



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 16 QUESTION 1

STEPHEN WILKINSON
BA (Hons), BPI, Dip LA, MBA, MRTPI

INTRODUCTION AND 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- 4 Under these powers the Authority's Upper Lee Valley Regeneration and Planning Committee (superseded by the Regeneration and Planning Committee in 2017) agreed responses as successive drafts of Epping Forest District Council's local plan have emerged.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 (Park Act) 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 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).
- 8 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.
- 9 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.
- 10 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

THE REGIONAL PARK BIODIVERSITY RESOURCE AND BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

- 11 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.

- 12 Epping Forest District includes part of the Lee Valley SPA and Ramsar Site at Turnford and Cheshunt Pits with other components lying adjacent or within a short distance from its boundaries. Two other SSSIs within the Regional Park also form part of the District – Cornmill Stream and Old River Lea and Waltham Abbey Woods. A range of other non-statutory locally designated sites also form part of the Regional Park. These are the most important sites for nature conservation outside legally protected land and in Epping Forest District they take the form of Local Wildlife Sites; these are identified on the draft Local Plan Policies Map.
- 13 The first Lee Valley Biodiversity Action Plan was adopted in 2000 following a process of engagement with key partners. It set out a vision and identified habitats and species within the Park that would benefit from specific programmes of action to conserve and enhance them. It provided an important framework for biodiversity action drawing in a range of delivery partners.
- 14 In November 2017 the Authority commenced consultation on a revised Biodiversity Action Plan recognising the need to review the Plan and reassess the original targets in the light of changes to national and regional priorities. Following consideration of the consultee comments and a number of amendments to the document the Authority formally adopted its revised Biodiversity Action Plan in January 2019 - 'The Lee Valley Regional Park Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 – 2029'. This is included in its pre-published form as Appendix C.
- 15 The Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 – 2029 sets out the overarching vision for the Lee Valley Regional Park Biodiversity Action Plan as “**to work with partners and communities to conserve, create, restore and enhance the biodiversity of the Regional Park, providing access to and appreciation of this area**”. This is supported by four key objectives:
 - I. To conserve, create, restore and link characteristic ecological, hydrological and landscape features to form a fully integrated river floodplain corridor***
 - II. To realise the full ecological potential of the Lee Valley Regional Park by maintaining and enhancing the present range of species, habitats and landscape features combined with extensive re-creation and expansion of key habitat types***
 - III. To achieve a sustainable use of the natural resource***

IV. To achieve awareness and understanding of the biodiversity of the Lee Valley Regional Park and to encourage participation in its conservation

- 16 The Biodiversity Action Plan identifies 5 key habitats targeted for action and 9 species action plans. Delivery of the Habitat Action Plans will provide benefits to a range of species, providing a more robust and inter-connected habitat across the Regional Park which is fundamental to the success of the Plan. The delivery of the Species Action Plans will target very specific work requirements of key species, these species are also an excellent tool for community awareness and engagement. A number of the habitat and species action plans are relevant to areas within Epping Forest District.
- 17 It should be noted that the Strategic Policies for the Park include a set of policies aimed at conserving and enhancing the Park's biodiversity B1 to B4. These policies were drafted and amended in accordance with the outcome of the HRA/AA, stakeholder comments and work on the new Biodiversity Action Plan for the Regional Park. Strategic Policy B1 states "***Development within the regional park should be consistent with the Authority's Biodiversity Action Plan and in accordance with a locally approved or DEFRA endorsed biodiversity assessment metric***".

THE LOCAL PLAN SUBMISSION VERSION - POLICY DM1 HABITAT PROTECTION & IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY

Question 1. Has account been taken of the Lee Valley Biodiversity Action Plan during the preparation of the Plan? Does the Plan adequately reflect this document and should reference be made to it as Key Evidence in paragraph 4.8? (Reps LVRPA).

- 18 In response to the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan the Authority noted that the proposed changes to biodiversity and green infrastructure policies were broadly in line with the amendments it had sought and the comments previously made; with the need for some additional minor amendments to the policy and supporting text (please refer to Appendix A, letter dated 23 January 2018).
- 19 A request was also made that account be taken of the existing Biodiversity Action Plan 2000 and the revised Biodiversity Action Plan which had been issued for consultation in late November 2017. The intention was that it should be included as part of the Key Evidence and listed as such at paragraph 4.8. The District Council were consulted on the draft revised Biodiversity Action Plan as part of the partner engagement process in November 2017 but did not offer any comments.

- 20 The expectation was that the Vision and objectives of the revised Biodiversity Action Plan would have been taken into account as part of the preparation of those policies relating to biodiversity. It is difficult for the Authority to ascertain whether, or to what extent this happened.
- 21 It would be helpful if this point could be clarified and to have mention of and support for the Lee Valley Regional Park Biodiversity Action Plan included in supporting text to policy DM1. Under the habitat and species action plans, areas of the Park within Epping Forest District will be subject to targeted action and conservation improvement, both to enhance their wildlife value and provide enhanced opportunities for people to access and enjoy nature. The Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 – 2029 should be included under para 4.8 Key Evidence.
- 22 The Biodiversity Action Plan is a key tool in the Authority's work, including the work undertaken with Natural England to protect and enhance the Lee Valley SPA. The SPA is cross boundary, (including sites within and adjacent to Epping Forest District) and is predicated on species and habitat protection irrespective of administrative boundaries. Given the acknowledged pressures on habitats within the District resulting from growth it is important that the Lee Valley Park Biodiversity Action Plan 2019 - 2029 is clearly referenced and acknowledged.

APPENDICES

A – AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATIONS

B – EXTRACTS FROM LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK ACT 1966

**C – LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2019 -2029
PRE-PUBLICATION DRAFT**