

Report for Policy Development Committee 19 September 2019

Regenerating Our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife – draft Swansea Central Area Green Infrastructure Strategy

Purpose:	This draft strategy will be reported to Council on the 24 th October 2019 seeking approval to carry out public consultation for a 6 week period starting in early November. The aim will then be to adopt the Strategy in Spring 2020. The PDC's views are invited.
Policy Framework:	The draft strategy is designed to support the Local Development Plan (LDP) Policy ER 2 Strategic Green Infrastructure Network, and emerging Supplementary Planning Guidance on Green Infrastructure. The strategy contributes to the Council's duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and will support the application of the Statutory SuDS Standard 2019. It also delivers one of the steps in the Council's well-being objective: Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural resources and biodiversity and, the Swansea Public Service Board's Working with Nature Objective.
Consultation:	The process to produce the draft strategy has included engagement with relevant Council stakeholders from the public, private and 3 rd sector and residents, visitors and users of the Swansea Central Area.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We know from the Landmark report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), that by 2050 that the Swansea Central Area

will have periods of intense heavy rainfall, droughts, and rising temperatures. Failure to adapt to and mitigate for climate change is no longer an option if we are to provide an economically prosperous hub for the Swansea Bay City Region. Environmental sustainability is the basis for a resilient and prosperous Swansea. The benefits and cost-effectiveness of green infrastructure (GI) are now well documented. The regeneration currently underway in the Swansea Central Area provides a perfect opportunity to design in multi-beneficial GI improvements to help ensure we have a city centre fit for the future.

- 1.2 The Council's Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Section has been working in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Green Infrastructure Consultancy (a leading expert with a proven track record in the green infrastructure industry) to develop a draft Swansea Central Area Green Infrastructure Strategy – *Regenerating our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife*, and Green Space Factor Tool (Appendix A) which will realise the green infrastructure aims of the Swansea Central Area Regeneration Framework and ensure the city centre benefits from strategically planned green infrastructure enhancements in both the planning of new development and the refurbishment of existing buildings and public spaces.
- 1.3 The strategy explores the benefits and cost-effectiveness of green infrastructure i.e. reduced flood risk, summer cooling, cleaner air and water, reductions in noise, better mental and physical health, gains in biodiversity, reduced CO₂ emissions and energy costs and a strengthened economy. It will enable the Council and stakeholders to take an informed and joined up approach to maximising these benefits and will create investor confidence in green infrastructure in the city centre.

2. The Strategy – why, what and how

- 2.1 To ensure and enhance the quality and variety of GI in development across Swansea Central Area a strategic approach is required which will:
 - demonstrate the environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits of improving and enhancing GI,
 - identify opportunity areas and technologies/techniques for enhancing GI in new and existing development,
 - influence strategic investment in GI based on its multiple benefits,
 - provide guidance and a tool to enable simple and reliable assessments of GI in new and existing development.
- 2.2 The draft Strategy is designed to provide an evidenced and clear overall strategy for multifunctional GI which performs individually and collectively, physically and visually, ensuring the Council maximise the city centres potential and its environmental resilience. It sets out a vision for the central area of Swansea to be much greener, creating green spaces which deliver resilience, prosperity, health well-being and

happiness. The intention is to double the amount of green infrastructure (with the exception of open water) within 10 years, to create a distinctive destination city with a high quality environment which is more liveable, better adapted to climate change and better for people and wildlife.

- 2.3 *“A city that is green is a City where I want to be seen. A City that is bare is a city that does not care”* (Anonymous member of the public 2019 Swansea City Green Infrastructure community engagement).

The vision was developed following significant stakeholder engagement. Two half day workshops were held at Juniper Place for colleagues from the private, public and 3rd sector (including PSB partners), along with internal sessions with officers and members including Policy Development Committee. 634 face to face conversations were held with members of the public across 10 locations in the Swansea Central Area. Sessions with the 4 primary schools within the catchment were held along with stakeholder meetings with 6 local groups including residents and local interest groups. Themes from the engagement process are summarised in Appendix B.

- 2.4 The strategy includes a Swansea Central Area Green Space Factor (GSF) tool, designed to measure the permeability of the different types of surfaces when planning a new development / refurbishment. The tool scores surface cover types for their permeability and quality in terms of multiple benefits. Similar GSF tools have been widely used since the 1990's, including in Greater London, the North West Region and Southampton.
- 2.5 Whilst use of the tool is not mandatory the Strategy states that NRW and the Council intends to apply the tool to their development proposals and expects and encourages all developers within the central area to use the tool to inform and improve their schemes as part of the pre-application process.

3. Using the Strategy Corporately

- 3.1. The scoping and development of the Strategy has been overseen by colleagues from the Strategic Planning, Nature Conservation, Regeneration, Landscape and Development Management teams within Planning and City Regeneration Services, supported by colleagues from the Drainage and across the Place Directorate.
- 3.2 The Regeneration Team plan to use the Strategy to advise current and future phases of the Swansea Central Area regeneration programme. The Strategy has been aligned to the Swansea Central Area Regeneration Framework (SCARF) to reflect this. The GSF tool will be piloted on the Digital Village Scheme in the coming months. Regeneration and Development Management will also be encouraging

partners and developers to use the strategy and tool as a simple and effective means of demonstrating compliance with legislation.

3.3 The issues of future maintenance and the need for training in the use of the GSF tool and implementation and maintaining new GI infrastructure are fully recognised and are reflected in the finding of the consultation. These issues will be addressed via a local conference planned to take place before the end of this financial year (19/20), and by bespoke training for teams on specific issues as required. Following the adoption of the Strategy an Action Plan will be drawn up.

3.4 Corporate cross-disciplinary collaboration will be key to delivering quality multi-beneficial GI which will tackle the causes and effects of biodiversity loss and climate change. The Corporate Biodiversity Working Group will accordingly champion and monitor the implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan.

4. Wellbeing of Future Generations Act

4.1 The sustainable development principle and the ways of working have been central to the development of this strategy from its conception, as outlined in Appendix C:

5. Equality and Engagement Implications

5.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their 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.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

5.2 The Strategy is part of the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Swansea Local Well-being Plan both of which have undergone full EIA's. As a strategy focusing on the natural environment it will not directly impact on any of the relevant protected groups. However by enhancing and improving the natural environment the strategy will contribute to all the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act's 7 well-being goals and therefore indirectly contribute to the overall improvement of wellbeing for all Swansea residents including the relevant protected groups, by contributing to improving social, environmental, economic and cultural well-being.

Appendices:

Appendix A	Swansea Central Area: Regeneration Our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife Consultation draft Plan. Consultation Draft
Appendix B	Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Findings
Appendix C	Assessment of the Strategy's contribution to the Well-being of Future Generations Act's wellbeing goals and application of the ways of working.