



Mayor and Cabinet

**Report title: Response to Sustainable Development Select Committee - railway children urban national park - environmental protection and neighbourhood plans**

**Date:** 25 August 2021.

**Key decision:** No.

**Class:** Part 1.

**Ward(s) affected:** Grove Park.

**Contributor:** Head of Strategic Planning

**Outline and recommendations**

This report addresses a number of outstanding scrutiny matters and provides a response to Mayor and Cabinet. The report covers officer's responses to comments made by Sustainable Development Select Committee on the railway children urban national park - environmental protection and neighbourhood plans – 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

## 1. Summary

- 1.1. On Tuesday 15 September 2020, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered a submission from Councillor Ingleby on the Comments of the Sustainable Development Select Committee on the railway children urban national park - environmental protection and neighbourhood plans ([link to the agenda and webcast for the Committee's meeting on 15 September](#)). This report covers officers responses to the Sustainable Development Select Committee's referral to Mayor and Cabinet on the railway children urban national park - environmental protection and neighbourhood plans – 16th September 2020.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to approved the officers response and report to the Sustainable Development Select Committee.

## 3. Sustainable Development Select Committee views

Recommendation 1: Hither Green sidings SINC case study

- 3.1. The Committee recommends that the Council should update 2015/2016 site of importance for nature conservation (SINC) review with a biodiversity action plan to include the priority habitats of wet-woodland for Hither Green Sidings SINC in time for its inclusion in the Local Plan.

Recommendation 2. Woodland and area tree protection orders

- 3.2. The Committee recommends putting in place a woodland TPO in the enclosed area inside the Nature Reserve \*(this a privately owned site in the south east corner of the nature reserve adjoining Railway Children Walk)\*, to ensure the many saplings and young trees are given a chance to succeed into a mature woodland; and an area TPO on the triangular site behind the Ringway Centre to protect the established trees amongst the mosaic scrubland, to avoid the extinction of habitats and species across Grove Park Nature Reserve SINC as well as – especially in their subsequent recording in the Local Plan – making it clear that ecological lapses will not be tolerated and underlining the strength of the ecological corridor and its role in establishing an Urban National Park.

Recommendation 3: Protection of ecological corridor along railway line from South Circular to Chinbrook Meadows and the borough boundary

- 3.3. The Committee recommends that a survey for the implementation of a Site of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) be carried out along the entire corridor to protect wet woodland, chalk grassland, rivers, ponds and ancient woodland and all other green sites.

Recommendation 4: Delay in the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan examination date.

- 3.4. The Committee recommends that the Council should agree re-designation immediately and set date for examination for the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan to gain material weight.

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## 4. Officers response

Recommendation 1: Hither Green sidings SINC case study

- 4.1. Further to the 2015/2016 SINC evidence report, London Wildlife Trust was commissioned by the council to undertake a focused SINC review on the land discussed. The completed report recognises the wet woodland and will provide an updated citation for Hither Green Sidings SINC which will also be provided to GiGL. This will ensure the latest evidence of habitats are formally recorded. Given the quality of the report, this will be added to the Council's evidence base documents to supplement the existing SINC review. It should be noted that the report concludes that the wet woodland habitat does not have the necessary conditions or species composition to fulfill the criteria of the Wet Woodland priority habitat typologies which would make it of value in a London context. It has been determined to be 'at best of Borough or Local importance'.

Recommendation 2. Woodland and area tree protection orders

- 4.2. Following the due process to make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), an area TPO was confirmed by the Council in March 2021 for the land identified in Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 3: Protection of ecological corridor along railway line from South Circular to Chinbrook Meadows and the borough boundary

- 4.3. The requested survey has now been completed, undertaken by the London Wildlife Trust to determine if Hither Green Sidings SINC together with the surrounding SINC's and open spaces meet the criteria of Metropolitan SINC. The report concluded that the Hither Green SINC land does not meet metropolitan status and that as a group of sites, further evidence would be needed to ascertain if this group meets metropolitan status. This corridor does however have one of the strongest possible planning protections from inappropriate development via the designation of the land as MOL which is equivalent to Green Belt. The designation of the corridor as Metropolitan SINC does not automatically protect ecology but is a consideration if and when a planning application is submitted. Officers are considering the designation of the land as Local Green Space, in accordance with the outcome of the Neighbourhood Planning Inquiry. This would be included in the next iteration of the draft local plan.

Recommendation 4: Delay in the Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan examination date.

- 4.4. At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Mayor and Cabinet agreed to accept the modifications made to the policy text as outlined in the examiner's report and approve the examiners recommendation that the plan should proceed to a public referendum. The public referendum is scheduled for August 2021.

## 5. Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no additional financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. As stated in the July report, the Council's Electoral Services team has provided an estimated cost of undertaking the public referendum. This was costed at approximately £30k and will be covered by existing service budgets.

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## **6. Legal implications**

6.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **7. Equalities implications**

7.1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

7.2. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

7.3. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

## **8. Climate change and environmental implications**

8.1. The positive and proactive work that the Council is undertaken with support from our neighbourhood groups is protecting the borough's green infrastructure and thus supporting the Council's response to the climate emergency.

## **9. Crime and disorder implications**

9.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **10. Health and wellbeing implications**

10.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **11. Report author and contact**

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