

Report of: Planning Services Business Manager

Title: Response to the Oxfordshire County Council consultation on its proposed Modifications to the Policies in the Deposit draft Structure Plan.

Ward: All

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Key Decision: No

Lead Member: Councillor Ed Turner

Scrutiny responsibility: Environment

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board agrees to:

1. Raise no objections to the Structure Plan Modifications
2. Continue to press the case for an Urban Extension to the City after 2016 at the appropriate opportunities, especially with the South East England Regional Assembly.

Summary.

1. Following the receipt of the Examination in Public Panel report on its Structure Plan, the County Council is consulting on proposed Modifications. While these Modifications do not all accord with the earlier views of the City Council, since they are all in line with the Panel's recommendations it is suggested that no objections are raised.
2. The argument that an urban extension to the City is the most sustainable way to meet the City's requirements in the longer term especially for affordable housing are best made now in the context of the South East Plan.

Fit with the Council's Vision and strategic aims.

3. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan in an important document with respect to many of the City Council's priorities but especially the aim to increase the quantity and quality of affordable housing in all sectors.

Background and context.

4. The City Council raised four main concerns when the County Council consulted on its Deposit Draft of the Structure Plan in the Autumn 2003.
 - 1) Proposed urban extension to Oxford on land south of Grenoble Road, only allocated for 1,000 dwellings. (5,500 houses were allocated to be provided within the City's boundaries between 2001 and 2016)
 - 2) Draft policy E1 on employment in Oxford;
 - 3) Post 2016 indicators; and
 - 4) Affordable housing.
5. The County Council then consulted on some pre-EiP changes in the spring last year. This time the City Council raised the following objections.
 - 1) The deletion of the Urban Extension on land South of Grenoble Road, and
 - 2) The assumption that all the 1,000 additional houses for Oxford can be accommodated on brownfield land. (In effect the Urban Extension allocation was added to the City's own housing requirement. This would increase the requirement for the City to make provision not just for 5,500 dwellings but now 6,500.)
6. Officers presented the City Council's arguments to the EiP panel in October 2004.
7. Following the receipt of the Panel's report earlier this year, the County Council has published its proposed Modifications to the Structure Plan and invited comments by 17th June 2005.

Advantages and disadvantages of the options considered

8. The County Council has agreed with the all Panel's recommendations on the issues raised above. As a result:
 - 1) The allocation of an Urban Extension on land South of Grenoble Road remains deleted.
 - 2) The requirement is for the City to make provision for 5,500 additional dwellings between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2016.

- 3) Policy E1, to be renamed E2, is rewritten in a modified form to recognise that Oxford does need to seek to ensure a supply of employment accommodation appropriate to the needs of its diverse economy.
 - 4) The paragraphs setting out the County Council's views on planning policies for Oxfordshire Post 2016 are to be deleted.
 - 5) The affordable housing target of 50% is removed from Policy H4 and set within the explanatory text.
9. It would be possible to object again to the deletion of the Urban Extension but since this issue was very fully aired at the EiP and the urban extension has not been supported by the Panel for inclusion in this Structure Plan, any objection now from the City Council would be highly unlikely to influence the County Council to change its mind.
10. Indeed, it might be counter productive to object inappropriately at this stage, because the Panel in its report is in fact very receptive to the principle of the urban extension and persuaded by many of the arguments put forward by the City and its supporters. The Panel report states:
- “In the light of our conclusions elsewhere in the Report, we consider that the DSP strategy up to 2016 just, but only just, meets the development requirements of RPG 9 and the needs of the Oxfordshire economy. (para 2.27)”
- “One consequence of this is that the overall requirements could be met without resorting to the proposal for an urban extension into the Oxford Green Belt. However, we endorse that conclusion only in the context of the presently identified requirements up to 2016. In future there will no doubt be continuing strong demand related to Oxford and limitations on the scope for finding yet more capacity within the City or for steering more development to the country towns. We consider it inevitable, therefore, that future plans will need to address new spatial options within central Oxfordshire, including those which involve making changes to the Green Belt. (para1.7)”
11. Therefore the Panel has provided the City Council with some very strong and supportive statements to help with the arguments now being made to SEERA (South East England Regional Assembly) concerning the contents of the South East Plan and the chapter on Central Oxfordshire.
12. It is suggested therefore that the City Council should continue to press its case that an urban extension to the City as the most sustainable way to meet the City's requirements in the longer term especially for affordable housing. However this argument will best be made now in the context of the South East Plan. All appropriate opportunities will be taken both directly to the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and in other quarters.

13. On the question of the housing numbers allocated to the City, recent monitoring and revisions to estimates being prepared for the City Council's own Modifications to its Local Plan indicate that it should be possible to accommodate the extra 1,000 dwellings in the City over this plan period to 2016. So there is no longer a need to be concerned that it is inappropriate to try and accommodate 6,500 houses on brownfield sites within the City between 2001 and 2016.
14. The City Council's arguments over employment, policy E1 (to be renumbered E2), and the Post 2016 paragraphs have been supported by the Panel in its recommendations and that the Structure Plan is to be modified accordingly. This is good to see.
15. On the particular wording of the affordable housing policy, the Panel has carefully explained the reasons behind its recommendation and it is suggested there in no further case to be made.

Financial implications

16. None in responding to the consultation document

Legal implications

17. None in responding to the consultation document

Staffing Implications

18. None in responding to the consultation document

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ed Turner, Strategic Planning, Housing and Economic development
Strategic Director: Sharon Cosgrove
Legal and Democratic Services: Lindsay Cane
Financial Management: Claire Reid

Background papers: No UNPUBLISHED papers relied upon in preparation of the report

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