

## NOTES CASTLE POINT PLAN BOARD

1.2.2023

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: Gibson (Chairman), Blackwell, Cole, Fuller, Hart, Mountford and S. Mumford.

Officers in attendance: Angela Hutchings, Chief Executive, Ian Butt, Head of Place & Policy, Amanda Parrott, Planning Policy Manager, Dominic Chessum (communications), Cheryl Salmon, Note Taker.

Apologies: Councillors Isaacs and Palmer.

- 1. Welcome and scope of the meeting**
- 2. Notes 4 January 2023 – Noted.**
- 3. Recap on Code of Conduct – Noted.**
- 4. Open Space Assessment Specification and Local Wildlife Site Review Specification**

The Board considered a report setting out two specifications in relation to the Open Space Assessment and the Local Wildlife Site Review. The Board was requested to discuss, amend as necessary and agree the specifications.

With regard to the Open Space Assessment, this was last undertaken in 2012, using the methodology set out in the now archived PPG17. Since that time there had been an increased emphasis on green infrastructure planning, and open spaces having a broader role in terms of not just being places for recreation, but also offering benefits in terms of wildlife, water and flood risk management and climate change amongst other things.

It was proposed therefore to undertake a new open space assessment which not only looked at open spaces in terms of their recreational attributes, but also considered the contribution those spaces made in terms of improving the environmental quality within the locality. The Open Space Assessment would not only inform the Castle Point Plan, but also the Council's approach to green infrastructure planning, to the delivery of biodiversity net gain within open spaces, and to the delivery of open space investments.

The Environment Act 2021 required all development schemes to deliver a mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain to be maintained for a minimum period of 30 years. The government suggested a market approach to this i.e. Castle Point and other landowners could sell biodiversity units to developers who could not meet the obligation entirely on-site.

It was considered that there was scope within parts of the open space provision in Castle Point to provide biodiversity net gain units. As part of the Open Space

Assessment, it was required that where this potential was identified for a specific site/sites, a biodiversity net gain baseline assessment using the Defra Metric was undertaken for that site/sites to allow for it to be taken forward as units.

With regard to the Local Wildlife Site Review, this had also last been updated in 2012. At present there were 40 Local Wildlife Sites and 12 potential Local Wildlife Sites in Castle Point. Each of these sites would need to be reviewed together with any potential new sites identified by the Council, stakeholders and by the community.

Each site would be reviewed in terms of composition and whether it met the selection criteria for Local Wildlife Site designation. Each site would be surveyed in terms of its current condition and given a Biodiversity Net Gain baseline score using the national Defra Metric. As appropriate, recommendations should also be made about how the wider environment around each site should be enhanced to better connect it into the network of Green Infrastructure. The Review was required to be completed by Autumn 2023.

Following the presentation the Board discussed the report and took opportunity to ask questions.

## **5. Decision**

1. The Board agreed the specification for the Open Space Assessment.
2. The Board agreed the specification for the Local Wildlife Site Review.

## **6. Communication**

Key message identified on the protection of Open Spaces and wildlife. Important to get the message out that planning is not all about development but the protection of green spaces as well. Further communications in November 2023 when results of assessment/review known.

## **7. Next Meeting**

- Workshop on engagement to be rearranged from 20.1.2023
- Board Meeting 1.3.2023 at 5pm

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