

**ADHS DECISION – 18**

**Title: OPDC Local Plan Review – Tree Strategy**

**Executive summary**

Approval is sought for expenditure of Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Biodiversity Net Gain Grant Funding (2025/26) for consultancy services to produce a Tree Strategy. This work will form an evidence base needed to inform the future review of the Local Plan. The strategy will build upon existing national and London Plan planning policies to secure a coordinated approach to the protection, enhancement and replacement of trees to improve green infrastructure provision across OPDC.

**Decision**

That the Head of Service approves:

- i. expenditure of up to £27,142 for consultancy services to produce the Tree Strategy as part of the preparation for the OPDC Local Plan Review.
- ii. future receipt of £27,142 from DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain Grant Funding.

**Head of Service**

I do not have any disclosable interest in the proposed Decision. It is consistent with OPDC's priorities and has my approval.

**Signature:**



**Date:** 24/10/25

**PART 1: NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

**1. Background and context**

- 1.1 OPDC, as the local planning authority, adopted its Local Plan in June 2022. This was underpinned by a suite of supporting studies that collectively provide the evidence base for the policies in the Local Plan.

- 1.2 Local planning authorities (including OPDC) are required to assess whether they need to update their Local Plans at least once every five years, taking into account changing circumstances (such as government directions, changing needs or changes in the market) affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. OPDC is undertaking early scoping work to prepare for its Local Plan Review to meet this requirement, while monitoring any changes to requirements set out in emerging reforms to the planning system including the reforms in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act.
- 1.3 Maintaining an up-to-date evidence base will help OPDC officers understand what areas this Local Plan review might focus on, whereby input and insight can be provided via the engagement of external consultancy services.

## **2. The proposal and how it will be delivered**

- 2.1 The Tree Strategy will provide a clear and coordinated approach to protecting, managing and expanding our tree canopy for the long-term benefit of the environment and the community. It will include a comprehensive baseline assessment of existing tree stock and species composition, providing an evidence base to inform decision-making. The Strategy will also set out recommendations and priorities for the management of urban trees, which will support and guide future policy development within the Local Plan Review.
- 2.2 The Strategy will be delivered through specialist consultancy services as OPDC officers do not have the required skills in-house. External consultancy services would be procured via a competitive process in accordance with OPDC's Contracts and Funding Code. This will make use of the shared service arrangement already in place between OPDC and Transport for London's procurement team.
- 2.3 The strategy will be funded by the DEFRA Biodiversity Net Gain Grant Funding (2025/26). The £27,142 amount was allocated to help local planning authorities implement Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in the planning system. The cost is expected to be incurred within the 2025/26 financial years and is based on expenditure of previous similar projects alongside inflation. It is expected the work will be under £25,000.

## **3. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 3.1 The objective is to have robust evidence base in place to:
  - Support the implementation of the existing adopted Local Plan.
  - Support the future Local Plan review.
  - Address national and London Plan requirements.
- 3.2 The outcome of the proposal is to understand and support existing and new tree planting within the OPDC area.

## **4. Strategic fit**

4.1 Undertaking the defined activities will deliver a range of National, Mayoral and OPDC corporate strategies and support a number of existing and future OPDC workstreams including:

- To implement the national biodiversity net gain requirement.
- Delivering the Mayor of London's 2018 London Environment Strategy ([updated 2024](#)) and London Plan policies G1 (Green Infrastructure), G5 Urban Greening), G6 (Biodiversity and access to nature), G7 (Trees and woodlands), SI 1 (Improving Air Quality), SI 12 (Flood risk management), SI 13 (Sustainable drainage) as well as climate resilience.
- Delivering OPDC's Corporate Strategy and Management Plan relating to delivering positive changes and local enhancements and nature-positive regeneration.
- OPDC Sustainability Charter relating to designing neighbourhoods that are climate-ready, healthy and integrated with green infrastructure.
- Delivering Local Plan policies EU2 (Urban Greening and Biodiversity), EU3 (Water), EU4 (Air Quality) as well as climate resilience.
- Public Realm and Green Infrastructure SPD and Industrial SPD.
- Inform any future OPDC Local Plan Review

## **5. Project governance and assurance**

5.1 External consultancy services would be procured via a competitive process. The contract will be managed by officer lead (Senior Planning Policy Officer) with oversight from the Director of Planning, Head of Planning Policy and Team Leader – Development Plans.

5.2 OPDC will seek a suitably qualified consultancy team with the necessary expertise and experience. Project management by the OPDC will manage risks associated with quality control.

## **6. Risk, Issues and Opportunities**

### Risk 1 – timeframes

6.1 Delays in delivering outputs will impact the spending requirement of the DEFRA Grant funding by end of financial year 2026. To prevent this, the consultants and client project lead will produce a clear and realistic project plan with milestones, timely delivery of outputs and appropriate resourcing. Project management by OPDC officers will manage risks associated with the delivery of the outputs.

### Risk 2 – quality

6.2 Poor quality outputs will inhibit the effectiveness of the outputs. To prevent this, the client project lead will seek a suitably qualified consultancy team with the necessary expertise, experience and resources to deliver high-quality outputs. Project management by OPDC officers will manage risks associated with the

quality of outputs.

Risk 3 – Monitoring deliverables and cost

- 6.3 The Tree Strategy will be delivered by consultants. Unclear definition of milestones and outputs would result in inefficient use of the consultant’s time and resources which would result in additional fees. To prevent this, clear timeframes and outputs will be defined at the inception meeting and reviewed at regular meetings with the consultant.

Risk description	Inherent score	Mitigations	Target score
Timeframes	Likelihood: [3] Impact: [4] Total: [7]	Project plan and project management	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [4] Total: [5]
Quality	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [6]	Robust procurement process and project management	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [4] Total: [5]
Consultancy management	Likelihood: [2] Impact: [4] Total: [6]	Project plan and project management	Likelihood: [1] Impact: [4] Total: [5]

**7. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Comments**

- 7.1 OPDC must have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation as well as to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.<sup>1</sup>
- 7.2 The consultancy services will be selected via a competitive process and following evaluation against set criteria, including their approach to equity, diversity and inclusion. The completed evidence base would inform any future planning policies, and if these are developed, they would be subject to separate assessment (Integrated Impact Assessment), approval and public consultation.

**8. Other considerations**

- 8.1 There are no other considerations that need to be considered in the taking of this decision.

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The protected characteristics and groups are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage/ civil partnership status. Fulfilling this duty involves having due regard to: the need to remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share a protected characteristic or one that is connected to that characteristic; taking steps to meet the different needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. Compliance with the Equality Act may involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic. The duty must be exercised with an open mind and at the time a Decision is taken in the exercise of the OPDC’s functions.

## 9. Conflicts of interest

9.1 No one involved in the preparation or clearance of this Form, or its substantive proposal, has any conflict of interest.

## 10. Financial comments

10.1 There is enough under Planning Policy budget to cover this cost. This is also a continuation of the same spend from 24/25. However, this will have nil impact as it will be funded by DEFRA.

## 11. Legal comments

11.1 No separate legal review is required as this decision is in line with OPDC's governance policies and procedures, including its Scheme of Delegation and Contracts and Funding Code.

## 12. Summary timeline

Activity	Date
Procurement of contract /Grant award	November 2026
Announcement	November 2026
Delivery start date	November 2026
Delivery end date	February 2026

## Appendices

- None

## Other supporting papers

- None

### **PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

Information in this Form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA). OPDC aims to publish the Form within three working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the Decision (for example, impacting a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date (when it will be published). Deferral periods are kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

### **Part 1 – Deferral**

Publication of this Part 1 is to be deferred: **Yes**

The deferral is until: **1<sup>st</sup> December 2025**

This is because: To allow for the completion of a competitive procurement exercise.

### **Part 2 – Confidential information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FOIA should be included in or attached to any separate Part 2 Form, together with the rationale for withholding the information at this time.

There is a separate and confidential Part 2 Form: **No**

### **DECLARATIONS**

**Drafting officer:** Sabrina Raja Safdar has drafted this Form in accordance with OPDC procedures, including for handling conflicts of interests, and confirm that:



**Advice:** The Governance, Finance and Legal teams have commented on the proposal.




### **CONFIRMATIONS**

**Section 106 funding:** N/A

**Review:** This Decision was circulated for **Senior Review** on 28/10/2025.

#### **Head of Finance**

Financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this Form.

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 29/10/2025