

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Date of meeting- 7th November 2005

Report of: Planning Policy Manager

Title: Annual Monitoring Report

Ward: All

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Key Decision: No

Lead Members: Councillor Ed Turner

Scrutiny responsibility: Environment

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Board is asked to:

- 1. approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State;**
- 2. decide whether it wishes to approve the recommendation of the Environment Scrutiny Committee that the Board, via the Oxford Strategic Partnership, begin discussions with the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University on the expansion of the Universities and knock-on effects that this is having on communities in Oxford;**
- 3. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to alter the text to make any necessary editorial corrections prior to publication.**

Summary

- 1. The purpose of this report is for Executive Board to consider the Annual Monitoring Report before it is submitted to the Secretary of State. This is the City Council's first monitoring report to assess the effectiveness of its planning policies. It covers the period 1st April 2004 – 31st March 2005 and is by and large a factual document.**

2. The draft report has been considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee and the detailed comments of the Committee are appended. The Executive Board is asked to approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State, to consider the recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee and to authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any editorial corrections that are necessary prior to submission.

Council's Vision and Strategic Aims

3. It is a statutory requirement for all local planning authorities to produce an Annual Monitoring Report. The production of the Annual Monitoring Report will also help to monitor the strategic aims in the City Council's vision on the provision of affordable housing, improvements to the local environment, improve employment opportunities, improve transport & mobility and provide leisure facilities.

Background

4. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 35) requires every local planning authority to submit an annual monitoring report to the Secretary of State containing information on:
 - the implementation of the Local Development Scheme (LDS); and
 - the extent to which policies set out in Local Development Documents are being achieved.
5. All local planning authorities are required to submit reports to the Secretary of State and publish the report on their websites by no later than the end of December following each monitoring period.
6. It is expected that the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 will be adopted by the time this Annual Monitoring Report is submitted to the Secretary of State. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the policies in the Local Plan will be 'saved' until they are progressively replaced by policies in Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The timeframe for production of DPDs is set out in the Local Development Scheme. Hence the report assesses the key Local Plan policies.

Why Monitor?

7. Monitoring is essential to establish what is happening now, what may happen in the future and then compare these trends against existing policies and targets to determine what needs to be done. It provides a crucial feedback loop and information on the performance of policy and its surrounding environment. Under the new planning system, with its focus on delivery of sustainable development and sustainable communities, monitoring takes on an added importance in providing a check on whether those aims are being achieved. Monitoring will also enable the City Council to identify the need to review 'saved' Local Plan policies and future DPDs, and respond more quickly to changing

priorities and circumstances. Two of the key factors DPDs will be assessed against at independent examination are whether the policies are founded on a robust and credible evidence base and whether there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.

Report content

8. The report covers the following key areas:

Local Development Scheme monitoring: this reviews actual plan progress of the LDS compared with the targets and milestones for Local Development Document (LDD) preparation.

Monitoring policies: in accordance with Government guidance, the City Council has adopted an objectives-policies-targets-indicators approach to ensure relevant and effective monitoring. The indicators used include core output indicators, which have been set nationally for all local authorities in order to provide data in a consistent format. Local output indicators and contextual indicators have also been used to highlight key characteristics of Oxford and to show the baseline position.

9. Where appropriate, the report shows how policy monitoring links to national targets such as Public Service Agreement targets and its integration with other City Council initiatives such as the Community Strategy. The existing targets in the Local Plan vary in their precision but more detailed targets will be integrated into DPDs.
10. The data in the report has been obtained from information submitted with planning applications and analysed through the Uniform computer system except where other sources are listed. It is the intention to provide information in the report in a consistent format year on year to enable comparisons to be made. However the detailed content may vary to reflect particular local issues that may arise or changes to national core output indicators.

Main Issues

11. The most significant factor influencing planning policy during the period covered by this first monitoring report was the Oxford Local Plan Inquiry. The Inquiry was held between March and August 2004 and the Inspector's report was received in February 2005. Therefore only by the end of the monitoring period, could significant weight be attached to its policies. With the adoption of the Local Plan, we look forward to the successful implementation of the policies developed and the realisation of their influence on future development control decisions. The effectiveness of this implementation will be highlighted in future reports.
12. The City Council also produced its first Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out its project plan for policy development over the next 3 years. The target dates for the production of the Local Plan was the only document included in the LDS during the monitoring period and the

target dates were achieved. It is also on target for achieving the milestones set beyond the monitoring period for developing new Local Development Documents.

13. One of the major planning issues in Oxford is how to provide more housing to meet the huge demand, and in particular the need for affordable housing. Our analysis of permissions and predicted future provision means Oxford is likely to exceed the Local Plan and Structure Plan target to 2016. It is also pleasing to note that the net number of affordable housing completions (186) achieved in the monitoring period was above the draft Housing Strategy annual target of 150 dwellings. However with the Housing Requirements Study identifying an annual need of 1700-1800 affordable dwellings per year, the amount of affordable housing achieved through negotiated planning obligations alone will not satisfy the level of need. The increase in the number of residential permissions for small scale developments (less than 10 units) and its potential impact on the provision of affordable housing will be carefully analysed in future monitoring reports.
14. With student numbers at the two universities increasing at a far greater rate than predicted in the Local Plan, any further increase in both student numbers and student accommodation will need to be carefully monitored so that appropriate remedial action can be taken should student numbers increase more rapidly than student accommodation. As the increase in student numbers is predominantly due to more efficient use of existing buildings and not as a result of increased academic floorspace, the growth in numbers has not been within the control of the City Council.
15. The monitoring period has also seen a growth of floorspace in the research and development sector and manufacturing/industrial uses. All this development has been on previously developed land which makes better and more efficient use of existing resources.
16. There has been little retail and office development completed during the monitoring period. There has been a significant increase in the indoor leisure sector with the completion of the Ozone Leisure Centre at Grenoble Road.
17. In terms of facilities for tourists, whilst the overall supply of short stay accommodation has increased in the monitoring period with additional hotel provision, two large guest houses have been lost. It is hoped that any future loss of guest house accommodation will be curbed now more weight can be given to the Local Plan policies.
18. On car parking standards, 84% of completed non-residential developments complied with car parking standards. It is expected that compliance with disabled and cycle parking standards will improve in future years with the implementation of revised standards.

Financial, legal and staffing implications

19. As explained above, it is a statutory requirement to produce an Annual Monitoring Report under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Statutory regulations also set out the broad content of the Report.
20. The production by the required deadline of an Annual Monitoring Report will be taken into account in assessing Planning Delivery Grant for 2006/07.
21. In terms of staffing, the production of this report and future reports will be met from the current staff resources of the Planning Policy team. It has been compiled in liaison with key stakeholders such as Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency. Any financial costs in its production will also be met from within existing budgets.

Conclusion

22. As this is the first monitoring report on planning policies, it should be viewed in the context of providing an important evidence base from which to assess future reports. Although the report draws attention to various key issues, care should be taken not to draw detailed conclusions from the indicators at this stage. It is hoped to develop a more detailed assessment of future trends as the evidence base develops.
23. The monitoring report assesses planning permissions and completed developments for a period where the Local Plan was yet to be adopted and the main document completed within the monitoring period was the Local Development Scheme. It is hoped that this report and future reports will help to improve the understanding of the Local Development Framework for everyone with an interest in the planning process.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:
Portfolio Holders: (portfolio responsibility Councillor Ed Turner)
Planning Services Business Manager: (Michael Crofton-Briggs)
Legal and Democratic Services: (Jeremy Thomas)
Financial Management: (Emma Burson/Mike Baish)

There are no background papers.

Appendix: Comments of the Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Annual Monitoring Report has been circulated separately to Executive Board members. A copy has also been placed in the Members' Room. Copies are available from the Committee Secretary on request and spare copies will be available at the meeting.

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Extract of draft minutes of meeting held on Monday 17th October 2005

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Roaf (Chair), Councillor Pressel, (Vice-Chair), Councillors Hollander, Phelps, Beryl Keen, Bryan Keen and Van Zyl.

37. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The Planning Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

Lyn Lawrence addressed the meeting and explained the background to the report.

Steve Pickles introduced additional information in relation to Core Indicator 33 regarding protecting the natural environment and Indicator 34 on biodiversity and habitat enforcement measures.

Issues were raised as follows :

- in reply to a question about protecting sites which were not either SSSI or SLINC's Steve Pickles said that other sites were well managed by the countryside service. There was a requirement to balance wildlife and City issues - biodiversity needs against other Council aims such as for Affordable Housing. Also, 'grading' sites in terms of scientific interest could mean that lower graded sites were "targeted" by developers.
- Councillor Pressel asked about including targets to demonstrate how habitats were being protected or expanded
- Michael Crofton-Briggs said that as the monitoring report was developed it would provide a framework against which Local Plan policies could be measured demonstrating what control the Council had over development and what sort of impact planning decisions were having. There were a range of indicators in the monitoring report which would test the effect of Local Plan Policies on a range of issues and these would illustrate how the City was changing and whether the proper balance between various needs was being achieved
- noted that development pressure would continue to be monitored against the Council's targets for affordable housing which were clearly set at 50% on new developments of 10 or more dwellings. Also noted, was the explanation regarding the Council's aims in relation to division of tenure between social rented housing and shared ownership. The current Local Plan met the City's housing requirements up to 2016 and the debate around developing the greenbelt was in relation to housing requirements beyond that period in

terms of quality and siting. The indicators would enable the debate to be monitored in relation to the effect of planning policies.

- Councillor Phelps raised the issue of student housing and the relationships between the student population, local people and the level of development of student accommodation. He was concerned that the large number of students living out of university accommodation was leading to unsustainable communities. The Local Plan includes clauses to limit the expansion of the universities, such as the limit on the number of students that can live in accommodation not provided by the universities. If these targets are exceeded then planning permission won't be granted for expansion to academic floor space. Officers said that the issue could be dealt with under existing policy or taken up through the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Members asked that this matter be referred to the Executive Board.
- Councillor Pressel asked about target setting for energy and flooding and comparisons with other authorities. Mr. Pickles said energy monitoring needed improving and referred to the natural resource impact analysis in the Local Plan. Schemes were often part of development such as the ground heating scheme at the Churchill Hospital. Flooding was a core issue for monitoring by the Council in accordance with the requirements of particular developments. Comparisons with other local authorities was part of the Government's monitoring ethos and might become available as data was developed through regional reports
- Congratulated the Planning Officers on a major piece of work

Resolved that the Executive Board, via the Oxford Strategic Partnership, begin discussions with Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University on the expansion of the universities and knock-on effects that this is having on communities in Oxford.