

Date of Meeting:

REPORT TO STRATEGIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 23rd September 2021

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive

Title: Petition Received in Relation to the Protection of Green Infrastructure in Pinhoe.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1 The City Council received a petition of more than 2,000 signatures regarding the protection of green infrastructure in Pinhoe. (Details of the petition are attached to the report) In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the petition was considered by Full Council on 21 July. A wide ranging debate was had before it was resolved that the petition be referred to Strategy Scrutiny Committee for further discussion.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.

3. Reasons for the recommendation

- 3.1 Following the receipt of a petition Members are invited to discuss the issues. The discussion will provide helpful background information to inform the progress of the Local Plan and its potential future policy approach relating to the protection of green infrastructure in the city, particularly in Pinhoe.

4. What are the resource implications including non-financial resources.

- 4.1 The report is not proposing any specific action in addition to regular planning policy preparation and therefore there are no resource implications for the Council.

5. Report details:

- 5.1 The City Council received a petition of more than 2,000 signatures regarding the protection of green infrastructure in Pinhoe. The petition itself proposed the need to safeguard Pinhoe's natural landscape and skyline, urgently protect the historic landscape and trees and to recognise the important roles these features have in improving wellbeing and maintaining local distinctiveness and character. The presentation noted the development which has taken place in Pinhoe since the 1960s and the impact this has had in terms of open space, landscape impact, ecology and traffic. The presentation also set out a series of measures to address some of these concerns such as the Clyst Valley Regional Park, the establishment of a natural asset network to support active travel and the need to develop community-led solutions to local issues. A particular focus of discussion was the start of a campaign to protect the hills to the north of the city through the establishment of a Ridgeline Park.

Discussion of key issues

Current planning policy

- 5.2 Current planning policy is provided by the Core Strategy and the Local Plan Review. Both these documents set out the importance of the hills to the north of Pinhoe and set out the importance of protecting them in terms of their green infrastructure role – a key thrust of the petition. On a strategic level, the current vision in the Core Strategy sets out the need to safeguard the hills to the north and northwest of the city. This is reiterated in the spatial approach for Exeter which states the need to steer development away from the hills. The concept of protecting this area is taken further in policy CP16 which identifies the green infrastructure network for the city and sets out the importance of protecting and enhancing various areas including the hills.
- 5.3 This Core Strategy policy approach runs in parallel with more detailed provisions in the Local Plan Review. Specifically, policy LS1 identifies large landscape setting areas around the city. This designation restricts development in these areas and aims to protect local distinctiveness and character, a key element of the petition.

Future planning policy and Liveable Exeter

- 5.4 The City Council has recently embarked on the preparation of a new Local Plan which will be progressed over the next three years. The new Local Plan will review the current spatial approach for the city and will draw on the Liveable Exeter programme in setting the development strategy for Exeter. The Liveable Exeter programme aims to deliver high quality development in the city at a series of urban redevelopment sites on brownfield land. One of the key drivers for this strategy is the need to meet Exeter's housing requirement within the city's administrative boundary and avoiding development on the city's sensitive landscapes. This will be an important part of the new Local Plan. As well as setting out the development strategy, the new Local Plan will include policies to address the landscape, biodiversity and green infrastructure of the city including in the hills to the north. This content reflects the key concerns of the petition.
- 5.5 Over the course of the next three years, the new Local Plan will go through three public consultations covering the emerging vision, development strategy, potential development sites and policies for the city. These consultations will provide opportunities for the local community to articulate the concerns raised in the petition through the formal plan-making process.
- 5.6 Looking outside of the administrative boundary of Exeter, previously, some development has been allocated adjacent to Pinhoe in East Devon. Further discussions will be required with East Devon as they move forward with their new planning policy work.

Transport Strategy

- 5.7 Devon County Council is the Local Transport Authority for Exeter and in this role has recently developed a new transport strategy for the city. This sets out the three key themes of greater connectivity, greater places for people and greater connectivity. Together these prioritise active travel and reflect the benefits that walking and cycling can bring to health and wellbeing, reducing carbon emissions, improving public spaces and enhancing the local environment. These concepts reflect the transport-related elements of the petition acknowledging the impact that

transport can have on community wellbeing and creating attractive spaces and routes. In addition to the current transport strategy, the County Council is working on a new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to identify the key active travel projects in the city which may provide further opportunities to develop routes such as those suggested in the petition.

Neighbourhood planning

- 5.8 Neighbourhood planning offers the potential for local communities to actively shape the future of their local area through the identification of local priorities and policies. The community in Pinhoe, already active in local planning matters, could use some of the concepts articulated in the petition to inform neighbourhood planning.

Summary

- 5.9 The concepts articulated in the recent petition regarding the protection of green infrastructure in Pinhoe are currently reflected in existing policy. Looking forward, there is an opportunity to shape the local area through engagement in the preparation of the new Local Plan whilst involvement in other areas of activity such as transport planning and neighbourhood planning also provide avenues through which the local aspirations in the petition can be pursued.

6. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

- 6.1. Although the report is for information, the content relates to three corporate priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan:
- Delivering Net Zero Exeter 2030;
 - Promoting active and healthy lifestyles; and
 - Building great neighbourhoods.

7. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

- 7.1 Under the Act's Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
 - advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
 - foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.
- 7.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

7.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because: this report is for information only.

8. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

8.1 No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations as the report is for information only.

9. Are there any other options?

N/A

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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