

Natural and Built Heritage Task and Finish Working Group Report to Place Shaping Sub-Group

Purpose

The natural and built heritage of the District is a finite resource. The natural and built heritage of the District is distinctive and unique and a tremendous resource.

The Natural and Built Heritage Task and Finish Working Group have been charged with addressing issues associated with the use and management of the resource and the impact of climate change and rising sea levels on it. The Sustainable Community Strategy is the focus for setting objectives and identifying actions to take forward to the Place Shaping Sub Group.

The overarching priority in the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) relevant to this group is Priority 8: *'To protect and enhance the distinctive environment of the district and encourage enjoyment of it'*. The following objectives have been identified:

- Greater awareness of ways to be energy efficient and of alternative energy production techniques
- Encourage sustainable travel to promote opportunities for informal recreation
- Increase recycling and minimise waste production and explore alternative methods to include food and green waste and other recyclable products
- Promote enjoyment of parks, countryside and coast
- Minimise harmful effects of possible flooding (adapt to climate change)
- Encourage economic sustainable management of natural and built environment

Background

Since inception in April 2009, the group has debated and discussed issues surrounding the objectives to protect, enhance and promote the District's natural and built environment. Three strategies/actions plans have been identified as important to achieve the objectives in the SCS:

- The Maldon Central Area Action Plan (LDF)
- The Green Infrastructure Schedule (LDF)
- MDC's Environment and Climate Change Strategy

The **Maldon Central Area Action Plan** has identified sites where regeneration and conservation of the built and natural heritage of Maldon can realise economic and social renaissance through commerce, retail function, education and tourism and how Maldon as the pivotal centre of the District physically connects with other towns and villages along coastal paths, footpaths, towpaths and cycle paths as well as by road.

The proposed **Green Infrastructure Schedule** for the District identifies, amongst other categories, parks and public gardens, parish fields and

recreation grounds, common land, green corridors (rivers, canals), recreation facilities from fishing lakes to allotments, local nature reserves and nationally important and protected natural environment sites.

The **MDC Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2009-2012** looks to set out the positive action that Maldon District Council will take in relation to environmental issues and climate change. The Strategy targets five key areas:

- Community Leadership
- Waste and Recycling
- Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty
- Flooding
- Transport

In view of the global aspect of climate change and the significant impact on the Essex coastline and therefore that of the District, there are a number of national and county legislative and policy documents and National Indicators that the Place Shaping Group should be aware of as follows:

- The Marine Bill
- Shoreline Management Plan
- Coastal Planning, CLG
- NI 185, NI 186, NI 187, NI 188

General Themes

Sustainability is a major theme encompassing:

- Sustainable Communities
- Sustainable Travel
- Sustainable Homes
- Sustainable Design
- Economic Sustainability
- Sustainable Tourism

All feature in the objectives of Priority 8 of the SCS.

Sustainable communities should be based on mixed uses, high density and permeable development with **good pedestrian links** and connections to a wide range of community facilities and services. Sustainable rural and local communities should have provision of facilities and services to allow an element of self-sufficiency.

New development should consider sustainable approaches to **minimising levels of long distance transportation and travel** and therefore the carbon footprint. Alternative sustainable means of transport and travel should be encouraged and utilised.

The use of The Building Regulations and the **Code for Sustainable Homes** should be used to achieve **reductions in energy use** and carbon emissions.

Sustainable design and layout of buildings should maximise the possibilities for **reducing environmental impact and running costs over their life time including energy loss and energy demand**. Also effective use of renewable energy technology, micro-generation systems, water saving devices and recycling, sustainable urban drainage systems and natural lighting, heating and cooling systems will save resources or minimise their use. Cutting down on **waste and recycling** reduces impact on the environment but there are opportunities for increasing recycling, the methods of recycling and further minimising waste.

The sustainable management of the built and natural environment requires **skills and training for maintaining the resources** with new uses and increased use. Buildings should be re-used and repaired because energy was invested in their construction which would be wasted if demolished. Coastal defences require being maintained (at present) as well as coastal paths and habitats.

Sustainable tourism should allow **increased visits** but minimise impact on the natural and built environment. Car parking and infrastructure issues should be balanced against access by **sustainable transport and travel** with increased use of cycle networks and introduction of cycle hubs, river and canal transport.

Most of the above are covered within new policies through the Core Strategy to the LDF or could be managed as a finished task within this Group, however, the following recommendations should be made to the Place Shaping Group. Better information and engagement with the public is essential and can be achieved to a certain extent through better links within service areas of the Council and website links to partners. However, our customers are not all able to access information on-line.

Key Projects

To monitor The Marine Bill, Shoreline Management Plan and Coast Planning documents that has significance to Priority 8 of the SCS.

To produce a Maldon DC Environmental Booklet (see Colchester BC's Green Guide) available to the public supported by ECC and Energy Savings Trust. Links to NI 185, NI 186, NI 187, NI 188. To inform the public of environmental impacts of waste, climate change, energy use etc and how to be energy efficient in and out of the home, in travel, buying local food, reduces use of car etc....

Identify the gaps in the cycle network within the District to realise a complete network and to upgrade footpaths, towpaths and coastal paths to cycle routes to increase use and access. Link to Braintree DC, Chelmsford BC and Colchester BC and National Cycle Network/Substrans.

Produce Community Flood Plans. Identify risks to buildings, loss of livelihoods and cost of maintaining existing land uses i.e. sea wall. Links to NI 188 Adapting to Climate Change.

Identify skills shortages to maintain buildings and natural environment and link to VCT and apprenticeships/bursaries with local businesses.

A Biodiversity Project to identify key habitats in Essex worthy of protection and action. If the habitats are protected the species will thrive.

Conclusion

The Place Shaping Group is requested to consider the recommendations put forward in this report and to further consider the future role of the Natural and Built Heritage Task and Finish Group.

If the Natural and Built Heritage Working Group is requested to continue and move forward with the key projects that have been suggested then there has to be further work in gaining the commitment of external partners to achieve such as this has been lacking within the Working Group.

Jackie Longman

Chair of the Natural and Built Heritage Task and Finish Group