

RECOMMENDED that the draft Cheshunt Old Pond Strategy be reviewed.

Purpose

To review the Cheshunt Old Pond Strategy prior to consideration by Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

For Members' information a number of copies of the Strategy, together with the accompanying Consultation Report and Technical Analysis have been placed on the Local Plan evidence studies table in the Members' lounge. An electronic draft of all the documents may be accessed at the following link: www.broxbourne.gov.uk/oldpond.

Introduction

The overall strategy is to enhance Cheshunt Old Pond's role as a centre for the residents of Cheshunt and further afield. That means that it will accommodate a complementary mixture of shops, eating and drinking establishments, local facilities, housing and businesses, set within an environment where landscaped public space provides an attractive setting for outdoor life. Focused around the junction of the busy roads of Turners' Hill and College Road, perceptions of the Old Pond are dominated by the presence of constant through-traffic. Changes to the wider highways network, including improvements to the A10, provide an opportunity to reduce this through-traffic and rebalance the environs of Cheshunt Old Pond in favour of its users.

Hertfordshire County Council has advised that the proposed major public realm works around the fountain should not be carried out until planned works to the A10 have been completed. Therefore it is proposed that the first phase of implementation of the strategy will focus on the proposed improvements to Grundy Park, followed by the major public realm scheme in 3-5 years' time.

Background

The policy basis for the Cheshunt Old Pond Strategy is contained within the Broxbourne Local Plan. Initial public engagement took place in 2017 with a wide range of local people, businesses, and groups. Extensive technical analysis was undertaken to inform the production of the Strategy. Consultation on a draft of the Strategy document took place in 2018 and further technical consultation with Hertfordshire County Council took place during 2019. This report presents the final Strategy document following changes arising from the consultation.

Projects

The Strategy identifies 28 projects falling into three groups: public realm projects; management and maintenance projects; and facilities and development opportunities. Delivery timescales are set out in the Action Plan within Appendix A to the document.

A. Public Realm Projects (Projects 1 - 9)

The Grundy Park Improvement Project (Project 1) proposes redesigned public realm and landscaping in the area between Turners Hill and the Laura Trott Leisure Centre. It includes removal of the former public toilet block (21). It is anticipated that this scheme will be implemented within 1-3 years using developer contributions already held by the Council.

The Old Pond Major Public Realm Improvement Scheme (Project 2) includes the creation of a new public space around the fountain. The Council has listened to public feedback, which overwhelmingly backed retention of the fountain in its current location as a local landmark.

Bigger and better public spaces will be provided, and cycle lanes will be provided to form part of a wider network along the B176/A1170. Underused spaces will be boosted by the introduction of new activities, for example events and play spaces and food or drink kiosks.

Additional public realm projects linked with the implementation of Project 2 (project numbers in brackets) are as follows: activating blank frontages outside Tesco and the Post Office (3); Pedestrian surfaces repair scheme (4); a review of pedestrian crossings and signals (5); traffic calming (6); cycle route provision (7); greening of key routes including Turners Hill, College Road, and Windmill Lane (8) and area walkability improvements (9). Related management and maintenance projects include the market and events programme (17); and centre parking improvements (18) to increase usage of existing car parks.

The Council is already collecting money from developer contributions towards the implementation of this project. It is anticipated that the bulk of the funding will come from the Cheshunt Lakeside development at Delamare Road.

Computer-generated images (CGIs) of the initial ideas for the major public realm scheme provided within the Strategy are reproduced on the next page.

Figure 1: CGI image of proposed scheme looking west towards Tesco



Figure 2: CGI image showing proposed scheme looking east along College Road



B. Management and Maintenance Projects (Projects 10-16)

Management and maintenance projects are as follows: a design code for Cheshunt Old Pond to encourage a consistent level of design quality (10); establishing the Cheshunt Old Pond Development Group with local businesses and Councillors (11); working with local business owners and freeholders to implement a maintenance programme focusing on building facades and shop frontages (12); a review of the Council lettings procedure to consider wider impacts on objectives for the Old Pond (13); exploring opportunities for improved food and drink offerings (14); a marketing campaign for the Old Pond (15); and working with the Environment Agency to identify the potential for future works to address flooding (16).

C. Facilities and Development Opportunities (Projects 17-28)

Facilities and development opportunities are as follows: market and events programme (17); a review of potential car parking improvements (18); increased cycle parking (19); signage and wayfinding scheme (20); demolition of the former Grundy park toilet building (21); exploration of options to improve community facilities and public realm at the drill hall/youth connections site (22); a project to utilise long-term vacant buildings (23); explore options for new development at Windmill Lane and Newnham parade car parks whilst retaining their current functionality and capacity (24); provision of local heritage information displays (25); seeking appropriate proposals for the redevelopment of the former police station site (26); implementation of a community toilet scheme (27); and provision of a new bus service as set out in the Broxbourne Transport Strategy (28).

Consultation

Extensive consultation (set out in the separate Consultation Report) has informed the emerging strategy. In brief, early engagement with local residents, businesses, and groups was undertaken prior to production of a draft Strategy in autumn 2017. 918 responses to a survey were received and used to help shape a draft Strategy document, which was published for consultation in summer 2018, and a further 259 responses were received in relation to this document. Additional consultation was undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council as the highways and transport authority during 2019, which included a review of high-level transport modelling and a high-level safety audit.

A steering group of local members has been engaged through the preparation of the strategy with opportunity for comment and input at key milestones as work has progressed, including two opportunities for local members to comment on the emerging draft document and one opportunity to comment on the CGI visualisations contained within this report. Consultation has also taken place with officers in the parking team, environmental services and economic development.

Following consultation, two new projects have been created as follows:

- *Project 3: Activating Blank Frontages Programme* has been created in response to concerns that the Tesco frontage may negatively impact the new public space proposed around the fountain. The project identifies a number of other smaller blank frontages.
- *Project 10: Cheshunt Old Pond Design Code* has been created to reflect the Planning Committee's request for a greater emphasis on improving the character and quality of buildings within the Strategy.

Further consultation on detailed matters will be undertaken with appropriate stakeholders in relation to individual projects as each project advances towards implementation over the coming months and years.

Financial, Legal and Risk Management Implications

The Action Plan set out within Appendix A of the Old Pond Strategy sets out the anticipated costs and delivery timescales for the projects. A number of capital projects will depend on successful bids for external funding, as well as receipt of developer contributions. Detailed consideration of the financial, legal and risk management implications will take place as part of future work on each project identified within the Strategy.

The Ministerial Direction regarding air quality exceedances on the A10 is likely to have implications for the timing of the proposed major public realm works at the Old Pond. The scope and duration of any measures which may be necessary in order to comply with the Direction have yet to be finalised. As highways authority Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) has pointed to dependencies between the public realm works and the delivery of proposed improvements to the A10, as set out in the Broxbourne Transport Strategy.

HCC supports the major public realm project in principle but has advised that further work, including local-area transport modelling and further consideration of bus priority measures, should be undertaken at the project level prior to implementation.

Equalities Implications

The draft Strategy was screened for equalities implications. This identified positive benefits from the strategy in terms of improved and safer pedestrian access to key facilities for older and less able-bodied people. Screening also identified that notwithstanding the overall positive benefits of the Strategy there could be negative implications for older and less able people and those with disabilities, relating primarily to potential conflict between cyclists and pedestrians, for example at bus stops and pedestrian crossings in particular. Safe crossing points will be explored in detail at the detailed planning stages to ensure the safety of all users. Project no. 27: Re-implement Community Toilet Scheme is considered to have positive impacts in terms of elderly and vulnerable people.

Alternative Options Considered

The public consultation sought views and comments on all aspects of the draft Old Pond Strategy and alternative proposals have been considered, as documented within the Consultation Report. The consultation draft contained formal alternative options as follows:

Project 1: Grundy Park Improvement Scheme and Project 21: Demolish Former Grundy Park Toilet Building. Option A proposed a new open space around a new commercial kiosk within a refurbished former toilet building. The property team has recently advised that refurbishment of the block as a kiosk is not commercially viable. The strong preference of local members is to demolish the former toilet building to create an improved park gateway and this has been carried through to the final strategy. Option B proposed relocation of the fountain to create a new, larger water feature within a formal garden setting. This option was discounted because of costs and the strong preference expressed through the consultation to retain the fountain in its current location.

Project 2: Major Public Realm Improvement Scheme. Option A proposed to retain the fountain in its current location, creating a new public space for markets and events. Option B proposed the removal of the fountain from its current position (potentially relocated to Grundy Park) providing increased planting and public spaces for market and events across the centre. Comments received suggested that the public preference was for the fountain to be retained in its current location, and option A has therefore been taken forward to the final strategy.

Contribution to the Council's Objectives and Environmental Sustainability Priorities

The Strategy will make a significant contribution to *Ambition Broxbourne: a thriving economy* by supporting a thriving town centre at Cheshunt Old Pond. It will also contribute to improved sustainable transport along the Old Cambridge Road corridor including better provision for walking and cycling and buses, whilst also providing for traffic. It will also make a significant contribution to *Beautiful Broxbourne: enhancing the quality of life* by enhancing the quality of the local environment to make it a more attractive place for local residents and businesses, providing new accessible open spaces and improving existing spaces. Through the provision of cycle lanes, and more attractive and well signposted walking routes, it will encourage residents to have healthier lifestyles.

Conclusion

The Cheshunt Old Pond Strategy provides the framework for delivery of significant improvements to the Old Pond area. It is an ambitious but realistic and deliverable strategy which has been produced through extensive engagement with a wide range of relevant stakeholders. Publication of the final strategy represents a significant milestone on the road to securing the necessary funding and other actions required to achieve implementation of schemes on the ground. Further work will be undertaken to progress and implement each of the projects contained within the strategy, to enable delivery as funding becomes available. The first phase of the Strategy will focus on implementation of the proposals for Grundy Park, followed by the major public realm scheme around the fountain once the A10 works are complete. The success of the Old Pond Strategy will rest at least in part on active engagement by local businesses, for example in driving forward events and marketing of the Old Pond.

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List of Background Papers:
None