

Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Southampton City Council Green Infrastructure Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
<p>The Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy are Southampton City Council’s response to the climate emergency and provide the framework to address the council’s statutory duty to halt the decline of biodiversity, protect and re-connect habitats, conserve, restore and enhance species populations and deliver connected GI in a response to the challenges posed by both climate change and the increase in the city’s population.</p> <p>The Biodiversity Strategy and GI Strategy explain the importance of habitats and GI, the principles for achieving no net loss of habitat and retain and enhance biodiversity, what needs to be considered to achieve those goals and provides the framework for how the council can meet its enhanced statutory duty under the requirements of the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>Accompanying each strategy will be a Delivery Plan; the aim will be that Strategies and Delivery Plans will be adopted in 2024. The Delivery Plans will provide more detail about specific targets we want to achieve and will assign actions for lead officers or teams. The Delivery Plans will be reviewed on an annual basis and the strategies will be reviewed every three years.</p> <p>Our world is warming causing more extreme weather events and sea level rise. The scientific consensus is that human induced climate change has already started. The further warming of the atmosphere threatens our planet including our natural environment, but also human health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The consequences include increased flooding, more frequent and severe heat waves, water scarcity, more pollution, and loss of biodiversity. There will be a detrimental impact on people’s lives, including to their health, and damage to homes and businesses. Climate change is already having an impact, with parts of the UK</p>	

reaching over 40oC in July 2022, the UK’s hottest year on record.

Southampton is a bustling multi-cultural city with a growing prosperous economy and population. With continually evolving attractive investment opportunities bringing more people and businesses into the region, it is essential that social, economic, and environmental sustainability (sustainable development) is not lost for the sake of economic growth; a city lacking green infrastructure and healthy ecosystems is not sustainable or climate change adaptable, in turn, risking future economic growth

Summary of Impact and Issues

The GI Strategy seeks to optimise the full range of benefits that our natural assets can offer. This includes offering outdoor amenity space, safe and attractive routes for travel, local flood management, improving local air quality, capturing carbon and providing habitat to support wildlife. The Biodiversity Strategy compliments the GI Strategy by identifying a wider range of opportunities that will specifically support wildlife. The current versions of the strategies have been developed following a thorough process of internal and external engagement to ensure our approach remains ambitious whilst also being achievable in scale and scope, striking the right balance for SCC and those service areas who have a more direct responsibility for delivering the actions needed to implement both strategies.

The costs and impacts of a failure to do anything in the face of climate change will be significant, and the primary roles of the strategies are to help mitigate these impacts by taking action. There will be many positive co-benefits from the strategies such as better air quality, flood alleviation, improved wellbeing, improved habitats and species diversity/populations and a city more adapted to climate change.

The strategies will affect the way that most council services operate, given the wide-ranging services which may be affected by loss and degradation of habitat, declines in species diversity and numbers, loss of GI and challenges faced by a changing climate. There may be impacts on the way people need to behave, so more inclusive participation is imperative. There will also be changes to planning and city infrastructure and technologies and any impacts of these on different groups of people.

Although these are high-level strategies, individual projects arising from the strategies may have unintended consequences. We have tried to future proof the strategies by being mindful of what these impacts may be however, individual projects which will be outlined in the Delivery Plans, may also require an assessment of impacts.

Potential Impacts

The implementation of the strategies will have many environmental, social, and economic benefits such as equity and social cohesion, health and wellbeing, resilience, and citizen engagement. In the absence of a GI and Biodiversity Strategy or, where there is a delay in their introduction, the council will be unable to demonstrate how it intends to deliver its obligations under the strengthened Biodiversity Duty in the Environment Act 2021 or the goals set out in the Corporate Plan or the Green City Plan. Penalties for failing to deliver statutory duties are currently unclear, however, there is a risk of reputational damage in addition to incurring higher future costs in adapting to the impacts of climate change and coping with loss of GI and continued loss and degradation of habitats and wildlife.

Responsible | Ian Collins

Service Manager	
Date	24 th November 2023
Approved by Senior Manager	Adam Wilkinson
Date	24 th November 2023

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	No negative impact identified. Improved GI and biodiversity will make the city more resilient to the effects of climate and improve the health, wellbeing and prosperity of Southampton for everyone.	
Disability	No negative impact identified. Improvements to increase access and use of our green spaces will be beneficial for everyone, including those with mental and physical disabilities.	
Gender Reassignment	No impact identified.	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No impact identified.	
Pregnancy and Maternity	No impact identified.	
Race	No negative impact identified.	
Religion or Belief	No negative impact identified.	
Sex	No impact identified.	
Sexual Orientation	No impact identified.	
Community Safety	No negative impact identified. With improved access and better infrastructure within our green spaces, they will more widely used and in turn become safer places for all to visit.	
Poverty	No impact identified.	

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Health & Wellbeing	<p>No negative impact identified.</p> <p>Improvements in public health will be delivered as our green spaces become will become more accessible. People’s relationships with green space will increase and in turn, deliver benefits to physical and mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We will work more closely with Health colleagues to ensure strategies which enhance health and wellbeing, through improving opportunities for exercise and contact with nature, improving air quality and improving green spaces for mental and physical wellbeing, align.</p>	
Other Significant Impacts	<p>Tourism - improvements to and promotion of our green spaces will put these spaces “on the map” and encourage everyone to visit who may currently not do so.</p>	