9. How can improvements to green infrastructure be delivered off site?

Current context

9.1 The council already has a mechanism for providing new and enhancing existing off site green infrastructure and uses this mechanism when approving planning applications for residential development. This is the council's Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) entitled 'Provision of open space in connection with new housing development'.

9.2 Approved in June 2006 (and updated in 2014) this SPD sought to achieve the outcomes set out in PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. These outcomes and the seven different types of open space that the SPD seeks improvements to are:
- Parks and Gardens
- Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace (including urban woodlands)
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Amenity Greenspace (including green corridors)
- Provision for Children and Young People
- Allotments and Community Gardens
- Cemeteries, Disused Churchyards and other Burial Grounds

9.3 Where 'on site' open space under any one of the above types is not appropriate and the quality of nearby off site open space is deficient then the SPD allows the council to require developer contributions to fund improvements to these off site open spaces. This situation occurs on a regular basis and monies have been received by the council for these purposes. For outdoor sport the monies are sent to local sports clubs for enhancement of sports facilities. For the majority of the other types of open space monies go the council for enhancement of its public open space, woodlands and local nature reserves. Subject to safeguards these developer contributions could be used on third party land for green infrastructure improvements such as public rights of way on private land.

Emerging context

9.4 The council is working towards the introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Once adopted, the CIL will replace the council's current policy of requiring developers to pay commuted sums towards off-site green infrastructure and open space requirements resulting from a residential development. The council's Regulation 123 list will enable pooled CIL funds collected across the district to be used to provide and/or enhance off-site open space. In addition,

parish and town councils will receive a proportion of CIL funds to be spent on infrastructure in line with local community priorities. In Harrogate, where no local council exists, Harrogate Borough Council will consult with residents on how to spend the neighbourhood funds collected in the town. On-site open space requirements directly related to the development will continue to be delivered by way of planning obligations.

Partnership Working

9.5 There may be potential green infrastructure projects outside of the planning system that can be delivered through partnership working e.g. with the Local Nature Partnerships and the White Rose Forest Partnership such as those highlighted in the Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy. Community groups may also wish to take forward a green infrastructure project. Through partnership working, funding opportunities may be explored to help to deliver such projects e.g. lottery funding.

10. The Green Infrastructure Checklist:

What does the council expect applicants to consider when designing proposals for development?

10.1 This section provides a checklist for applicants and developers to show how the council expects proposals for development to integrate high quality green infrastructure from the earliest design stage. The following process sets out the key steps and this is followed by more detailed guidance.

Step 1: Consider the opportunities that the proposed development could bring

Step 2: Identify the characteristics and green assets within and near to the site

Step 3: Consider existing evidence base, plans and local community aspirations

Step 4: Use information from steps 1, 2 and 3 to identify opportunities for creating/improving green infrastructure

Step 5: If the application is significant carry out pre-application community involvement

Step 6: Carry out pre-application discussion with Harogate Borough Council

Step 7: Submit the planning application

Step 1: Consider the opportunities that the proposed development could bring

10.2 The nature of the proposed development will help to determine the priorities and opportunities for green infrastructure on a particular site. For example, for housing development, there may be opportunities to create open space to encourage activity and social interaction, footpath links to local shops and services and allotments to encourage locally grown food. For economic development there may be opportunities to create an attractive setting for investors and the workforce including opportunities for recreation, and links to the cycle network to encourage cycling to work. It is important to consider the characteristics of the development and who will use the site and benefit from its development.

Step 2: Identify the characteristics and green assets within and near to the site

10.3 The next step is to look at the existing green infrastructure characteristics and features within and surrounding the site. The following list provides some examples of characteristics

and features to consider:

- Is there a watercourse?
- Is part of the site within a flood zone or does the site suffer from surface water flooding?
- Are there any heritage designations or assets?
- Is there an existing Public Right of Way (PROW), cycle route or bridleway to link to?
- Are there any nature conservation designations (such as a SINC, SSSIs or nature reserve)?
- Are there any opportunities for protecting, linking and enhancing habitats and species?
- Is the site within a retail or employment area with potential to improve the shopping experience or business environment?

Step 3: Consider existing evidence base, plans and local community aspirations

10.4   If the site is included as a case study, urban extension or is within the main urban areas identified within sections 6, 7 or 8 of this SPD, you will need to ensure that the design of the proposed development contributes to the delivery of the case studies and opportunities that relate to the site.

10.5   You should also consider relevant information contained within any Neighbourhood Plan, Parish Plan and Village Design Statement affecting the site.

10.6   For sites within or near to a Conservation Area, the Harrogate District Conservation Area Appraisals are a useful source of information to show how the council wishes to see the setting of our heritage assets.

10.7   You should also consider whether the site is affected by a project in the Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy or whether it falls within one of Natural England's Green Infrastructure corridors.

10.8   You can view up to date information about flood zones on the Environment Agency website. More detailed information about flooding, including surface water flooding, is set out in the council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1).

Step 4: Use information from steps 1, 2 and 3 to identify opportunities for creating/improving green infrastructure

10.9   Taking into consideration the information collated in steps 1 to 3 you will need to consider the opportunities for delivering the following green infrastructure benefits:

 Connecting green spaces and routes

 Improving the setting and quality of place

 Encouraging activity and enjoyment

 Adapting to changes in climate, flood risk and growing food locally

 Protecting nature and heritage

10.10   The key consideration here is to think about green infrastructure as multifunctional. This policy is not necessarily about providing more green infrastructure, it is about being creative and seeking to deliver as many benefits as possible for the local community, economy and environment.

Step 5: Pre-application community involvement for 'significant' applications

10.11 Pre-application community involvement is encouraged for all 'significant' development. A significant development is described as:

- Major[2] developments within or adjoining residential areas
- Major departures from the Development Plan
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development
- Applications which require notification to the Secretary of State
- Other proposals that are likely to attract significant community interest

10.12 For significant development it is important to engage with the community during the design process before a planning application is submitted. This provides an opportunity to invite feedback about the location, type and scale of green infrastructure proposed and how it could benefit the local community.

10.13 To find out more about the requirements for pre-application community involvement please refer to the council's latest Statement of Community Involvement.

Step 6: Carry out pre-application discussion with Harrogate Borough Council

10.14 The council encourages applicants and developers to engage with the council before a planning application is submitted. This allows for confidential feedback and advice regarding the scope of the development and the proposed design and layout.

10.15 A pre-application enquiry can be made - details of this service including the current cost and and a form that you will need to use are available via the council's website at: www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/New%20Plan/Can-I-have-pre-application-advice.aspx.

Step 7: Submitting the planning application

10.16 Ensure that the design of the development has made the most of opportunities for green infrastructure and taken into consideration the comments made by the community, stakeholders and the council during the pre-application stage.

10.17 Include information within the planning application e.g. within the Design and Access Statement to demonstrate how green infrastructure has been addressed and cross refer to any drawings.

2. Major developments are defined as follows: For dwellings: where 10 or more are to be constructed (or if number not given, area is more than 0.5 hectares). For all other uses: where the floorspace will be 1000sq. metres or more (or site is one hectare or more). Area of site is that directly involved in some aspect of the development. Floorspace is defined as the sum of floor area within the building.

11. Useful documents and links

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Ecosystems Knowledge Network on Green Infrastructure: http://ekn.defra.gov.uk/resources/tools-guidelines/green-infrastructure/

English Heritage on Streets for all:
http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/planning-and-transport/streets-for-all/regional-documents/

Environment Agency: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/

Landscape Institute on Green Infrastructure: www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/GreenInfrastructure.php

Natural England on Green Infrastructure: www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure/default.aspx

Susdrain on SuDS: www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/design-guidance/green-infrastructure.html

NATIONAL PUBLICATIONS

DEFRA, (2010), Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network:
http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf

DEFRA, (2011), Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services

Forestry Commission, (October 2010), Benefits of Green Infrastructure Report to DEFRA and CLG:
www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urgp_benefits_of_green_infrastructure_main_report.pdf/$file/urgp_benefits_of_green_infrastructure_main_report.pdf

RTPI, Briefing on Green Infrastructure: www.rtpi.org.uk/media/499964/rtpi_gi_task_group_briefing_final.pdf

Town & Country Planning Association, The Wildlife Trusts (July 2012) Planning for a Healthy Environment - Good Practice Guidance for Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity: www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/TCPA_TWT_GI-Biodiversity-Guide.pdf

DCLG, (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) (2004)

SUB-REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS

North Yorkshire County Council, (May 2011), North Yorkshire and York Landscape Characterisation Project:
www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/25431/Landscape-character-assessment

Living Landscapes; Yorkshire and the Humber, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, 2009: www.ywt.org.uk/living-landscapes

DISTRICT POLICY AND PUBLICATIONS

Harrogate Borough Council, (February 2004), Harrogate District Landscape Character Assessment:
www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/Landscape-Character-Assessment.aspx

Harrogate Borough Council, (2006), Harrogate District Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/SCI.aspx

Harrogate Borough Council, Harrogate District Conservation Area Character Appraisals (there are 53 separate appraisals):
www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/Conservation-Areas.aspx

Harrogate Borough Council, (February 2009), Harrogate District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD):
www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/harrogate-district-local-plan.aspx

Core Strategy Policy EQ1: Reducing Risks to the Environment
Core Strategy Policy EQ2: The Natural and Built Environment and Green Belt

Harrogate Borough Council, (2014), Provision for Open Space in Connection with New Housing Development SPD:
www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Documents/planning-guidance/2014-provision-open-space-spd.pdf

Harrogate Borough Council, (2012), A Strong Local Economy Strategic Action Plan 2012/2015:
www.harrogate.gov.uk/edu/Documents/HBCStrongLocalEconomyStrategicActionPlanFINAL.pdf

Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Plan (2012): www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/Biodiversity-Harrogate.aspx

Review of Local Landscape Designations: Special Landscape Areas (September 2011)

Harrogate Borough Council, (Draft), Heritage Management SPD: www.harrogate.gov.uk/plan/Pages/Heritage-SPD.aspx

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