

Part I

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WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET – 6 FEBRUARY 2024

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR (RESIDENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD)

DANESBURY AND SINGLERS MARSH LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLANS 2023-2033

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 It is a requirement for grant funding proposals and good practice to produce Landscape Management Plans for our nature reserves.
- 1.2 Each plan has a vision statement, outlining the overall goals and intentions of the site and its management. The aims and objectives within the plans set out how these goals are to be achieved.
- 1.3 Following Cabinet approval of the draft plans, a public consultation was undertaken to seek views from key stakeholders and the public on the plans for both Singlers Marsh and Danesbury. The plans have been amended following the consultation and are presented to Cabinet for approval.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve:
 - a) the amended Singlers Marsh Landscape Management Plan for 2023-2033 in Appendix A; and
 - b) the amended Danesbury Park Landscape Management Plan for 2023-2033 in Appendix B.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 Conservation management of the nature reserves has been supported since 1994 by Countryside Stewardship grant schemes in agreement with Natural England. Each grant scheme operates for a ten-year period, so the scheme was renewed in October 2003 and again in October 2013 when the council entered the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.
- 3.2 The Landscape Management Plans are produced to ensure the council's Nature Reserves are maintained in a strategic and planned way. The plans typically run for 10 years.
- 3.3 The previous management plans for both Singlers Marsh and Danesbury Park are due for renewal.
- 3.4 The new plans have been jointly produced by our contractor (Maydencroft) working closely with the Council's Landscape Conservation Officer.

- 3.5 The plans gives a background to the sites, policy context, an analysis and evaluation of the sites, aims and objectives, action plans and a monitoring/review process. Key features of the Plans are:
- The context of the site both historically and within the current landscape
 - The current habitats and wildlife provided by the site.
 - Policy context
 - Current and proposed management
 - Actions plan
- 3.6 The Landscape Management Plans will be published on the Council's website and so available to Councillors, Officers, Volunteers and to the public.
- 3.7 Public consultation was undertaken on the draft Landscape Management Plans between 18 October and 30 November 2023. 84% of those who responded to the consultation agreed with the visions, aims and objectives for both sites.
- 3.8 Responses and comments were received via the online consultation and some directly to officers at the Council. These have been reviewed and considered by the Landscape and Ecology Team. Where issues have been raised regarding factual matters such as road names and boundaries these have been amended on the plans. Issues raised regarding specific management preferences have been noted but may only have been added to the aims within the plans if considered appropriate and in line with the objectives.
- 3.9 Further details of the responses received, and amendments considered and made to the Plans can be found in Appendix C. Full details of the online survey responses can be found in Appendix D.

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 Singlers Marsh was identified and selected as a Local Wildlife Site in 1997. It is also a Local Nature Reserve pursuant to section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 4.2 In 2002, Singlers Marsh was the subject of an application for registration as a town and village green pursuant to section 15 of the Commons Act 2006. That application was refused by the Registration Authority, Hertfordshire County Council.
- 4.3 Singlers Marsh is currently the subject of two further applications, under section 15 of the Commons Act, to register it as a town and village green. Both of those applications have yet to be determined. Once they have been determined by the Registration Authority (Hertfordshire County Council), the Singlers Marsh Landscape Management Plan will be reviewed in light of the determination.
- 4.4 There is also legislation that is relevant to both Landscape Management Plans, and they are set put in page 17-18 of the Management Plans in Appendix A and B. Most notably, section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that every public body, including local authorities, must in exercising its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

Conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing a species population or habitat.

4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) sets out the national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

4.6 Some of the key messages from the NPPF which are of relevance to the sites and its context include: conserving and enhancing the natural environment, minimise and net gain on biodiversity, and considering the impacts of climate change.

5 Financial Implication(s)

5.1 The visions will be achieved through the Aims and Objectives and the implementation of the Action Plans. The Action Plans consist of a Capital Works Programme and Annual Maintenance and Monitoring schedule.

5.2 The Plans are managed through existing budgets and grant funding (from central Government).

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 The main risks related to this the plan are if some of the key actions are not undertaken there is a risk that some of the habitats may be affected, which in turn could affect biodiversity on the site.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no procurement implications arising from the Landscape Management Plans. The contractor who undertakes tree and landscape works was procured under contract through a tendering process in 2021.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 The appropriate management of the vegetation on site is likely to positively contribute to climate change mitigation.

10 Human Resources

10.1 The landscape management plans are managed from existing resources in the landscape and ecology team, and any tree or landscape works is undertaken by contractors and also volunteers.

11 Health & Wellbeing Implications

11.1 There is growing evidence to suggest that being in nature has positive effects on people's mental health. Studies have shown that green spaces can lower levels of stress and reduce rates of depression and anxiety, reduce cortisol levels and improve general well-being.

11.2 The proposed management plans look to enhance access in and around the site and encourages use of the site by members of the public.

11 Communication and Engagement Implications

11.1 Some of the proposed works within the action plans will be undertaken with the help of our established volunteer groups. The involvement of these groups means that there is good engagement with these groups.

11.2 The management plan will be made available to everyone so those wishing to understand the proposed works and the reasons they are being undertaken.

12 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's corporate priority of Action on Climate Change which includes promoting awareness and the biodiversity for positive change in the community's environment.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Singlers Marsh Landscape Management Plan 2023-2033

Appendix B – Danesbury Park Landscape Management Plan 2023-2033

Appendix C - Summary of public consultation responses and amendments to the Plans

Appendix D – Details of online survey responses.