

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET		
SUBJECT:	DECLARATION OF PEARTREE GREEN AS A LOCAL NATURE RESERVE		
DATE OF DECISION:	14 NOVEMBER 2017		
REPORT OF:	CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT		
<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
None	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport seeking to declare Peartree Green as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Peartree Green is a semi-natural greenspace on the eastern side of Southampton with high biodiversity value and good opportunities for local residents to experience nature.	
The Friends of Peartree Green are keen to secure LNR status for the site and have produced a draft management plan in addition to undertaking practical conservation and environmental education activities. Southampton is currently below the recommended quantity of LNR designated land for its population size.	
Declaring the site as an LNR would address this deficit without increasing the costs or responsibilities of the City Council. It is hoped that LNR status will increase local resident's interest in and care for the site.	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
	(i) To proceed with the declaration of Peartree Green as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Designating the site as an LNR will give the site enhanced status which will help to generate greater public interest in, and support for, its care and management. It will also help to highlight opportunities for informal recreation to local residents.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED	
2	To not proceed with the declaration of Peartree Green as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
3	Not declaring Peartree Green as an LNR will not alter the City Council's responsibilities or work load in respect of managing the site. It will however, result in disappointment for the friends group and may deter local people from volunteering in parks and greenspaces.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
	Value of access to nature for residents
4	There is a growing body of evidence which demonstrates that access to nature is good for physical health and mental well-being. Natural green spaces provide natural solutions to many of the modern non-communicable diseases e.g. obesity and inactivity; heart disease and strokes; depression and mental illness which blight the lives of significant numbers of the city's residents. In difficult times, they provide cost effective treatment and improve people's lives.
5	For many of Southampton's residents visits to the countryside are not possible and their local greenspaces are the only places where they are able to experience nature. It is fortunate therefore that Southampton possesses a significant extent of semi-natural greenspace.
6	Local authorities have the statutory power to provide a greater degree of protection and status to sites of high wildlife value which highlights both their biodiversity value and the opportunities available to local people to experience nature. Such sites are termed Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
	What is a local nature reserve?
7	Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are places with wildlife or geological features that have special interest in their local area. They provide people with opportunities to learn about nature or to just enjoy it. LNRs are designated by local authorities using powers contained within the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.
8	LNRs should normally be greater than 2ha in size and be capable of being managed for the conservation of nature and for the provision of opportunities for study, research or enjoyment of nature. They must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of high natural interest in the local context, or • of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for formal education or research, or • of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public.
	Why declare a Local Nature Reserve?
9	The benefits of declaring an LNR are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase people's awareness and enjoyment of their natural environment; • provide an ideal environment for everyone to learn about and study nature; • provide a very clear signal to a local community of the local authority's commitment to nature conservation; • make it possible to apply bye-laws which can help in managing and protecting the site; and • help towards achieving Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) targets.
	Procedure for declaring a Local Nature Reserve
10	In order to declare an LNR a local authority must have a legal interest in the land concerned. A management plan should be produced in consultation with

	the local community and appropriate organisations and Natural England (NE) should be formally notified of the intention to declare the LNR.
	Local Nature Reserves in Southampton
11	<p>At present there are four LNRs wholly or partly within Southampton totalling an area of 30ha, these sites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chessel Bay (12.92ha) • Millers Pond (8.06ha) • Netley Common (5.23ha) • Westwood Woodland Park (3.80ha). <p>The first two are owned by Southampton City Council whilst the latter two belong to Hampshire County Council.</p>
12	Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace standard (ANGSt) recommends that local authority areas should have a minimum of 1ha of LNR per 1000 residents. The population of Southampton is just over 254,000 (2016 mid-year estimate) which means that at present there is a deficit of approximately 224ha.
	Peartree Green
13	Peartree Green is a 17ha semi-natural greenspace located just to the east of the River Itchen in the Peartree Ward. The site supports a variety of habitats including both acid and calcareous grassland, scrub, woodland and wet hollows. It is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and 12ha have been entered into the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme.
14	The site has an active friends group which undertakes a range of activities on the Green including a programme of practical conservation work, litter picks, wildlife surveys, a BioBlitz and educational activities for schools. They also hold bi-monthly open meetings in a local pub to which local residents are invited.
15	In the autumn of 2016 the friends group approached the City Council to seek support for their aspiration to secure LNR status for the site and technical assistance in developing a management plan. Working closely with the council's Land Management and Planning Ecologists, the friends have produced a draft management plan. They have also held two public meetings specifically about the idea of securing LNR status for the site. The first was at the start of the process to gauge local views on the idea whilst the second one was designed to obtain comments on the draft management plan. All comments received were considered and, where, appropriate incorporated into the management plan. Public comments at both meetings were strongly in favour of LNR status.
	Next steps
16	<p>The friends group and local residents are strongly in favour of designating Peartree Green as an LNR. If the City Council is also supportive the following steps needs to be taken in order to designate the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a formal declaration document should be drawn up accompanied by a map at a scale which accurately shows the LNR boundary. Drafts of these documents are attached in appendices 1 and 2;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the declaration should be agreed by Cabinet a public notice announcing the declaration should be placed in a local paper and copies of the declaration and map made available for the public to inspect free of charge; and the local authority should formally notify the Natural England regional team of the LNR declaration in writing and send them a copy of the declaration, together with maps and any other details required about the reserve.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
17	Designation as an LNR will not require additional financial resources. The site is already managed for nature conservation, using existing revenue budgets and funds from the HLS scheme. The enhanced status may, however, enable the friends group to access funding which is not available to the City Council. PW
18	Peartree Green is currently managed by the Land Management Ecologist and East Area Parks Team with support from the friends group. The amount of City Council management input will not increase however, LNR status may help to generate an increase in volunteer activity in response to the publicity and heightened profile of the site. PW
<u>Property/Other</u>	
19	The site is currently 'protected open space' under retained policy CLT3 Protection of Open Spaces of the Local Plan Review. It is also safeguarded under Policy CS 21 'Protecting and enhancing open space' of the Core Strategy Amended Version March 2015.
20	Peartree Green is one of a number of sites to which additional recreational activity, arising from new housing in the city centre, is being directed. LNR status will raise the profile of the site helping to attract new residents to it and away from more sensitive habitats at Weston Shore.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u>	
21	The power to declare LNRs is granted by Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>	
22	LNR status is a statutory designation which will provide greater protection for the site, including the ability to create bye-laws. Designation as an LNR will demonstrate the City Council's discharge of its biodiversity duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
23	If necessary, LNRs can be de-designated should circumstances change.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
24	Declaration of Peartree Green as an LNR will not require alterations to the current maintenance regime or the site's status as protected open space and as such the risk profile is unlikely to change.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
25	None

KEY DECISION?	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	Peartree
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Draft plan of the LNR boundary
2.	Draft declaration document

Documents In Members' Rooms

1.	None
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	No
Privacy Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to be carried out.	No
Other Background Documents	
Other Background documents available for inspection at:	
Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	Draft Management Plan, Peartree Green