



Historic England

Planning Policy Team
Colchester City Council

Our ref:
PL00794596

Telephone 01223 582775

05 January 2024

Dear Planning Policy Team

Colchester Green Networks and Waterways Consultation

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the Colchester Green Networks and Waterways Consultation. As the Government's adviser on the historic environment Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process.

We have reviewed the online consultation material and although we do not have the capacity to review each individual site and provide specific comments for each, Historic England can provide the following general comments in relation to planning for green networks and waterways in relation to the historic environment:

Green Networks, Waterways and the Historic Environment

Historic England would highlight that Green and Blue Infrastructure should not only be considered in terms of the natural environment, health and recreation but also the role it can play in conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It can be used to:

- conserve and enhance heritage assets
- improve setting of heritage assets
- improve access to heritage assets
- create a sense of place and tangible link with local history
- create linkages between heritage assets and other green infrastructure

Conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is an important facet of sustainable development. There is an important synergy between the historic and natural environment. Countryside, landscape parks and the open spaces in our cities, towns and



Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU
Telephone 01223 58 2749 HistoricEngland.org.uk

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.





villages often have heritage interest, and it would be helpful to highlight this. It is important not to consider 'multi-functional' spaces only in terms of the natural environment, health and recreation. It may be helpful to make reference in the text to the role GI can have to play in enhancing and conserving the historic environment. It can be used to improve the condition and setting of heritage assets and to improve access to them.

Likewise the historic environment can help contribute to the quality, character and distinctiveness of green spaces by helping to create a sense of place and a tangible link with local history.

Opportunities can be taken to link new GI networks into already existing green spaces in town or existing historic spaces such as church yards to improve the setting of historic buildings or historic townscape.

Maintenance of GI networks and spaces should also be considered so that they continue to serve as high quality places which remain beneficial in the long term.

In Colchester, green spaces surrounding and the historic environment provide an important component of the landscape setting of the historic city. These features help to make Colchester the special and unique place that it is today. They serve to protect heritage assets and their settings, and some are designated as heritage assets in their own rights. They play a crucial role and form part of the character of this historic city. Maintaining and enhancing these features is critical to the future of this City.

Baseline Data

Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs) should be included in the data set for the assessment. Other datasets, e.g. the National Trust or access land layers, can help to improve understanding regarding accessibility, but it will not be a complete picture.

We suggest that it would be helpful to include Scheduled Monuments (SMs) as a dataset. Many SMs are 'green' features within the landscape, covering woodland, grassland, etc., and while (like RPGs) they have varying degrees of accessibility and variable conditions, they present opportunities for improvements to benefit access, health & well-being and biodiversity.

Likewise we suggest that you include Conservation Areas as a dataset. Green spaces, trees, water courses, etc., contribute so much to shaping and defining the key characteristics of Conservation Areas – directly related to the project's aims of place-making and maintaining local distinctiveness.

You may also want to consider interrogating Natural England's datasets on current/live agri-environment schemes, both to see where subsidised investment is





concentrated and to identify those areas/assets where there are 'gaps', allowing a more informed discussion of potential opportunities and where multiple organisations to focus resources.

You may also want to consult the Historic Environment Record and Local Lists which could provide useful baseline data. Neighbourhood Plans will also have identified locally important green spaces/open spaces and so we suggest consulting these too.

Opportunities for enhancement and landscape character assessment and historic landscape characterisation

We anticipate that some of the potential 'opportunities' identified during this process are likely to be at more of a landscape scale (e.g. large-scale woodland creation, re-wilding, etc.), raising the question of how a sound understanding of Landscape Character Assessment / Historic Landscape Character Assessment will inform this process.

The synergies between your work on green spaces and also landscape character assessment and historic landscape characterisation need to be made.

Future work affecting heritage assets and their settings

Would remind you that any proposals that might affect heritage assets will require necessary consents e.g. Listed Building Consent/Scheduled Monument Consent. WE would encourage early engagement with Historic England in relation to future proposals.

Conclusions

In preparation of the forthcoming evidence base for the Local Plan we encourage you to draw on the knowledge of local conservation officers, the county archaeologist and local heritage groups.

Finally, we should like to stress that this opinion is based on the information that you provided. To avoid any doubt, this does not affect our obligation to provide further advice and, potentially, object to specific proposals, which may subsequently arise where we consider that these would have an adverse effect upon the historic environment. We hope that the above comments of assistance.





Historic England

Yours sincerely

Debbie Mack
Historic Environment Planning Adviser
Debbie.Mack@HistoricEngland.org.uk



Historic England, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 8BU
Telephone 01223 58 2749 HistoricEngland.org.uk

Please note that Historic England operates an access to information policy.
Correspondence or information which you send us may therefore become publicly available.

