

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BOARD

4 April 2005

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

6 April 2005

Report of: Strategic Director for the Environment (Oxford City Council)
and Assistant Chief Executive (Oxfordshire County Council)

Title: AREA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE WEST END

Ward: ALL

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Key Decision: Yes

Lead Members: Councillor Hollingsworth (City Council) and
Councillor Mitchell (County Council)

Scrutiny responsibility: Environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Boards agree to:

1. Welcome the Area Development Framework (ADF) as a significant step towards the renaissance of Oxford's West End, based as it is on joint working between SEEDA and the City and County Councils, and building on the comments received from last autumn's consultation exercise.
2. Endorse the Design Concept and the Development Principles in the ADF as material planning considerations, to enable the work in the ADF to be taken forward into the Local Development Framework and to form the basis for an Area Action Plan.
3. Confirm the next steps as described in paragraph 8 of this report.

1. Summary

The Area Development Framework (ADF), recently received from David Lock Associates (DLA) provides an exciting vision for the renaissance of Oxford's West End. Further work is required to develop the vision and begin the process of implementation, but the ADF will enable the City Council to commence work on the preparation of an Area Action Plan for the West End, and at the same time to use the City and County Council's West End land-holdings to help further shape and deliver the vision outlined by DLA.

The number of development opportunities identified in the Second Deposit Oxford Local Plan and the ADF together with the number of pre-application enquiries being received, clearly indicate that there is a high level of interest in the West End. Work is underway on two major projects at Oxford Castle and a mixed development alongside Castle Mill Stream.

The ADF will enable the two Councils to be proactive in dealing with future applications: to lead rather than to follow.

2. Link to Councils' strategic objectives

Renaissance of Oxford's West End is identified as a priority strategic objective of the County Council, will lead to substantial progress against several elements of the City Council's Vision Statement, and will assist in meeting objectives of both City and County Councils' Community Strategies. The West End provides an opportunity to facilitate countywide transport improvements currently under consideration in the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP2).

3. Background and context

The West End Partnership (Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils and SEEDA) commissioned David Lock Associates (DLA) to produce an Area Development Framework (ADF) for Oxford's West End in March 2004. At the same time Ove, Arup and Partners (Arup) was commissioned to advise on the feasibility of improving railway station arrangements for Oxford including a possible relocation of the station. Following extensive research and consultation the ADF has now been received and endorsement is being sought from the partner organisations. A copy of the ADF has been given to each Member and is available too for public inspection on www.oxfordwestend.co.uk including all the supporting papers.

4. Area Development Framework

The ADF combines three elements:

- A design concept, derived from the existing assets of the West End and aimed at introducing a coherent structure and identity for the area.
- A set of development principles to which any development should conform, along with an indicative vision of one outcome based on those principles. The indicative vision tests the concept and principles, and
- A set of supporting papers that provide additional guidance on how the ADF has been prepared and can be delivered.

It is hoped that all Members have had an opportunity to read the full ADF in which there is important visual information to illustrate the text. However, the central components can be summarised as follows:

Design concept The West End is identified as a city quarter which itself can be subdivided into four quarters each with a distinctive character. Each quarter should be encouraged to develop around a public space and establish its connection to the adjoining Castle Mill Stream. Oxford Castle lies at the heart of the four quarters and thus provides a link to the whole area.

Development principles A set of principles underlies the approach in the ADF. They are recommended as a set of tests.

- The West End should be accessible and permeable, to ensure easy access to and through the area, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists
- The area should be easy for people to find their way around
- Streets should be continuous and enclosed with clear distinction between the public and private realm, to create comfortable and well defined streets
- The West End should have high quality routes supported by carefully considered design of the public realm
- Street elevations should be well articulated with all buildings having active street frontages
- There should be a prevalence of mixed uses throughout the area
- Car parking provision should be constrained.
- A new bus facility should be provided in Norfolk Street/Castle Street adjacent to a redeveloped Westgate Centre
- Landmark buildings should be developed, demonstrating architectural excellence in keeping with the City's world profile.
- The sub-quarters should have a character borne out of their location, existing features and future role within the area. Key public spaces (Oxpens Square, Abbey Place, Frideswide Square, Bonn Square and Castle Mill Stream) should be developed.
- The scale of development opportunity in the West End provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate sustainability, be it in the use of brown field land, a strong emphasis on the use of public transport and constrained use of cars, residential developments close to the city centre and high energy efficiency by design.

Illustrative Vision An illustrative vision has been drawn up to indicate one way that the design concept could be interpreted. Based on the development principles, Turner Morrum Associates (TMA) has undertaken a block-by-block assessment of the value of the illustrative development along with the likely value of developer contributions. TMA clearly demonstrate that the development is viable but that any development fund generated will be modest in scale. The development gain will be insufficient, for example, to make a meaningful contribution to the station move/redevelopment.

Development issues In preparing the ADF the consultant team considered a range of significant issues for the West End. These have played a large part in shaping the ADF and defining the strategy.

The underlying development Issues are:

- Oxford Station Relocation
- Oxpens Road
- Movement Network
- Development Mix
- West End Development Fund
- Oxford and Cherwell College
- Building Height
- Sustainable Development
- Flood Risk and the Environment Agency
- Car Parking
- High Profile Projects

Work is well under way on some of these projects but in no case is it yet complete. As an example work is nearing completion on options to relocate the railway station as identified in the Arup report. Currently the cost and benefit of moving the station suggest that capacity improvements at the current site is the best option. However, the Strategic Rail Authority has commissioned a study of the implications for the Botley Road before making their decision known in June.

In summary, the ADF is an exciting piece of work that has recommended a vital future for the West End, one that while visionary is grounded in reality and suggests a way forward that can be implemented. Therefore it is suggested that DLA and the other consultants should be warmly congratulated for their work, including the efforts that they made to engage with the public and other important stakeholders.

5. Financial implications

Overall the West End renaissance will be a substantial and costly project where most of the costs will be borne by the private sector, but one where costs are contained or self-financing as far as the two Councils are concerned. For example ring-fenced income from developers should be available to fund necessary public realm and infrastructure works. It is suggested that a development fund be established to enable contributions from different developers to come together to fund major infrastructure works. The viability of the project will depend on a robust approach being taken to developer's contributions; a proactive approach through a priority list of necessary works, some outside of the West End, is currently being drafted.

A partnership budget already exists to cover elements of the necessary project management work as they unfold in 2005/06.

6. Legal considerations

As the project develops and both Councils become actively involved in various capacities, consideration will need to be given at each relevant stage to ensure that each Council has the appropriate powers to act. Similarly as

the project develops consideration will need to be given to the possibility of creating an appropriate separate legal vehicle to take the project forward.

7. Staffing Implications

The Steering Group has considered immediate staffing implications. Further work has been requested on the details, but it is considered that about two posts needed to take forward the new tasks and responsibilities can be funded from the existing West End budget for 2005/06. There will also be pressures on Planning and Transport for both Councils but such pressures should be dealt with through the normal business planning processes as they arise.

8. Next steps

The West End Steering Group at its last meeting considered a Project list. The Steering Group want clear management of the overall programme to provide momentum and coherence to the eight strands shown below.

1. The Steering Group has agreed that it should continue to meet and has requested a paper to its next meeting on future arrangements.
2. The ADF principles and concepts are to be taken forward in the Local Development Framework through the production of an Area Action Plan, further consideration to be given to the establishment of development fund mechanisms.
3. Consideration is to be given to setting up a Forum of developers and partners.
4. There is a particular body of work associated with the Oxpens area involving a dialogue with potential landowning partners and leading towards the commissioning of a master planning exercise.
5. There is ongoing work associated with transportation in the West End and its integration with the development of LTP2.
6. There is a need for a continuing liaison with the Westgate Centre developers.
7. The Civic office plans require further progress.
8. There is a discrete project associated with cultural issues arising from the ADF.

<p>THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY: Portfolio Holders: (Councillors Hollingsworth and Mitchell) Strategic Director: (Sharon Cosgrove) Assistant Chief Executive: (Chris Impey) Legal and Democratic Services: (Lindsay Cane) Financial Management: (Andy Collett)</p>

Background papers: Oxford West End Project, John Walker and Associates (2004)

Oxford's West End, an area development framework. David Lock Associates, (2005)

Feasibility study of Oxford Station Relocation. Arup. (2005)