
THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX - GREEN GRID STRATEGY CONSULTATION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid strategy. Consultation responses are required by 14 January 2005. A copy of the document, which comprises several volumes, has been placed in the Members' Library.

2 THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The vision for the Green Grid strategy is to achieve:

"A living system threading through the urban and rural landscape, connecting places that are attractive to people, wildlife and business and providing clean air, food, water, energy, minerals and materials."

- 2.2 The strategy is based around a series of strategic themes, including accessibility, planning, character, urban form and infrastructure. The aim is to promote high quality environmental infrastructure that, in turn, promotes high quality development. New development should impact positively on the environment and indeed, as appropriate, make a contribution to environmental improvements.
- 2.3 The Green Grid is not simply about a collection of green spaces. Rather, it is about connectivity and networks: the linkages that allow people to move easily between a local park to a country park via clean, safe and attractive streets. The strategy document seeks to highlight these issues, through a typology of spaces and to highlight the policy context that would enable linkages to be achieved.
- 2.4 The overall strategic framework is illustrated on a coloured diagram, which is amplified for each of the three key areas of the Gateway; Thurrock, Basildon/Castle Point and Southend/Rochford. The diagram of the Southend and Rochford Strategic Area Framework is attached as Appendix 1 to this report, together with its accompanying notes.
- 2.5 From the Rochford perspective, various key issues and opportunities are identified, including the rural character of much of the district and the need to improve north-south links to improve access.
- 2.6 The strategy identifies the need to promote and encourage longer visits by tourists to Rochford, particularly by linking Cherry Orchard County Park, with other country parks and green spaces.

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- 2.7 The need to link the strategy with wider community strategies and the preparation of local development frameworks is highlighted.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 A significant part of the Green Grid strategy document provides an inventory of environmental resources in Thames Gateway South Essex. Clearly, the strategy must be based on a sound knowledge and understanding of the environmental resource, but it may be that this material would be better located in a technical appendix, in order to reduce the length of the document and to allow better focus on the 'plan'.
- 3.2 The strategic framework for Southend and Rochford identifies the importance of and opportunities to develop leisure and tourism in Rochford. The Cherry Orchard Country Park is certainly a focus, but the attractive rural landscapes that exist throughout the district also provide many opportunities to increase leisure participation.
- 3.3 At this early stage, one key element, the business plan, is missing from the document. However, the strategy is intended to feed into the planning process and act as a catalyst to ensure that Green Grid issues are fully considered as the new local development plans are prepared and that new development takes full account of these matters; in other words, is sustainable.
- 3.4 The strategic area framework for Southend and Rochford seems to be a very useful guide, with issues that can be incorporated in emerging development documents and supplementary planning documents.
- 3.5 That being the case, the Green Grid strategy document is to be commended. It provides a good starting point to address the strategic opportunities to enhance and develop the environment in South Essex. The real test will, however, be the business plan that will outline the arrangements for achieving the vision.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Risk

- 4.1 It is essential that a holistic view is taken of the environmental resources in South Essex and that these are developed to both improve the environment and to contribute towards social and economic well-being.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Green Grid is more than simply a plan to address environmental issues. Rather, it is focused on sustainability and opportunity to link together environmental, social and economic issues for the benefit of the area.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Not known until the business plan is published. The Green Grid strategy will be a key component of the emerging local development framework.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is **RESOLVED**

That, subject to comments from Members, The TGSE Partnership be advised that this Council supports the principles outlined in the South Essex Green Grid strategy consultation document.

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Background Papers:-

Thames Gateway – South Essex Green Grid Strategy consultation document, December 2004.

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