

11. GREEN ARC VISION AND OBJECTIVES

BACKGROUND

- 11.1. The Steering Group drafted a vision for the Green Arc when the concept was at an embryonic stage. The draft vision was distilled into three key elements:
- To create an extensive and attractive recreational landscape for North and East London, Essex and Hertfordshire, characterised by a rich mix of woodlands, grassland and scrub, woodland pasture, riverine wetlands, and parkland, in which animals can graze freely and extensively.
 - To encourage the development of large and well-connected areas of open space and attractions that provide areas of tranquillity with a freedom for people to roam and explore and which meet the needs of local residents whilst drawing people from Greater London and surrounding towns.
 - To improve perception of the Green Belt as a pro-active place, in which positive planning and management of the land and environment is pursued in order to realise the Vision.

REFINING THE VISION

- 11.2. During the course of this Study, the Green Arc Vision evolved in response to Steering Group members' comments and the views of consultees. Most people agreed that, as initially defined, the Vision addressed the main issues of concern and, as such, would attract support in policy terms. In particular, there is support for woodland creation in appropriate locations, which is consistent with national and regional forestry and woodland strategies³² and from a public health point of view.
- 11.3. Some concern was expressed about the emphasis on grazing animals which, although a metaphor for large, well-connected areas of open space and a management tool for self-sustaining landscapes, might be misinterpreted.
- 11.4. There was also a strong view that the Vision should give expression to the positive role of the Green Arc in responding to development pressures, particularly those associated with the Sustainable Communities Plan. This would help to ensure that the Green Arc is related closely to the East of England, where a considerable amount of growth is set to occur, as well as London.
- 11.5. To ensure wide support for the Green Arc, it was also considered important to demonstrate the benefits that it will bring to people of all ethnic groups – particularly because of the ethnic diversity of north and east London. This underlines the importance of further consultation, to ensure that the needs and aspirations of different ethnic groups are recognised.

³² Woodland for Life: The Regional Woodland Strategy for the East of England, November 2003 (EERA and Forestry Commission)

- 11.6. Above all, it was also agreed that the vision should be big, bold and encapsulate the essence of the Steering Group’s ambitions in simple terms.

AGREED VISION FOR THE GREEN ARC

- 11.7. The agreed vision for the Green Arc is:

Bringing the BIG OUTDOORS closer to people – through the creation and protection of an extensive, attractive and valued recreational landscape of well-connected and accessible countryside around London, for people and wildlife.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 11.8. It was agreed that the Vision should be supplemented by strategic objectives that address the full range of opportunities and aspirations for the Green Belt. The following range of strategic objectives were considered appropriate:
- To promote positive uses for the Green Belt that realise the potential to improve the quality and accessibility of the land while meeting its statutory purposes
 - To improve the contribution of the urban fringe countryside to the quality of life of Londoners, local residents, visitors and people beyond the outer boundary
 - To conserve and enhance the biodiversity value
 - To improve the linkages between existing and potential accessible open land for people and wildlife
 - To create attractive destinations for daytrips and holidays, for visitors, tourists and the local population
 - To support initiatives that contribute to sustainable development, including renewable energy, floodwater retention and water gathering areas
 - To provide burial space ‘green’ or ‘woodland’ burials in natural environments