

STAFFORD BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

MEETING BETWEEN NATURAL ENGLAND & STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

DATE OF MEETING – 9 JUNE 2008

Officers in Attendance

Ruth Metcalf	-	Natural England
Nick Young	-	Natural England
Alex Yendole	-	Stafford Borough Council, Principal Planning Officer

- Natural England are encouraging and promoting Green Infrastructure projects across the country as well as in the West Midlands region. Ruth Metcalf is the regional lead on Growth Points for Natural England whilst Nick Young acts as the regional lead overseeing the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Project Team at Natural England includes Nick Young, Ruth Metcalf and 3 additional staff.
- There are 4 key elements of work carried out by the Project Team at Natural England; Policy development at the regional level through the Regional Spatial Strategy; a Communities and Promotional role; Growth Points and Eco towns; Projects focused on delivering Green Infrastructure such as the 2007 / 2008 Black Country Green Infrastructure strategy.
- AY provide an update of the position with Stafford Borough Council in terms of the scale of development needed to be provided.
- Natural England wishes to deliver a project focusing on sustainable communities applying a master planning exercise. The project would be supported by Natural England and subsequently disseminated to other local authorities as good practice. Natural England wishes to work closely with new and existing Growth Points to deliver Green Infrastructure. To date Telford and Birmingham are working on Green Infrastructure strategies with work carried out through funds to deliver strategies in other locations.
- The Growth Point in East Staffordshire is a good model in terms of leading projects with a Steering Group co-ordinating work, including community involvement for a range of projects including green infrastructure. The Growth Points receive direct Government funding with this work supported by advice and guidance from Natural England. However Natural England would directly fund a demonstration project on master planning to provide concept statements to support green infrastructure. Natural England will provide a letter to Stafford Borough Council regarding the production of a Green Infrastructure strategy for Stafford Borough, if Growth Point status is announced. Therefore there are 2 distinct programmes; Growth Point and master planning concept statements.

- Production of the Local Development Framework's core strategy will require a Green Infrastructure policy which is supported by a Green Infrastructure strategy. The Green Infrastructure study would bring together the work already carried out by Stafford Borough Council whereas the Green Infrastructure strategy goes beyond this level to provide a vision, spatial context and guiding principles. Guidance for developers will be essential in order to provide access for green space in the future. East Staffordshire Borough Council have begun delivering this approach including mapping work. For Stafford Borough the Green Infrastructure study and the related strategy would work alongside the concept statements, informing each other.
- If Stafford Borough Council's expression of interest is successful to become a New Growth Point the delivery of Green Infrastructure through this agenda will be required as part of the Programme of Development. East Staffordshire has established a Green Infrastructure task group made up of Natural England, Staffordshire County Council, English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission within the overall structure of a wider Partnership Group for the Growth Point. Government funding was provided in October 2006, with the Partnership set up during 2007 / 08. Natural England, the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency have supported Green Infrastructure projects with guidance and advice concerning the best value for spending Growth Point funds to deliver through the statutory planning process.
- A Master Planning project would focus on Stafford town with concept statements being prepared for strategic development areas in particular locations. The concept statements would identify existing assets and include enhancing such assets through proposed development. The concept statements would link to green infrastructure thus providing a brief for developers. Green infrastructure should be part of the overall scheme, although in the past it has been difficult to separate from broad principles to deliver developable areas and green infrastructure. Discussion about Green Infrastructure delivery and dissemination of the approach to provide guidance for developers will be important after the project in terms of providing master plans and green infrastructure in other locations. Identifying key characteristics in the location and establishing broad ideas with the community and through wider partnership engagement will be facilitated by the project. Engagement will support how and when work is done.
- There is an issue of procurement in terms of delivering the Master Planning project of concept statements. Natural England can provide funds but the project must be lead by Stafford Borough Council. The approach adopted regarding how much can be done within the budget will need to emphasis qualitative added value through the work. Natural England work on the basis of 100% match funding with the partner organisation, which will need to be agreed by Stafford Borough Council. Therefore the Council will lead the contract and costs rather than Natural England, but Natural England will provide at least matched funding through monies. The Council can provide time and resources to contribute to its element of match funding. Natural England will provide detailed guidance on the brief overseeing the work. AY agreed to provide internal costings for the project including £3,000 for existing work from the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, £5,000 for staff and £2-3,000 for hiring rooms when community involvement takes place.

- Key outputs from the Master Planning concept statement project will be 3 to 4 location strategies developed around the Stafford town area including location plans and key objectives as part of a case study report. Natural England will disseminate the work to other local authorities and partners. The project will involve engaging a consultant for the technical work to be delivered. A community engagement / involvement input will be required through planned events and evening sessions to feedback ideas. This may well involve 1 to 2 days with 3 to 4 staff from the Borough Council to be present to complement the consultant and an enabler. The project must establish links with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust as well as Staffordshire County Council. Community involvement work can be administered through Stafford Borough Council's Local Development Framework process. The approach of new development locations around Stafford and the inclusion of land through the Green Infrastructure strategy will be important in terms of future broad principles. Natural England agreed to commission the work and provide a budget with clearance from the national lead. The green infrastructure strategy would be needed for the whole borough but the master planning concept statements project is just focused on Stafford and the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at this stage. The size of the locations will be established through the tendering process. Broadly it was established that areas would be north, south, east and west of Stafford town.
- The timescale for the project was discussed and agreed as being acceptable and appropriate by Natural England and Stafford Borough Council. AY to act as the project management lead to produce a project brief and funding application by 25 July 2008. The deadline for engaging consultants will be 12 September 2008 with an interim meeting later in the month. AY will work directly with Ruth Metcalf from Natural England on this project. A covering letter from Stafford Borough Council will be required to secure agreement in terms of match funding and monies from Natural England. It was agreed that work would be for a maximum of £10,000 from each organisation, including match funding contributions.

Notes prepared by Alex Yendole
Forward Planning Section
Date last revised: 08/01/2009