



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

STATEMENT OF THE LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

SUBMITTED IN RESPECT OF MATTER 2

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BACKGROUND TO THE LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

1. The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority is a statutory authority created by the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 (the Park Act). It has a statutory responsibility to either provide directly or work with partners to provide facilities for sport, recreation, leisure, entertainment and nature conservation throughout the Park. The Park lies in east London extending northwards from the River Thames to Ware in Hertfordshire and comprises 4,000ha of which 1,600ha are owned and managed by the Authority.
- 2 The Park includes a mosaic of award-winning facilities and open spaces, including three Olympic Legacy venues and a biodiversity resource of international, national and local importance, some of which is owned and managed by the Authority. The Park attracts approximately 7m visits each year.

THE AUTHORITY'S GOVERNANCE

- 3 The Authority is managed by a Board, 'the Authority', which is made up of elected Members drawn from its funding authorities of the London Boroughs, Hertfordshire and Essex. The Authority delegates to Committees various responsibilities including its responsibilities defined by Section 14 of the Park Act.
- 4 Under these powers the Authority's Upper Lee Valley Regeneration and Planning Committee (superseded by the Regeneration and Planning Committee in 2017) agreed responses as successive drafts of Epping Forest District Council's local plan have emerged. These are included in the **Appendix A**, to this statement.

THE AUTHORITY'S PLANNING ROLE

- 5 Section 12 of the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 identifies the Regional Park as a place for recreation, leisure and nature conservation (**Appendix B** includes relevant extracts from 'the Park Act'). Although the Park straddles the boundaries of several local planning authorities this statutory remit seeks to define the Regional Park as a distinct place.

"It shall be the duty of the Authority to develop, improve, preserve and manage or to procure or arrange for the development, improvement, preservation and management of the park as a place for the occupation of leisure, recreation, sport, games or amusements or any similar activity, for the provision of nature reserves and for the provision and enjoyment of entertainments of any kind."

- 6 The Authority is not a planning authority but it has a range of powers and duties in relation to the statutory planning process. Section 14(1) of

the Park Act requires the Authority to prepare a plan setting out proposals for the future management and development of the Regional Park. Planning authorities are under a mandatory obligation to include those parts of the plan affecting their areas within their own relevant planning strategies and policies. However inclusion of these policies and proposals by riparian boroughs does not necessarily imply they are fully accepted (Section 14 (2)(b)).

- 7 Section 14 (4-7) of the Park Act requires local planning authorities to consult with the Authority on planning matters which they consider could affect the Park. The operation of this requirement has occasioned this statement.
- 8 Section 14 (8-9) allows the Authority to refer decisions of the riparian authorities to the Secretary of State if it is considered by the Authority that the decision materially conflicts with the proposals of the Authority for the development of the Park.
- 9 Under its plan making powers the Authority has, over the past 50 years, produced a range of proposals for the future development and management of the Regional Park. Presently, the Authority is transitioning from the Park Plan (2000) which comprises two documents; Part 1 the strategic policy framework and Part 2 which contains detailed proposals for the whole Regional Park, to a new suite of documents - the Park Development Framework (PDF).
- 10 Extensive work has been carried out on this replacement planning document for the Park Plan, the Park Development Framework (PDF) to comply with section 14 of the Park Act. A new vision supported by a set of strategic aims for the Park arranged around 6 themes was adopted in 2010.
- 11 The whole of the Park Plan will shortly be replaced by the PDF. Area Proposals for the southern half of the Park, (i.e. south of the M25) including the area around Sewardstone which lies within Epping Forest District have been adopted; these are known as Areas 1 to 5.
- 12 The Authority has now produced final amended versions of new strategic policies, a landscape strategy and guidelines, and Area Proposals for the Regional Park north of the M25 which include the majority of the Park within Epping Forest District. Public consultation has been carried out on all the proposed and adopted documents. These documents will be presented to the Authority Meeting in April 2019 for adoption.
- 13 Accordingly given the progress made on the PDF, and the fact that Area Proposals for the Park within Epping Forest District are either already adopted or are due to be adopted in April 2019, it is the PDF that is considered relevant in terms of Section 14 (2) of the Park Act

and are formal statements of the Authority's position in respect of proposed development within the Regional Park.

- 14 The Park offers a biodiversity resource of international, national, regional and local importance. In total there are eight sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Park four of which; Amwell Quarry, Rye Meads, Turnford and Cheshunt Pits and Walthamstow Reservoirs, form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar Site. These protected sites and habitats offer a high level of 'access to nature' sites for large numbers of visitors as well as being accessible to local people. The Authority has recently revised its Biodiversity Action Plan and adopted a new BAP in January 2019 'The Lee Valley Regional Park Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 – 2029' which identifies key targets for improving habitats and species.

MATTER 2 CONTEXT, VISION & OBJECTIVES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ISSUE 1 - QUESTION 4.

New District Vision

- 15 An amendment is sought to the new vision for the District, under A (vi), where it references the Regional Park, to take account of the Authority's full statutory purpose in delivering the Regional Park. The Council's proposed Vision references the 'recreational aims' of the Regional Park but this fails to acknowledge the other elements of the Park's offer in terms of leisure and nature conservation which are of equal importance and relevance.
- 16 As stated above (para 5) the Authority's statutory purpose in respect of the Park's development, management and protection extends to cover a wide range of leisure activities and experiences, both active and passive. To fully represent this wide remit within the wording of the District's Vision it is felt appropriate to use the phrase "**recreation, leisure and nature conservation** aims of the Authority"....
- 17 This change would better reflect the scope and variety of the Park's offer within Epping Forest District, the work of the Authority and its partners and the contribution this makes towards delivering a good quality of life for local residents and their visitors.
- 18 Supporting text under para 2.19 of the draft Local Plan describes the extent of the Regional Park within the District and provides some detail about the variety of the Park's offer and the type of recreational and leisure activity available. It also highlights the importance of the ecological resources that lie within the Park and adjacent to the District and that these provide opportunities for people to enjoy and learn more about nature and its conservation.

Supporting Text and Lee Valley Regional Park Vision

19 Supporting text under paras 2.14 to 2.23 of the Local Plan is helpful in setting out the context for the Authority and the Regional Park but the 'Lee Valley Park Vision' set out in the box (ref par 2.23) is incorrect and out of date. It should be replaced with the corporate Vision adopted by the Authority in July 2010 which is set out in the Park Development Framework document 'Vision, Aims and Principles' as follows

Lee Valley Regional Park – A world class leisure destination

This is supported by six strategic aims:

- **Visitors: A Park that is a high quality and regionally unique visitor destination.**
- **Sport and Recreation: A Park that delivers a range of high quality opportunities for sport and recreation.**
- **Biodiversity: A Park that delivers a high quality biodiversity resource for the region.**
- **Community: A Park that helps people improve their wellbeing.**
- **Landscape and Heritage: A Park landscape that embraces the physical, cultural and social heritage of the area.**
- **Environment: A Park that contributes to the environmental sustainability of the region.**

The Vision, Aims and Principles document is available to view via the following web link:

<https://www.leevalleypark.org.uk/parkframework/vision/>

20 Paragraph 2.24 of the Local Plan also needs to be updated to reflect the current position regarding the plan of proposals for the Park within Epping Forest District. PDF Area Proposals for Areas 5, 6 and 7 apply to the Park within Epping Forest District. Area 5 Proposals have been adopted (April 2013) as stated. Proposals for Areas 6 and 7 will be adopted in April 2019 at the Authority Meeting.

21 These proposals together with an updated Landscape Character Assessment and Strategy have undergone extensive consultation. This includes discussion with the Council given the duty placed upon both the Authority and the Council under Section 14 (1 and 2) in respect of the Authority's plan proposals and their relationship to the Local Plan.

- 22 The last sentence under paragraph 2.24 of the draft Plan should be amended to read as follows:

Proposals for Areas 6 and 7 cover the majority of the Regional Park within the District. This includes proposals for visitor facilities, enhancement of habitats and access to nature opportunities within the River Lee Country Park, improvements to water sport and angling facilities, in association with habitat and ecological connectivity enhancements around Nazeing and Glen Faba and further improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes especially where links can be established with rail stations and other open spaces adjoining the Park.

Status of the Authority's proposals

- 23 In support of the Authority's response to the issue raised in question 4, I refer to paragraph 6 of this statement which summarises the legal position in relation to the integration of the Authority's proposals into the draft Local Plan. Whilst these are correctly described in the draft plan the Authority considers that the draft plan should include the relevant proposals in an Appendix. These proposals should be accorded significant weight given the process which they have followed which is covered above. Their inclusion would be consistent with the sentiments underpinning paragraphs 2.18-2.24 and should assist for completeness.
- 24 The relevant adopted and draft proposals can be found in **Appendix C** to this Statement. A full description of all relevant documents under the Park Development Framework can be found via the following link <https://www.leevalleypark.org.uk/en/content/cms/corporate/enhancing-the-valley/consultation/>

APPENDICES

A – AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATIONS

B – EXTRACTS FROM LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK ACT 1966

C – RELEVANT PDF AREA PROPOSALS FOR AREAS 5, 6 AND 7