

Report of: Planning Services Business Manager

To: Executive Board – 6 November 2006

Item No:

Title of Report: Annual Monitoring Report (Planning)

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: The Executive Board is asked to approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State. This is the City Council's second monitoring report to assess the effectiveness of its planning policies. It covers the period 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006 and is by and large a factual document.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Legal: Legal & Democratic Services (Jeremy Thomas)

Finance: Financial Management (Emma Burson),

Strategic Director: Strategic Director (Sharon Cosgrove)

Planning Policy Manager (Mark Jaggard),

Planning Services Business Manager (Michael Crofton-Briggs),

Policy Framework This report assesses whether the project plans set out in the Local Development Scheme are being achieved and whether the policies set out in the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 are being effectively implemented. 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, economy and quality of life and promote environmental resource management.

Recommendation(s):

The Executive Board is asked to:

1. approve the Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Secretary of State; and
2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to alter the text to make any necessary editorial corrections prior to publication.

Background and content

1. 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; and
 - the extent to which policies set out in Local Development Documents are being implemented.
2. The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 is a Local Development Document. 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.
3. 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. Oxford City Council submitted its first Annual Monitoring Report to the Secretary of State on 17th November 2005, and was the first authority in the South East Region to do so. The draft report for 05/06 is circulated separately.
4. The Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the 05/06 report on 16th October 2006 and the comments made are appended to the report.

Why Monitor?

5. 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.

Key Events in 05/06

6. The most significant factor influencing planning policy during the period covered by this second monitoring report was the adoption of the Oxford Local Plan on 11th November 2005. The City Council has started assisting the successful implementation of key policies in the Plan with the development of supplementary planning documents on affordable housing and natural resource impact analysis (adopted July 2006). The documents were drafted following consultation with key interest groups and public consultation took place February to April 2006. Work also started on further supplementary planning documents on planning obligations and car parking standards, transport assessments and travel plans with community involvement through meetings and questionnaires on the scoping of the documents.
7. In terms of implementing the new policy system, the Local Development Scheme sets out the City Council's project plan for policy development over the next 3 years, and all of the target milestones have been achieved in 05/06. Evidence gathering commenced on the Core Strategy DPD and the West End Area Action Plan (AAP), including a major public consultation exercise on the AAP in January 2006. A Statement of Community Involvement was developed and submitted to the Secretary of State in February 2006 (and subsequently adopted in October 2006).

Key Findings in 05/06

8. **Housing Delivery** – Monitoring information up to 1st April 2006 represents the end of the first 5 year phase of the 15 year Local Plan. This provides the opportunity to reflect on whether the Local Plan is on target to deliver the number of dwellings in the Local Plan. The Structure Plan and Local Plan set a strategic target for Oxford of 6,500 dwellings over the Plan period which equates to an annual average of 433 dwellings. There were 943 dwellings completed in 05/06, over 270 more than the previous year. If this trend continues, Oxford could exceed the target by almost 1,500 dwellings.
9. Over 90% of dwellings completed were 1 and 2 bed dwellings. This reflects the number of City centre flat developments and the conversion of dwellings to flats. Whilst the loss of 3 and 4 bed dwellings is of initial concern, consultants have been commissioned to undertake an assessment of the dwelling sizes of the current housing stock in Oxford, the demographics and what implications this has on the need for particular sizes of market dwellings. In September 2006, the City Council commenced production of a Balance of Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document. This will provide further information on how the City Council will apply its Balance of Dwellings policy (HS.8) in light of this additional research.

10. Planning permission was granted for 997 dwellings. Whilst this is about 280 fewer than last year, it is still a high level. The slight drop may be due to the adoption of the Local Plan with its affordable housing policy that increases the proportion of affordable housing required and applies it to smaller sites than the previous Plan. This may have resulted in initial resistance to develop land as it reduces the value of sites so landowners may be less keen to sell to developers. However it is anticipated this resistance may be short term. Any developing trends will be carefully monitored to assess potential impact on target completion rates.
11. **Affordable Housing** – 167 units of affordable housing were completed which equates to nearly 18% of all dwellings, in comparison to 186 in 04/05. This seems due to the number of sites completed in phases where the proportion of market housing is completed earlier than the affordable housing to cross subsidise the affordable housing. The 167 units of affordable housing is slightly higher than the target in the Housing Strategy of 150 affordable dwellings per year. However affordable housing delivered by planning obligations will only ever meet a relatively small proportion of the need for affordable housing in Oxford (estimated to be 1700-1800 affordable dwellings per year by the Housing Requirements Study).
12. **Student numbers** – Student numbers at Oxford Brookes University increased by 185 students (1.05%). At the University of Oxford, the University figures indicate there were 139 less students in 05/06 than 04/05. The two universities anticipate limited or reducing growth after 2006/07 which should help them meet the Local Plan policy requirement that no more than 3000 students at each of the two universities live outside provided accommodation after 2008. Student numbers will continue to be carefully monitored to ensure that the number of students living in private accommodation does not significantly increase in future years and put further pressure on the Oxford housing market. Officers will undertake further discussions with the two universities to confirm that the figures provided give an accurate indication of changes in student numbers so that when there are real increases in student numbers, these are reflected in the figures. Any future growth in academic floorspace should only be supported with further increases in student accommodation.
13. **Business development** – just under 267,500 sq.m. of business floorspace has been completed in 05/06, 90% of which was due to further development at the BMW plant at Cowley. Permission was granted for 13,000 sq.m. of office space, mainly at the Oxford Business Park. At the same time, 4.7 hectares of land was lost (in comparison to 3.7 hectares in 04/05). Most of the employment land lost was due to the redevelopment mainly to residential use of the former Oxford Automotive Components factory site.
14. **Retail** – Completed retail development amounted to 3,872 sq.m., mainly through the intensification of existing units in district centres by the

insertion of mezzanine floors. This is a significant increase in comparison to last years total of 340 sq.m.

15. **Tourism** – hotel accommodation increased in Oxford with the opening of the 150 bed space Malmaison hotel within the Castle site. Planning permission has also been granted for a further 174 bed space hotel on land adjacent to The Priory, Grenoble Road. There has been a growth in museum provision with the completion and opening of Oxford Unlocked, again the Castle site and planning permission granted for extensions at the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums.
16. **Environment** – In recent years the water vole has been Britain fastest declining mammal. However, the 2005 survey results seem to indicate that the species may no longer be declining in Oxfordshire as a whole. Whilst there is no evidence that this decline is slowing in Oxford yet, there are extensive areas of potential habitat to encourage water voles.
17. **Transport** – on car parking, 81% of completed non-residential developments complied with car parking standards. It is expected that compliance with cycle and disabled parking standards will improve in future years with the removal of the ambiguity of having two sets of standards during the Local Plan review period and the adoption of the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document in early 2007.

Conclusion

18. As with the first monitoring report on planning policies, this second report should be viewed in the context of providing an important evidence base from which to assess future reports. The report draws attention to various key issues and does include some comparison data with the outcome of the first report. A more detailed assessment of future trends will develop as the evidence base builds.

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Background papers: None – all published information

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Environment Scrutiny Comments
Annual Monitoring Report – circulated separately

Comments of the Environment Scrutiny Committee – 16th October 2006

The Environment Scrutiny Committee considered the report on 16th October 2006 and made the following comments:

- The Committee asked if information on CO2 emissions could be included as an indicator for future years.
The Head of Planning Policy responded that this would be investigated.
- Indicator 8 on sizes of affordable dwellings – this should take account of the size of families on the housing waiting list.
In response, the Committee was advised that this was taken into account in the Housing Requirements Study and formed part of the strategic mix now sought under the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document.
- Indicator 13 on gypsies and travellers – concern was expressed that snapshot monitoring was not effective. The County Council should be asked to investigate a short stay site near the City that could be used for large gatherings such as funerals.
In response, the bi-annual monitoring count is undertaken by the County Council in accordance with national guidelines. The results do indicate the general situation in Oxford, which sees a small number of transitory encampments from time to time over the course of a typical year. This is seen as a regional issue due to the transitory lifestyle of the community and hence the assessment is carried out on a regional basis jointly with other Thames Valley authorities. The need for transit sites are difficult to assess but the partial review of the South East Plan will eventually set out the number of sites to be provided in our area.
- Indicator 24 on Green Flag Award standards for open spaces – the Committee asked for this standard to be applied to countryside sites.
Applying the Award to countryside sites will be investigated.
- Indicator 33 on biodiversity – the Committee asked for the further report on improving the condition of the southern part of the Lye Valley SSSI to be submitted to a future meeting and for the loss of gardens and any consequential loss of habitat as a result due to development to be monitored.
The report on the Lye Valley SSSI will be submitted to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. Designated sites are monitored by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and it would be difficult to extend this to garden areas but the sites that are monitored give an indication of the position in the green network as a whole.

- In general, the Committee asked for indications of risks and trends.
The report does include some comparison data and a more detailed assessment of future trends will develop as the evidence base builds.

In summarising the debate, the Chair said it was a good document which should be available for on-going operational use. The 8 indicators that were not currently on target would form the basis of future work of the Committee.