

Item

## HOBSON'S BROOK CORRIDOR 10 YEAR VISION



**To:**

Councillor Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces  
Community Services Scrutiny Committee 15/03/2018

**Report by:**

Joel Carre, Head of Environmental Services  
Tel: 01223 - 458201 Email: joel.carre@cambridge.gov.uk

**Wards affected:**

Market, Newnham, Queen Edith's, Trumpington

### Key Decision

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Hobson's Brook Corridor is an important green infrastructure corridor extending between the natural spring at Nine Wells on Cambridge's southern fringe and running northwards in to the city centre (**Plan 1**). It has multiple aspects that contribute to the cultural and historic heritage, as well as an environmental legacy that enhances Cambridge. These include being a rare chalk stream, an ecological corridor, the unique historical waterway of Hobson's Conduit (dating back to 1614), and an important flood risk management asset.
- 1.2 Hobson's Brook Corridor 10 Year Vision has been prepared, in conjunction with Hobson's Conduit Trust, using City Council technical officer inputs from landscape, biodiversity, planning and drainage. Additionally, a desktop archaeological study was commissioned separately from Suffolk Archaeology to enable key stakeholders to

understand the importance of Hobson's Brook from a historic perspective and to feed into the content of the document.

- 1.3 The 'Vision' describes the nature and character of the corridor, defines various pressures faced and outlines management and maintenance priorities over the next 10 years; based upon an assessment of historical records and more recent data gathered.
- 1.4 It is intended to guide activities which focus on water quality improvements, ecological enhancements, maintenance and restoration work along with community engagement activities within the corridor. Covering the period 2018 – 2028, it will be used to help attract funding towards potential projects; either by the Council, bodies such as Hobson's Conduit Trust and other local organisations. It will also be used as an evidence base to inform future Local Plan creation and decisions regarding planning applications affecting the corridor.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:
  - a) Endorse the Hobson's Brook Corridor 10 Year Vision as an evidence base to inform planning policy and decisions, and to influence management and maintenance priorities
  - b) Support the establishment of a delivery action plan setting out future investment priorities in order to assist obtaining funded as needed.

## **3. Background**

### **Purpose of the 10 Year Vision**

- 3.1 There are increasing pressures on the Hobson's Brook corridor arising from growth, climate change and change of adjacent land use. Over recent years funding has only been sufficient to enable largely ad-hoc reactive maintenance and minor repairs to structures, banks and other assets. Given the historic nature of Hobson's Brook, many assets associated with it are now aging and significant investment is required

above and beyond normal maintenance activities in order to preserve its heritage and environmental value and physical integrity into the future.

- 3.2 Cambridge City Council, as the maintenance delivery body for Hobson's Brook, as well as a major landowner in the corridor, has an interest in ensuring there is support for activities associated with maintaining and improving this corridor. The Council, previously as the Corporation of Cambridge, is subject to a 999 year lease to safeguard flows within the brook. Given the age of the watercourse, responsibilities and obligations for its maintenance are complex and have been the subject of varying legal advice over several hundred years. The establishment of this Vision, however, does not alter the Council's roles and responsibilities where it is believed to have riparian ownership.
- 3.3 The production and adoption of the 'Vision' is identified and included as an objective within the Council's Streets and Open Spaces Operational Plan for the period 2017 - 2018.
- 3.4 The document has been produced in conjunction with Hobson's Conduit Trust, a registered charitable trust with the primary purpose of ensuring that the flow of fresh water along Hobson's Brook from its source into the centre of Cambridge is unimpeded, and that it is maintained in perpetuity.
- 3.5 Along with a list of potential individual and linked projects, the main aspects covered by the 'Vision' are as follows:
  - Vegetation management
  - Silt management
  - Historic structure management
  - Flood risk management
  - Ecological and water quality potential

### **Consultation**

- 3.6 The draft 'Vision' has been subject to a stakeholder engagement process in June 2017 whereby key stakeholders, including main landowners and interest groups, were asked to provide feedback and

attend a collective workshop. The suggested scope, objectives and content were welcomed and a number of improvements have been made based upon the helpful input received.

- 3.7 A broader public consultation exercise lasting seven weeks commenced in November 2017, with key stakeholders and interest groups further invited to comment (as listed in **Appendix A**). The council established a webpage containing information about the corridor and Vision and including a link to an online survey inviting comment. Furthermore, a global email promoting and signposting the consultation was issued by the local charity, Cambridge Past, Present & Future.
- 3.8 The results of the public consultation can be seen in **Appendix A**. Encouragingly, all respondents were generally supportive of the document with 65% agreeing strongly and the remaining 35% tending to support it with only minor improvements listed. Given this level of support it is recommended that (subject to minor modifications as suggested in **Appendix B**) the 'Vision' is endorsed by Community Services Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Councillor for Streets and Open Spaces.
- 3.9 The main consultation findings relate to new and proposed development pressures along the corridor and the impact this could have on its preservation. Whilst the Vision provides a suitable evidence base that might help mitigate such pressures, it is not intended to replicate other documentation or deal directly with development allocations forming part of the Draft Local Plan.

### **Future investment needs**

- 3.10 The Vision identifies various interventions likely to be needed over the next 10 or so years in order to ensure this historic watercourse continues to deliver fresh water to the centre of Cambridge, and is able to be enjoyed by future generations. It includes an outline of the improvements likely to be needed over the period; with a shared approach to funding anticipated prioritised towards the most pressing needs.
- 3.11 If the 'Vision' is endorsed, a suitable steering group will be established with key partners to appraise and prioritise potential projects and activities coming forward, with a view to agreeing a Hobson's Brook Vision Delivery Plan for 2018 to 2028.
- 3.12 The Council will need to play its part in helping fund this plan and may well need to take on a lead commissioning role on behalf of the various partner organisations involved. Once the Vision is established and investment needs become clearer, individual projects will be subject to the Council's usual development and scrutiny requirements including Capital Programme Board (where appropriate) and approval by Councillors.

## **4. Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

There are no additional financial implications relating to the endorsement of the 'Vision' at this point. Any proposed actions arising from it will be included in a Hobson's Brook Delivery Plan, which will be considered for adoption and funding in the normal manner. The Vision and resulting Delivery Plan will be used to support future funding bids, either to the Council's capital plan and/ or to external funding sources. Council staff time associated with leading the development and implementation of the Vision and associated Delivery Plan will be met either from within existing Council staff resource; or, where additional capacity is needed, from future internal and/ or external revenue funding bids.

**(b) Staffing Implications**

There are no additional staffing implications anticipated relating to the endorsement of the 'Vision'.

**(c) Equality and Poverty Implications**

None so far identified. An Equality Impact Assessment has not thus far been undertaken as the items listed are visionary. When potential projects come forward for detailed scoping an assessment will be made in accordance with equalities requirements at this stage.

**(d) Environmental Implications**

+Low: The proposal has a low positive climate change impact. The Vision will help to protect and enhance the Hobson's Brook corridor, aiding species ability to adapt and disperse in response to a changing climate. The increased awareness of the area's importance may potentially lead to funding of projects which improve management of flood risk and drought better within the corridor.

**(e) Procurement Implications**

There are no procurement implications at the current point.

**(f) Community Safety Implications**

There are no negative community safety implications anticipated at the current point.

**5. Consultation and communication considerations**

- 5.1 The 'Vision' has been subject to a stakeholder engagement process including a workshop held with the main landowners and interest groups.
- 5.2 A broad public consultation process took place between 22<sup>nd</sup> November and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

- 5.3 Any potential projects which come forward, following the production and adoption of the Vision Delivery Plan, will be subject to normal consultation processes.

## **6. Background papers**

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

- (a) Hobson's Brook Corridor 10 Year Vision – Accessed online:  
<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft-hobsons-brook-corridor-10-year-vision.pdf>
- (b) Streets & Open Spaces Operational Plan 2017-2018

## **7. Appendices**

- (a) Hobson's Brook Corridor 10 Year Vision Consultation Report
- (b) Proposed Modifications Table
- (c) Plan 1 - Map showing Extent of Hobson's Brook Corridor

## **8. Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Rachel Veysey, Sustainable Drainage Engineer, tel: 01223 - 458529, email: [rachel.veysey@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.veysey@cambridge.gov.uk).