

Chapter 5: Open Space

Background

- 5.1 This update to the IDP concentrates on refreshing the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule to reflect the progress made on the delivery of new green infrastructure.
- 5.2 The standard of open space was assessed within the DSIS against recognised standards for provision for a range of green infrastructure typologies. This work is currently under review and consideration is being given to updated standards for green space provision. The outcomes will be included in a technical study in support of the new local plan and will be included in update to the InDP in 2017.
- 5.3 The impact of the growth was examined for inclusion in the DSIS; in terms of the existing deficiencies, the additional demand arising from planned development and the planned provision of either additional open space or improvements to existing open space, where they may increase capacity.
- 5.4 At a more local level, Green Infrastructure Plans were published for Hertfordshire and Dacorum; the Hertfordshire Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan (HSGIP), and the Dacorum Borough Green Infrastructure Plan (DBGIP). These documents can be located under the following links:

The full HSGIP report can be accessed on the County Council's website:

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/docs/pdf/s/SHiP.pdf>

The full DBGIP report can be accessed on Dacorum's website:

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/evidence-base/infrastructure-and-delivery>

Any updates on infrastructure evidence in support of the new single local plan will be published on the following webpage address:

<http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/new-single-local-plan/technical-work-for-the-early-partial-review>

- 5.5 The projects set out in the HSGIP and DBGIP are aimed at enhancing the existing green space network and delivering multiple benefits. Because of this approach, none of the schemes are required purely because of new development. However, it is clear, that the measures proposed are required to support new housing growth, and these will be complemented by measures required to mitigate the impact of specific development sites. A number of other open space schemes planned for delivery during the plan period have been included in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule.

New Provision

- 5.6 The Council made good progress delivering a number of its key open space projects at the Water Gardens and Two Waters during 2016. The water has been cleared of much of the silt, fish channels have been introduced, the islands within the lake have been removed and new bridges have recently been installed. The works at the Water Gardens will be completed in full within 2016/17 and will include a new play area and community building. A pedestrian and cyclist link between the train station and town centre as part of the Two Waters Open Space project was completed in October 2015. The Council has also implemented the first phase of improvements to Heath Park providing new footpaths, crossings, benches and additional landscaping. A second phase of works will be implemented over 2016/17 looking at the river Gade and its embankment. At Durrants Lake works have been undertaken to repair damaged banks to the river Gade and to the flood relief channel including the provision of a rubbish trap.

5.7 The Council's programme of playground improvements and refurbishments is now in a third year and the following playgrounds have been improved since the last version of the InDP :

Hemel Hempstead

- Barley Croft
- Gadebridge Skate Park
- Grovehill Playing Field
- Marlowes
- Westwick Field
- Wharf Road

Berkhamsted

- Berkhamsted Skate Park
- George Street

Elsewhere

- The Nap, Kings Langley

New Schemes

5.8 The Open Space projects within the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule have been updated to include those projects subject to the River Colne Catchment Action Plan. These have been developed by the Colne Catchment Action Network (ColneCAN) ColneCAN brings together water companies, local authorities, charities, conservationists and local residents to progress funding opportunities for works on a variety of river projects. There are 8 Action Plans covering the key tributaries feeding the Colne including one covering the rivers Gade and Bulbourne.

5.9 The Boxmoor Trust are working with the Chiltern Chalk Streams Project and the Environment Agency to "Bring Back the Bulbourne" to its former natural glory. Over time various works had been carried out to the river banks, which

has resulted in the river being wider than its natural form. Substantial works have been carried out to sections of the river banks and to the weir between Harding's Moor and Bulbourne Meadow to return the river to its natural narrow winding course including notching of the weir by the bridge at Bulbourne Moor.

- 5.10 The Environment Agency has undertaken a feasibility study into the River Gade through Gadebridge Park. The Environment Agency has commissioned a feasibility study to investigate the restoration of the River Gade through Gadebridge Park. The river is impacted by centuries of human use, and is perched above the valley bottom, where it once served Bury Mill. It also suffers from over-abstraction. The study will investigate options to improve the river's gradient, reconnect it with the flood plain and utilise the spring water which is currently piped through the Park to the culvert at the Bury. It aims to improve the sustainability and ecology of the river Gade, the contribution it makes to the amenity and recreational value of Gadebridge Park, and achieve Water Framework Directive objectives.
- 5.11 Officers have now identified the four adventure playgrounds (Adeyfield, Bennetts End, Chaulden and Grovehill) and Gadebridge Park as play destinations for Dacorum and are seeking to secure funding towards their refurbishment and expansion. The adventure playgrounds are each estimated to require £1 million of investment to bring them up to a high standard of play.
- 5.12 The Council has allocated a total of £1.5m for the improvement of Gadebridge Park with the priority to be the delivery of a Splash Park serving the wider population of Dacorum. Such improvements should be coordinated with other schemes for works within the park including the repair and restoration of the White Bridge, those works listed in 5.11 and works at the Bury.

Funding

- 5.13 The Council has historically secured external funding and invested significant amounts of capital funding in key open space infrastructure projects. Such sources of funding have declined and will be difficult to secure in the longer term.
- 5.14 The remaining green infrastructure projects within the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule, and in particular the programme of play area improvements, are reliant on developer contributions secured historically under Section 106 agreements. Both CIL funding and external funding sources will be required to progress the delivery of a number of green infrastructure projects despite the capital investment being provided for Gadebridge Park and those contributions made by Affinity Water towards the improvement of the river Gade.