



## Mayor and Cabinet

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

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** all

**Contributors:** David Syme, 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 at its meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

15 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	Railway Children urban national park: neighbourhood plans and environmental protection considered by Sustainable Development Select Committee
21 <sup>st</sup> July 2021	Council passed a motion on Grove Park District Park to support the creation of an integrated district park.
14 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	Mayor and Cabinet approved officers response
15 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	Sustainable Development Select Committee consider Mayor and Cabinet response.
23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2022	Lewisham Local Plan - Regulation 19 stage “proposed submission” presented to Sustainable Development select Committee.

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. 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 at its meeting of 15th September 2021.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to approve the officers’ response and report to the Sustainable Development Select Committee (SDSC).

### 3. Sustainable Development Select Committee referral

- 3.1. At its meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> September the SDSC resolved that the Committee would refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet as follows:
  - a) The Committee recommends that Mayor and Cabinet should give consideration to the additional evidence provided by the Friends of Railway Children Walk – as well as the comments and suggestions made by Councillor Ingleby - in determining the potential for the collection of sites of importance for nature conservation within the complex of open spaces situated either side of the Hither Green railway corridor to constitute a broader site of metropolitan importance for nature conservation (MSINC).

### 4. Officers response

- 4.1. Officers have considered the SDSC referral and the response to each point is set out below:

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- a) Following requests by SDSC and the Friends of Railway Children Walk the Council commissioned London Wildlife Trust to assess the SINC status of the Hither Green Sidings and the combined sites based on the Sites of Metropolitan Importance (SMI) criteria. Officers can confirm that the document provided by Cllr Ingleby following the September SDSC meeting was considered as part of that work and the information provided does not provide any new additional evidence.
- b) The study which included the assessment of the 'additional evidence' was published in Dec 2020 and concluded:
  - a. That the Hither Green Siding does not fulfil enough of the SMI criteria to be upgraded to Metropolitan SINC and as such should retain its current status as Borough SINC
  - b. That the combined sites could be considered as a single Site of Metropolitan Importance however, on several important criteria there was insufficient data to determine effectively if the SMI criteria could be met. Additional surveys would therefore be required.
- c) The Wildlife Trust report further noted that as the land in question is designated Borough SINC, Metropolitan Open Land and as a Green Corridor, it is therefore afforded the highest planning protection. Indeed the findings from the Wildlife Trust report states "on matters of site planning protection the combined sites' current status as Metropolitan Open Land provides greater weight than as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation".
- d) Given the Council motion passed on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 that supports the ambition to create an integrated District Park for this area, officers could commission additional survey work as part of the wider open space review currently ongoing as part of the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan. However this is not part of the current work programme and as such has not been budgeted for. Approval to undertake these surveys would require additional council funding to be identified. This would be in the region of £15,000 and would need to come from existing budgets, via underspends achieved from reducing other proactive work and holding vacancies. This would reduce the in year underspend of the Planning Service that would deliver a once off in year saving to the Council budget. If that funding is not possible or forthcoming at this stage, the land still benefits from the strongest possible planning protections and would not be at any greater risk of development.

## **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1. As stated in paragraph 4.1d above, should there be an agreement that additional survey work is required, additional funding of £15,000 would be required. No funding has been identified for this so this would have to be met from the overall Planning Service budget. With the current financial position across the Council, the Planning Service, have been undertaking robust budgetary management to seek to deliver an in year underspend. The funding of this work would reduce the underspend achievable.

## **6. Legal implications**

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

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## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1. The Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme for 2016-20 provides an overarching framework and focus for the Council's work on equalities and helps ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 7.2. There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.
- 7.3. The preparation of the Local Plan is being informed by an Integrated Impact Assessment which includes an Equalities Impact Assessment.

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

- 8.1. There are no direct environmental impacts arising from this report.

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

- 9.1. There are no direct implications relating to crime and disorder issues.

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

- 10.1. There are no direct implications relating to health and wellbeing issues.

## **11. Background papers**

- 11.1. Report to SDSC 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020.  
<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s74905/05%20Railway%200children%20urban%20national%20park%20-%20neighbourhood%20plans%20and%20environmental%20protection%20150920.pdf>
- 11.2. Council motion approved 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021  
<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s84820/Motions.pdf>
- 11.3. Report to Mayor and Cabinet 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021.  
<https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s86334/03%20Response%20from%20Mayor%20and%20Cabinet%20150921.pdf>
- 11.4. Lewisham Local Plan Regulation 18 Stage "main issues and preferred approaches" document.  
<https://lewisham.gov.uk/my services/planning/policy/planning/about-the-lewisham-local-plan>
- 11.5. Lewisham draft Local Plan website including access to all evidence base documents. [https://lewisham.gov.uk/my services/planning/policy/adopted-local-plan/evidence-base`](https://lewisham.gov.uk/my services/planning/policy/adopted-local-plan/evidence-base)

## **12. Report author and contact**

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### **13. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources**

13.1. Shola Ojo – Principal Accountant, Financial Services

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### **14. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR**

14.1. Joy – Joy Ukadike, Senior Planning Lawyer

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