also set to increase. Whilst this adds to the diversity of the county we recognise the need to maintain and build community cohesion. It is vital that local communities, especially the vulnerable, are able to directly influence the level of service provision being delivered in their locality and feel able to affect decision making in their local area.

It is for all bodies to play their part in developing cohesive communities to ensure alternatives to crime and disorder are readily available. This includes our vibrant voluntary and community sector which supports a sense of character and pride in our places underpinned by diverse cultural activity.

Volunteering is very important and in the cultural sector volunteers are the key to a thriving range of arts organisations, sports delivery and museums across the county.

Long-Term Objectives (2008-2021)

...

- Develop cohesive communities
- Enable and support a vibrant voluntary and community sector and a range of diverse cultural activities which meets the needs of local people
- Encourage communities and individuals to have a greater voice and participate in local decision making

Short-Term Actions (2008-2011)

...

- Encourage more cohesive communities
- Increase the levels of volunteering
- Increase numbers of people who feel they are able to affect decision making in their local area, especially vulnerable people (including children)

Children and Young People

... Some problems affect children and young people generally. They are far more likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour than the rest of the population. They are increasingly overweight and obese.

We want to bring about a dramatic improvement in outcomes for vulnerable groups, and to motivate and inspire all children and young people so that they participate fully in society and enjoy the benefits of living in Hertfordshire.

Long-Term Objectives (2008-2021)

....

- Ensure all children and young people have access to high quality facilities and a range of positive activities to develop personal and social skills, promote wellbeing and reduce behaviour that puts them at risk;
- Ensure children and young people have a healthy weight

Short-Term Actions (2008-2011)

...

- Children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health is well supported
- Children and young people have a healthy weight
- Young people get a wide range of opportunities to learn
- Children and young people make a positive contribution to decisions about services

An Ageing Population

To take Hertfordshire forward in the future we need to plan our approach to what is already on the horizon – including the fact that the population group predicted to rise most is the older population.

.... Older people will need to have the opportunity to work and enjoy lifelong learning, to volunteer, to be physically active and have access to and enjoy leisure and cultural pursuits in the community.

Long-Term Objectives (2008-2021)

- Focus on the prevention of illnesses
- Help older people maintain their independence
- Ensure older people have the opportunities to be active members of our communities

Short-Term Actions (2008-2011)

...

- Increase physical activity amongst older people
- Ensure older people have opportunities to work, volunteer and learn

Health and Wellbeing

....

Encouraging people to be active is an important way to prevent illness in later life, and many people in Hertfordshire are not sufficiently active. ... Sport, active recreation, culture and leisure services will be crucial in addressing these issues. In addition,



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

approximately one in five boys and girls starting school in Hertfordshire is overweight or obese.

Short-term Actions (2008-2011)

Transport and Access

Long-term Objectives (2008-2021)

- Improve access to the countryside, open spaces and cultural activities for recreation and health

Sustaining Hertfordshire's Unique Character & Quality of Life

In 2021 Hertfordshire should be a place where people can embrace residential and commercial developments whilst valuing its historic character, rural landscape and sense of place. This will ensure Hertfordshire remains an attractive place for people (especially families) to live, visit, learn and work, offering the best quality of life in the country.

Long-term Objectives (2008-2021)

- Avoid coalescence between our communities by protecting our green belt wherever possible, and enhancing our urban fringe and open spaces
- Support the management of our land, particularly the historic built and natural landscape, as well as local agriculture, which protects our biodiversity, wildlife, and natural resources

Promoting Sustainable Development

By 2021 a minimum of 83,200 further new homes and 68,000 new jobs are required to be created in Hertfordshire under the East of England Plan. This will put immense pressure on our transport infrastructure and local services such as schools, hospitals and leisure facilities. It also threatens our environment and the availability of natural resources such as water.

We need to take action to develop a more sustainable approach to future development and how we live and use resources in Hertfordshire in order to make a meaningful contribution to the global challenge of climate change.

Already Hertfordshire uses 35 times the amount of resources that the county's relative size warrants - 150% higher than the global average. We create 8.5m tonnes of carbon emissions and 538,000 tonnes of household waste a year. The rising cost of waste disposal, the scarcity of waste disposal sites, and statutory carbon reduction targets will present key challenges for the future.

Long-term Objectives (2008-2021)

- Ensure sustainability principles are central to future planning and decision making in Hertfordshire
- Ensure the development of properly planned sustainable communities with the necessary social, economic, environmental and transportation infrastructure in place
- Meet the Government's targets for reducing Hertfordshire's carbon emissions

3.3.2 Local Area Agreement

Hertfordshire Forward is the county's Local Strategic Partnership and it includes the district LSP for St Albans City and District Council. Hertfordshire Forward has 30 priorities in its LAA – Heartwood Forest can contribute to the following of these:

NI 001 - percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

Opportunities exist for community participation from the initial planning of Heartwood Forest, through planting and subsequent management to utilisation of woodland products. Heartwood Forest will also provide opportunities for individuals to participate in volunteering, which can enhance a CV, develop new skills or use existing skills, contribute to the community and provide an opportunity to meet new people, and offer a way of getting outside and exercising. There are numerous opportunities for volunteering with the Forestry Commission and in the wider environmental and conservation sector.

Numerous studies on green space, and particularly woodland, have shown that they are highly valued by communities, and access to woodland is not only important for health benefits through exercise but also makes visitors feel 'happy', 'relaxed' and 'close to nature' .

NI 008 - Adult participation in sport and active recreation

Woodlands offer diverse opportunities for physical activity. Over 55% of people living in England are within 4km of a woodland where a variety of recreation activities can be undertaken. Some of the most widely recognised benefits of woodlands are recreation provision which comprise:

- Leisure. Visits to woodlands are made for a variety of reasons, from quiet contemplation to noisy, adventurous activities.
- Health. Benefits provided by moderate but sustained physical exercise and psychological wellbeing.
- Lifestyle. Visitors seek particular kinds of emotional and spiritual refreshment.

NI 056 - Obesity in primary school age children in Year 6

Some of the most widely recognised benefits of woodlands are recreation provision which produce numerous health benefits including:

- Reduced risk of premature mortality

- Reduced cardiovascular diseases CVD
- Reduced risk of developing some cancers
- Reduced risk of developing type II diabetes
- Helps prevent or reduce hypertension
- Helps prevent or reduce osteoporosis
- Helps to control weight and lower the risk of becoming obese
- Promotes psychological wellbeing
- Enhances and protects brain function
- Can help in the management of painful conditions
- Improved health related quality of life

NI 186 - Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the Local Authority area

Trees and woodlands play a significant role in moderating the flux of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, between the land and the atmosphere.

3.3.3 Woodland Habitat Action Plan - 'A 50-year vision for the wildlife and natural habitats of Hertfordshire - A Local Biodiversity Action Plan' (Hertfordshire Biodiversity Partnership, March 2006)

4.5 A vision for woodlands (pp4.27-4/28)

In 50 years' time, the area of woodland in Hertfordshire will have been increased from the existing 15,000ha (9% of the county area) to approximately 20,000ha (12% of the county). Woodland expansion will occur in all areas of the county, but will particularly be concentrated in the following areas:

- South-east Hertfordshire
- Chilterns dip slope
- Woodlands west of Stevenage
- Watling Chase Community Forest (where 30% woodland cover will be achieved)
- Adjacent to existing ancient semi-natural woodlands, particularly where accessible from urban areas.

All 3280ha of ancient semi-natural woodland will be managed sympathetically, with conservation being a primary objective. Key areas containing large blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland will be managed as limited intervention woodland, with natural processes being encouraged.

Woodlands, both ancient and more recent, will continue to provide a valued recreational space for the local population. Access will be increased, but well managed, to meet the needs of many different users by providing a wide spectrum of opportunities from informal to more formal activities and to protect sensitive areas.

An expanded woodland resource will be highly valued as a wildlife, recreational, educational and timber resource. The necessary economic conditions to establish and manage this multi-purpose resource will be in place, thereby ensuring the future for woodlands and woodland biodiversity in Hertfordshire.

4.6 Ten year targets

- To protect and prevent any further loss or damage to ancient woodlands.
- To have 50% of the woodland area and 75% of the ancient woodland area managed sensitively in line with the UK Forestry Standard by 2010.
- To have undertaken a feasibility study on the creation of large limited intervention woodlands within the county.
- To have begun the restoration of at least 500ha of ancient replanted woodland to the appropriate local woodland type.
- To have begun the establishment of 1200ha of new woodland.
- To ensure all parkland and former wood pasture sites containing veteran trees are under sympathetic management regimes.

3.3.4 The Quality of Life Report (Hertfordshire Environmental Forum, 2008)

Wildlife

Hertfordshire's biodiversity resources remain under pressure despite the success of conservation initiatives. On one hand, agri-environment schemes and wildlife projects continue to deliver, support and raise the profile of wildlife. On the other, agricultural economics and extensive developments undermine sensitive land management, changing and fragmenting open land and habitats. Climate change places further environmental pressure on species as they are forced to adapt or they become threatened by non-native species and new diseases. Under these circumstances it is important to continue to understand what is happening to our wildlife and to make provisions for its conservation.

3.3.5 Children and Young People's Plan 2009/11 (Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership, 2009)

Priority 5 Children and young people have a healthy weight (page 24)

What positive conditions of wellbeing do we want to see?

- Children and young people are not overweight, and lead healthy lifestyles in and out of school.

...

- Partners working with children and young people work with local communities to provide children and families with advice, support services and accessible opportunities to lead healthy lifestyles.



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

- Partners work with each other to develop a targeted approach to improving children's health lifestyles, participation in sport, and access to free play opportunities.

3.3.6 Health & Wellbeing Action Plan: Improving the health and wellbeing of Adults in Hertfordshire 2009 – 2011 (Hertfordshire Forward, 2009)

Priority Outcome 3: Adults and Carers are encouraged and supported to stay physically healthy and active.

Priority Outcome 4: Adults and carers are encouraged and supported to stay mentally healthy and active.

Priority Outcome 6: Adults and carers are able to participate as full and active members of their local community.

In 2009, the Hertfordshire Forward Local Strategic Partnership will be developing two new strategies: one to promote and celebrate the development of stronger communities (community cohesion) and another to promote volunteering. Volunteering and active citizenship in general are twin drivers in community cohesion; the more people engage in voluntary activities, the more likely that they will feel part of their communities.

3.3.7 Hertfordshire County Council Cycling Strategy (Herts CC, 2007)

CS17 Two headline objectives have been identified for this strategy. The first is:
More people cycling more often as a convenient, quick, healthy and sustainable form of transport for short journeys

CS19 The second headline objective is:
More people cycling more often as an activity that contributes positively to the primary shared local transport objectives

CS20 The contribution cycling makes to achieving these objectives may be summarised as follows:

- Safety: The presence of more cyclists creates a safer environment for all road users;
- Congestion: Cycling is a convenient, quick and healthy alternative to the private car for short journeys;
- Accessibility: Cycling is an affordable form of transport which provides access to employment, leisure, education, shopping and health facilities for just about everyone;
- Environmental: Cycling does not create pollution, has few adverse impacts on the natural or built environment and has positive benefits for the health of those choosing to cycle.

Cycling can also make a contribution to economic development through the creation of sustainable tourism, recreational opportunities and access to the countryside.

3.4. Local policy

3.4.1 Sustainable Community Strategy: 'Shaping our district together for 2021: St Albans and District Sustainable Community Strategy' (St Albans and District LSP, Revised June 2009)

Our vision for St Albans and District (page 4)

The SCS Vision for St Albans and District:

A progressive, unique and vibrant district, which values its environment, heritage and culture, and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.

By progressive we mean –

- Maximising the potential of our built environment, natural landscape and cultural heritage, and setting the standard for the county

By unique we mean –

- Recognising the unique character of our city, towns and rural villages, all of which are distinct and their communities have different needs and aspirations
- Celebrating and promoting our cultural and environmental heritage
- Ensuring that the district's valued landscapes, wildlife and heritage are accessible for everyone and are safeguarded for future generations to enjoy

By vibrant we mean –

- Everyone in the district, no matter where they live, has the opportunity to enjoy the same great quality of life and access the same services and facilities
- People are encouraged and supported to make positive changes to their lifestyles for better physical and emotional health

Four key priorities for the district (pp8-9)

Ensuring the district is a great place to be

2009-12 we will focus on:-



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

- Continuing to protect our green belt
- Protecting, enhancing and promoting our historic environment, heritage and culture
- Supporting arts, leisure and sports activity
- Providing accessible facilities and activities for young people

By 2021 St Albans District will:-

- Be a cultural centre and visitor destination of choice
- Celebrate and support the unique character and aspirations of its city, towns and rural villages
- Provide a safe environment and first class facilities for all
- Be a vibrant and sustainable district, preserving green space while providing an appropriate mix of housing and supporting infrastructure

Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st century

2009-12 we will focus on:-

- Promoting sustainable local economic development including a focus on new sectors
- Encouraging participation in education and skills development so that people can access local job opportunities and progress in their careers
- Encouraging business, entrepreneurship and enterprise
- Securing a well-maintained, accessible and safe network of transport links across the district

By 2021 St Albans District will:-

- Have a healthy, diverse and strong economy including a new focus on creative and knowledge industries, tourism and the green/environmental sustainability sectors

Keeping the district healthy

2009-12 we will focus on:-

- Encouraging and supporting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing
- Ensuring residents have access to excellent healthcare services and empowering individuals to self care
- Helping to build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative and support services
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Supporting the needs of carers

By 2021 St Albans District will:-

- Be a healthy place to live with access to high-quality facilities and services which support active lifestyles
- Provide easy access to healthcare services, especially for the more vulnerable or disadvantaged groups in the community
- Offer a comprehensive range of preventative and support services through its thriving voluntary and community organisations



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

- Enable independent living for older people

Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future

2009-12 we will focus on:-

- Reducing our impact on the environment
- Encouraging green and sustainable travel
- Reducing inequalities
- Encouraging and promoting community engagement and participation

By 2021 St Albans District will:-

- Be working towards carbon neutral status
- Offer a range of green travel options including reliable public transport and integrated walking and cycling routes
- Meet local challenges through communities and individuals getting involved and implementing local solutions
- Provide access to the same great quality of life and excellent services to all its residents

Targeting the gaps (pp10-13)

Identified gap area: Providing accessible facilities and activities for young people.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

...

- Actively promote activities and facilities for young people including both arts and sports opportunities
- Focus on providing sport facilities and activities

Identified gap area: Helping to build the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative and support services.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

...

- Optimise contribution from volunteers (using their skills to maximum effect)
- Recruit more volunteers with the right skills/training (including focus on younger age groups)
- Explore opportunities for joint working and social enterprise

Identified gap area: Encouraging and promoting community engagement and participation.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

- Develop an engagement strategy to foster community cohesion and empower individuals to get involved with their local community

Version: Final



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

- Provide support and advice to those who wish to start up a community group or partnership
- Promote corporate social responsibility opportunities
- Share good practice examples and innovative ideas for volunteering, community engagement, cohesion and participation

Identified gap area: Promoting sustainable local economic development.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

- Explore opportunities for building links between work on the economy and the environment
- Explore opportunities for developing or attracting new sectors to the district: creative and knowledge industries, tourism and the green/environmental sustainability sectors

Identified gap area: Meeting the needs of an ageing population

What we will do over the next 12 months:

- Develop a range of opportunities for physical activity and healthy living promotions (for the over 50s)
- Ensure older people have opportunities to take an active role in their community

Identified gap area: Reducing our impact on the environment.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

- Translate national drivers/initiatives into local projects (e.g. reducing congestion, renewables etc)
- Ensure the Local Development Framework for the district incorporates sustainable principles at all levels (including protection of the green belt)
- Raise awareness with general public and businesses of individual action needed to address our carbon footprint (bitesize changes promoted through the St Albans Values Energy campaign)
- Encourage partner organisations to develop 'adaptation to climate change' strategies

Identified gap area: Reducing inequalities.

What we will do over the next 12 months:

- Develop community engagement activities to investigate local circumstances and identify local need
- Implement community based projects in most disadvantaged areas
- Work with other partnerships/project groups to identify key actions to address inequalities (i.e. health, facilities for young people, employment opportunities etc)

3.4.2 Core Strategy: 'Shaping Our Community, Planning Consultation - Emerging Core Strategy, Local Development Framework' (St Albans City and District Council, July 2009)

Chapter 3 KEY STRATEGIC INFLUENCES ON THE CORE STRATEGY

Overview (page 11)

The critical areas for the Council to address are:

- Strategically managing and improving the green belt, and resisting its loss, in order to maintain the distinctiveness of its landscapes and communities;
- Ensuring that the district's most sensitive urban and rural areas are afforded adequate protection from inappropriate development;
- Maintaining and improving the vibrancy and prosperity of the district's main towns and protecting the vitality and viability of the smaller district, village and local centres,
- Focusing future growth within those parts of the district where sustainability of settlements can be maintained or improved.

Chapter 5 VISIONS FOR THE CORE STRATEGY

CITY VISION (pp-19-20)

Integrated Living for 2030: a creative and pioneering city for all, which values the past and embraces the future St Albans' prosperous economy will provide a sustainable and adaptable base from which to respond to changing markets and pioneer emerging sectors such as green technology and the creative industries. The city will boast a new range of shops and services which more than satisfy residents' needs and attract visitors from elsewhere. The city's active cultural life will be enhanced and diversified to help meet the needs of residents and visitors as lifestyles shift and priorities change, establishing St Albans as a cultural hub within the region. The city's relatively underexploited and exceptional Roman heritage, its proximity to London and the pleasant rural surrounds will help to rapidly expand the visitor economy.

St Albans will become a sustainable transport centre, boasting a wide range of high quality and attractive public transport choices. Walking and cycling will be a mainstream way to travel, residents enjoying the high-quality routes which permeate the city.

St Albans will transform itself into a green and sustainable city with an accessible centre open to all. This, in turn, will help to bring about a renaissance in the public life of the city, with a central piazza of the highest quality and a stunning pedestrian environment. Homes, too, will be provided which support a sustainable and diverse community for St Albans, attract young people to the area and provide a high quality of life.

RURAL VISION (page 20)



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

The rural areas and communities within the district can be enhanced through the promotion of sustainable measures to boost the local economy and increase integration.

The need to promote sustainability is widely acknowledged across the district. A modal shift away from car use can be encouraged by providing enhanced and affordable local integrated public transport services, and improving the provision of local walking and cycling routes.

Accessibility and integration between the rural centres and St Albans City and its surrounding towns should be improved to enhance access to local shops, services and employment opportunities for local communities.

The rural areas of the district have a wealth of historic buildings, and settlements with strong identities throughout. Local heritage and natural and visitors, and access to the surrounding countryside improved.

The vitality and viability of local centres must be maintained and enhanced to ensure that they can supply for the everyday needs of the local community, with some centres supported to encourage visitors.

New development should be appropriate in its location and scale so that it enhances the physical environment where possible and minimises any associated detrimental impacts on rural areas.

Chapter 6 CORE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

SCS Key Priority 1: Ensuring that the district is a great place to be (page 21)

SO1 – Actively protect, manage and improve the green belt to maintain the district's distinctiveness and to benefit quality of life.

SO2 – Protect natural and historic assets and ensure any change is sustainable and enhances these assets for the benefit of the community.

SO3 – Provide sufficient land for development as required by the Government, in sustainable locations, capable of being served by appropriate physical, social and green infrastructure and accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

SO4 – Deliver high quality, inclusive, safe, sustainable and locally distinctive design, creating excellent built and green environments which respect local character and make best use of land in urban areas.



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

SO5 – Establish St Albans as a regional cultural hub and premier location for recreation, culture, leisure, heritage and tourism. Encourage participation in sport and recreation by providing new and improved facilities catering for all levels of ability.

SCS Priority 2: Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st century

SO7 – Support a sustainable, prosperous and diverse economy and build the district's economic competitiveness by responding positively to economic change.

SO8 – Promote St Albans city centre as an attractive, vibrant and competitive place for commercial, civic and cultural activity and improve the vitality and viability of the centre.

...

SO10 – Support sustainable travel by public transport, walking and cycling; reduce growth in car travel and congestion; manage parking facilities; and enhance St Albans' role as a Regional Transport Node by creating a better integrated transport system.

SCS Priorities 3 and 4: Keeping the district healthy and supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for the future

SO11 – Create well-balanced, strong, safe, vibrant and sustainable communities, reduce deprivation and improve wellbeing by meeting everyone's needs through:

- supporting a vibrant voluntary and community sector;
- supporting community participation;
- providing equality of opportunity and access to homes, jobs, health care, education and training, recreation, and social and cultural facilities for the whole community.
- initiatives for young people and the ageing population; and
- supporting the provision of social and community facilities.

SO12 – Development must contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change by making prudent use of resources, minimizing pollution and waste, increasing energy efficiency and using low carbon and renewable energy sources.

SO13 – Seek to achieve delivery of the strategy through the respective strategies, plans and programmes of all relevant delivery partners.

Chapter 16 LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM POLICIES

Sport and recreation (page 68)

16.13 There is some potential for tourism in the Watling Chase Community Forest and Heartwood Forest (see paragraphs 18.9-18.12). However, the Council sees these areas as



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

being places for low key, quiet, countryside recreation, not as major tourist attractions with large numbers of visitors.

Chapter 18 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE POLICIES

Green infrastructure

18.9 There are two regionally significant projects in the district that will greatly enhance the local green infrastructure:

- Watling Chase Community Forest
- Heartwood Forest

18.11 At Heartwood Forest, between Sandridge and Wheathampstead, the Woodland Trust is creating a 340 Ha wood which, when fully planted, will be the largest new native forest in England. The Council considers that Heartwood Forest should become an important area for low-intensity recreation and quiet enjoyment of the countryside. It should also become an important site for wildlife. Management of visitor numbers will be a critical issue if nearby settlements are not to be overwhelmed: this is an issue of concern to the Council.

3.4.3 Corporate Plan 2009-2012 (St Albans City & District Council, 2009)

The Council has set out the following overall aims in its Corporate Plan for the 3 year period 2009-2012 (page 4):

Aim 1: To safeguard the environment.

Aim 2: To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive.

Aim 3: To work in partnership for the health and wellbeing of the community.

Aim 4: To cherish and promote our heritage, arts and culture.

Aim 5: To ensure the district is a desirable place to visit and in which to live, learn and work.

In addition, the Council has set specific corporate priorities for this period, including:

- To develop the LDF, protect the green belt and the environment to ensure a sustainable and greener community.

3.4.4 St Albans City and District Sport and Recreation Facilities Strategy (PMP, 2005)

Our vision (page 10)

"To enhance the health and wellbeing of everyone by providing quality sport and recreation opportunities at facilities that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of our community."

xliv) To achieve this vision the strategy identifies a number of key aims and objectives:

Aim 1: To maximise the contribution sport and recreation facilities make to the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Developing facility initiatives which increase community participation in sport and active recreation.
- b) Creating facility initiatives that help reduce crime, foster a sense of local pride and develop community identity.

Aim 2: To enable all residents and visitors to have access to a range of sport and recreation facilities.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Providing appropriate quality sport and recreation facilities to meet identified community needs and assist individuals to succeed in sport.
- b) Providing new and improved sport and recreation facilities that remove barriers and improve access for:
 - Minority ethnic communities
 - People on low incomes
 - People over the age of sixty five
 - People with disabilities
 - Young people
- c) Improving awareness of sport and recreation facilities through improved marketing and communication campaigns.

Aim 3: To develop customer focussed sport and recreational facilities that are capable of delivering the standards our community expects.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Improving the quality of the facilities by fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.
- b) Providing sport and recreation facilities that are safe for the community.
- c) Involving the community in developing and improving sport and recreation facilities.

Aim 4: Ensure the delivery of sport and recreation facilities is undertaken in an environmentally sensitive manner.

This will be achieved by:

- a) Ensuring that where appropriate all sport and recreation facilities meet the requirements of Local Agenda 21 and environmental best practice whilst respecting the built and natural environment.
- b) Encouraging and promoting innovative, high quality and environmentally sensitive design in all new sport and recreation facility developments.

Aim 5: To develop sustainable sport and recreation facilities that contribute to the prosperity of the district.



Heartwood Forest Environmental Statement

This will be achieved by:

- a) Attracting inward investment into the district through the development of sport and recreation facilities.
- b) Developing sport and recreation events that contribute to the local economy.

3.4.5 Tree Strategy and Policy for St Albans (St Albans District Council, 2004)

1.1.1 "A variety of landscape types and qualities make up the environment within the district, and trees are one of the most important, natural elements within this environment. Trees, whether appearing as individuals, groups or as woodlands, have a very significant effect on our quality of life by providing direct and indirect benefits" (page 3).

1.1.3 The aim of the tree strategy is to: -

"Ensure that the trees and woodlands within the district are adequately protected, cared for and supported by new planting so that their extent, quality, biological diversity and contribution to the character and appearance of the district can be sustained and enriched for the benefit and enjoyment of the residents and visitors to St Albans."

2.3 WOODLANDS (INCLUDING WOODED COMMONS)

2.3.1

There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodlands within the St Albans District, some of which stand on common land, managed for public access, recreation and nature conservation. The Council manages ten woodland areas, and a further three woodlands within commons. The Council's overall management objectives are nature conservation, landscape enhancement and recreation. Other objectives such as timber production are limited but should be pursued where appropriate and when there is no conflict with the primary objectives.

2.3.2

The majority of the district's woodland is made up of oak, hornbeam, ash, birch, hazel, field maple, cherry and holly. Some of these have been traditionally managed as coppice with standards to provide wood for the local area. Such management ceased early last century and many woods have since deteriorated directly through a lack of intervention.

Tree strategy and policy for St Albans

2.3.3

Some of the woods in the St Albans area are now managed with nature conservation objectives as a priority. Those managed with the assistance of wildlife groups have seen the reintroduction of coppicing as a form of management. In some cases, it has been

necessary to remove a proportion of tree cover within woodlands where there is a specific wildlife habitat interest e.g. heathland restoration within Bricket Wood Common. The future management of woodlands needs to address the continued problems of neglect, which have afflicted many woodlands nationally for at least 75 years. Woodland management will need to take into account the multi-purpose objectives which woodlands today fulfil.

2.3.4

Policies for woodlands and wooded commons

Policy 22: The Council will ensure its woodlands have up-to-date management plans in place and encourage the production of plans for woods in the private sector, in particular those which are wildlife sites.

Policy 23: The Council will ensure that its woodlands are managed as a long-term sustainable resource for the public, for education and for nature conservation and biodiversity in line with the St Albans Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

Policy 24: Natural regeneration will be supported on appropriate sites.

Policy 25: Where appropriate the Council will ensure dead and fallen wood is left on site and dead trees are left standing unless there are sound conservation and safety reasons for their removal and will provide log piles from pruning and coppice to encourage the biodiversity of the site.

Policy 26: The Council will encourage community involvement with Woodland Management.

Policy 27: The Council will offset some of its costs incurred through woodland management by the marketing of a proportion of timber and other woodland products.

Policy 28: The Council will encourage expansion of the urban woodland in appropriate locations ensuring layout and selection of native species of local provenance to reflect the local woodland character.

Policy 29: The Council will manage woodland to fulfil its obligation as owners to ensure safety of people and property whilst remembering that woodlands are natural places and the level of acceptable risk must reflect this.

3.4.6 St Albans Draft Walking Strategy (St Albans City and District Council, 2008)

5. Objectives (page 8)

The principal objectives of the St Albans and District Walking Strategy are to:

- Increase the amount of walking
- Improve facilities for pedestrians
- Promote a walking friendly culture
- Integrate walking into relevant policy initiatives and programmes
- Increase the number of walking trips

6.3 To achieve the walking objectives we will focus on a number of actions outlined below:

6.4 Work with partners in promoting walking as the most environmentally and socially sustainable form of transport.

6.7 Promote walking as a leisure activity for residents and visitors.

Parks, open spaces and wildlife areas within or close to urban areas provide opportunities for people to enjoy walking outside their usual environment. Creation of such areas if carefully designed can offer opportunities for regeneration of an area.

Routes that lead to recreational facilities or out to more rural areas should be identified and clearly signed so that they can be accessed by walking or cycling.

3.4.7 St Albans Draft Play and Free-Time Strategy 2007-2012 (St Albans City & District Council, 2007)

8.6.3 Outdoor natural play

Parents of young children highlighted opportunities for free play involving nature as something that is lacking in St Albans District – as previously stated there is an emphasis on indoor structured play, and outdoor play is dominated by fixed play equipment which is in an unnatural environment – ground covered with concrete and surrounded by fences.

Action 3.10 Natural Play

What is the action?

Develop a network of natural play areas in green spaces across the district where access to physical play opportunities is limited.

Outcomes: Delivery of a network of natural play areas that allows children and young people to interact with their environment.



3.4.8 St Albans Urban Transport Plan Consultation Document (Herts CC, 2008)

3.4 Environment and Health Objectives

EB1: Reduce the adverse impacts of transport on health and the environment

EB4: Continue to protect and maintain the green belt

EB5: Promote personal health through increased levels of walking and cycling