

Decision by Portfolio Holder



Report reference: HSS-004-2021/22

Date of report: 07 October 2021

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Property & Housing Services - Councillor H Whitbread

Author: Fran Edmonds/Rachel Smith (Ext 2710) Democratic Services: J Leither

Subject: Jessel Green tree planting following successful grant bid

Decision:

- (1) To approve the proposed tree planting project at Jessel Green following a successful bid for £64,160 grant funding from the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund.**
- (2) To approve future Housing Revenue Account budget provision for tree maintenance from 2025/26, the costs are expected to be approximately £5,000 per annum.**

ADVISORY NOTICE: <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve the above decision: Comments/further action required: None	
Signed: Councillor H Whitbread	Date: 21 October 2021
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> None	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee:</i> N/A
Office use only: Call-in period begins: 21 October 2021	Expiry of Call-in period: 28 October 2021

**After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to
Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY**

Reason for decision:

EFDC have secured grant funding through the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund for planting approximately 2325 trees on Jessel Green. The proposed planting intends to bring multiple benefits to enhance the community space and support the Council's

pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030. The grant covers capital costs of the tree planting as well as 3 further years of tree maintenance, after these 3 years a budget provision of approximately £5,000 will be required for ongoing maintenance of the site.

Options considered and rejected:

1. No trees to be planted;
2. Trees planted on a different site; and
3. The same number of trees spread across different sites.

These options have been considered and discounted.

Background Report:

1. EFDC have secured grant funding through the Forestry Commission's Local Authority Treescapes Fund for a planting proposal at Jessel Green. The proposed planting intends to bring multiple benefits for both the community and for the Climate Change agenda.
2. For the community there is an opportunity to make links with organisations in Debden through consultation on the final planting design. Trees planted will enhance the visual amenity of the area and trees have also been found to improve the mental health and wellbeing of residents. It can also encourage increased activity in residents to go out for a local walk. Trees have also been shown to improve air quality particularly in urban areas, which will help keep residents healthy.
3. For the climate agenda, the enhanced greenspace in the area is in line with the Council's Green Infrastructure strategy. The number of trees proposed to be planted will bring a carbon reduction benefit, increased capture of carbon will play a role in reaching the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. Biodiversity will be enhanced with the majority of planting being new native woodland species well suited to the area, this will boost biodiversity and encourage wildlife.
4. A site visit was undertaken at Jessel Green to assess planting options. The proposed plan is detailed in paragraphs 5 and 6 below but this could be subject to change based on consultation with residents and Loughton Town Council.
5. Approximately 2250 whips (90cm young trees) of native mixed hedgerow species to add to existing hedging adjacent to Colebrook Lane. The larger scale planting intends to bring carbon storage and biodiversity benefits without obstructing existing views. The proposed area for this planting is two areas measuring 10m x 100m on either side of the playground. These areas would be protected with fencing at first to allow them to establish undisturbed.
6. More established trees would then be planted elsewhere with 10 feature trees on the hilltop, planted as standards (250cm+ sized trees) to visually enhance the space whilst keeping the view to the horizon. Areas of native woodland planted along sections adjacent to Brady Avenue and Jessel Drive, also planted as standards (250cm+ sized trees) to be at least 3m spaced to keep open feel to the planting and allow for maintenance requirements. Further decorative trees, planted as standards (250cm+ sized trees), adjacent to Goldingham Avenue.

7. Considerations made on the site visit include keeping the flat area near to The Cottage Loaf public house free of planting to allow for community activities and events. Consideration of resident views onto and across the green to be kept open. The planting will be spaced at least 3m apart to keep the open feel of the area, allow residents to feel safe and to aid maintenance.
8. An online consultation survey is planned for this autumn with residents and Loughton Town Council to finalise ideas for planting design. Engagement will include promoting the consultation to the area's schools, community and faith groups and the Save Jessel Green group. This will be alongside promotional campaigns on social media. We will also be asking Loughton Town Council for their views on the proposal.
9. Through the consultation we will look to establish a volunteer base of residents who can assist with the planting and maintenance of the young trees.
10. The grant to be received is for £64,160 this covers planting, tree supply, tree protection, mulching, irrigation bags for the standard trees, temporary fencing protection around the whips, light groundworks and 3 years of maintenance. The initial cost prediction is based on estimates received from a known contractor and discussions with EFDC tree officers.
11. Following the first 3 years of maintenance, minimal ongoing maintenance will be required as by this point the trees should be well established. It is estimated that from 2025/26 a maximum of £5,000 would be required for maintenance, this would come from the Housing Revenue Account. The costs are estimated to be £480 per year for the whip planted area plus £4,500 for the standards. The cost for the standards includes 5 site visits where the full 5 visits are unlikely to be necessary.

Resource Implications:

Climate Change Officer to lead the project with support from Housing, Countrycare, Tree Team, Communities, Grounds Maintenance and Planning teams.

Contractor to carry out ground preparation, planting and maintenance of the trees.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

Trees capture and store carbon emissions through photosynthesis and within a woodland ecosystem carbon is stored within the living wood, deadwood, surrounding soils and associated vegetation. Increased capture of carbon will play a role in reaching the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 alongside carbon reduction activities. By planting new native woodland well suited to the area, this will boost biodiversity and help wildlife.

Trees have also been shown to improve air quality particularly in urban areas by removing gaseous air pollution through uptake on the plant surface and interception of airborne particles. Reduced flooding can be another benefit where trees directly intercept rainfall, promote higher soil infiltration rates and use a greater amount of water.

A greener area with trees planted has also been found to improve the mental health and wellbeing of residents.

Consultation Undertaken:

An online consultation survey is planned for this autumn with residents and Loughton Town Council to finalise ideas for planting design. Engagement will include promoting the consultation to local schools, community and faith groups and the Save Jessel Green group. Along with promotional campaigns on social media. We will also be asking Loughton Town Council for their views on the proposal.

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

Should the trees not be planted prior to March 2022 there is risk that full funding will not be received, however due to delays in the bid outcome announcement it is possible an extension could be granted if required.

Key Decision Reference (Y): N

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an Appendix to the report.