

Report of: Planning Policy Manager

To: Executive Board 14th May 2007
Special Council 21st May

Item No:

Title of Report : Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To approve for submission to the Secretary of State the Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Goddard

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Legal: Jeremy Thomas

Finance: Christopher Kaye

Strategic Director: Sharon Cosgrove

Policy Framework: The production of this document fulfils a commitment of the Local Development Scheme. It builds on policies set out in the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. The West End Area Action Plan will help achieve the City Council's vision by improving the environment where we live and work. It will also deliver the key themes and priorities for the City as set out in the Community Strategy.

Recommendation(s):

That Executive Board recommend to Council that they:

1. approve the Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan for submission to the Secretary of State;
2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document.

That Council:

1. approve the Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan for submission to the Secretary of State;
2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document.
3. endorse the Submission Draft Area Action Plan for development control purposes as a material consideration in planning decisions.

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to consider the Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan (SAAP). The document will be submitted to the Secretary of State. There will be a six-week period for people to comment on the submitted document. Their comments will not be considered by officers or members but will be passed directly to the Secretary of State for consideration against the tests of soundness (see Appendix 1) as part of the Examination. Once adopted the Area Action Plan will form the planning policy and spatial framework for the renaissance of Oxford's West End.
2. Executive Board are asked to recommend that Council approve the SAAP for submission to the Secretary of State. Council is asked to approve the document for submission and to endorse the document for development control purposes as a material consideration in planning decisions.

Oxford's West End

3. Currently, the West End of the City centre is under-utilised and does not match Oxford's worldwide reputation, or live up to its potential as an urban quarter of the highest quality. However, the area is part of the centre of our historic City, and its renaissance is key to the overall long-term success of the City as a whole.
4. The SAAP presents the opportunity for a wide spectrum of regeneration benefits. The development of the Oxford Castle site is the first step in the renaissance of this area, and shows the potential for creating attractive new developments that enhance the whole City centre and that make the most of previously neglected features.
5. The SAAP provides the framework for a coherent and radical improvement to the environmental quality of the West End. It is intended to facilitate the creation of a city centre quarter that people enjoy living in, working in, and visiting. A mix of new homes, retail and employment uses, community facilities and cultural attractions that meet the needs of Oxford's residents and visitors will be created. There is also a rare opportunity to improve access and movement, to create a good network of routes and connections that allow safe and efficient movement for all modes of travel. This should all be provided in an environmentally responsible way.

West End Executive and Steering Group

6. A West End Executive, containing representatives from Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) has been set up to drive the West End renaissance forward.
7. To support the Executive a Steering Group has been set up which consists of representatives of a range of organisations with an interest in the future of the West End. These are listed in Appendix 2. By engaging major stakeholders in the development of the Programme, the Steering Group will ensure that stakeholders play an important part in shaping and delivering the West End Renaissance

The Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan

8. The SAAP includes a series of policies to guide and control developments and to resist schemes that conflict with the overall vision for the West End. Once adopted, the Area Action Plan will form part of the Local Development Framework and will be used in the determination of planning applications under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
9. The production of the document has followed a procedure set out by central Government. This process involved several key stages set out in Appendix 3. At the first stage of the production process, issues and options for the West End were generated by consultation with the community and other stakeholders. The Preferred Options document detailed the options and suggestions that had been generated during its preparation. The SAAP as now drafted builds on the Preferred Options document using the evidence base that has been built up over the production period of the Plan production process.
10. The City Council has undertaken a considerable amount of background work and collaboration with partners, local people, businesses, visitors and others with an interest in the future of Oxford City centre. The Local Strategic Partnership has been involved with the production of the SAAP and has been supportive of it. Many technical studies have been carried out to assess which options were most appropriate to be taken forward as policies. Studies include a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and a Sustainable Energy study.
11. At the Preferred Options stage, the options that were identified for the Area Action Plan were assessed in a Sustainability Appraisal report. This has informed the SAAP. The Sustainability Appraisal has been updated to take account of the options taken forward as policies. It will be published in June alongside the SAAP.
12. The document has been checked by the Plain Language Commission. The Submission Draft AAP will be produced professionally by a graphic designer before it is submitted and made available for public consultation.
13. The SAAP is attached at Appendix 4.

Tests of soundness

14. A key feature of the new development planning system is the requirement for development plan documents to pass nine 'tests of soundness'. These tests are set out in PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, and are attached to this report at Appendix 1. The examination of the AAP will only consider these tests. The AAP has been designed to meet these tests of soundness and this has been checked using the Soundness Self-assessment Toolkit produced by the Planning Advisory Service.

The AAP timetable

15. Once approved by Council, the SAAP will be submitted to the Secretary of State (in June). The six-week period for public comment will follow.

16. The Examination is programmed for January/February 2008. The Inspector's report will be received in September/October 2008. The Inspector's report is binding; the legally required amendments will then have to be made before the West End Area Action Plan is adopted by Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tests of Soundness

Appendix 2: The West End Steering Group

Appendix 3: Stages of production

Appendix 4: Submission Draft West End Area Action Plan (circulated separately)

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Background papers: None



Appendix 1 – Tests of Soundness

A development plan document will be sound if it meets the following tests:

Procedural

- i.** it has been prepared in accordance with the local development scheme;
- ii.** it has been prepared in compliance with the statement of community involvement, or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations⁴⁷ where no statement of community involvement exists;
- iii.** the plan and its policies have been subjected to sustainability appraisal;

Conformity

- iv.** it is a spatial plan which is consistent with national planning policy and in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy for the region or, in London, the spatial development strategy and it has properly had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area or to adjoining areas;
- v.** it has had regard to the authority's community strategy;

Coherence, consistency and effectiveness

- vi.** the strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent within and between development plan documents prepared by the authority and by neighbouring authorities, where cross boundary issues are relevant;
- vii.** the strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all the circumstances, having considered the relevant alternatives, and they are founded on a robust and credible evidence base;
- viii.** there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring; and
- ix.** the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.

Appendix 2 – The West End Steering Group membership

Housing Corporation
Environment Agency
Learning and Skills Council
English Heritage
Oxford Preservation Trust
Capital Shopping Centres
Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
Nuffield College
Christ Church College
English Partnerships
Network Rail

Also members of the West End Executive:

Oxford City Council
Oxfordshire County Council
South East England Development Agency

Appendix 3 – Stages of production

Production Stage	Dates	Details
Issues and Options	September 05 - January 06	<p>Public Involvement: exhibitions undertaken to raise awareness and workshops held to facilitate discussions about Issues and Options facing the West End</p> <p>Steering Group: involved in identifying Issues and Options for consideration</p>
Preferred Options	January 06 – December 06	<p>Background evidence: studies undertaken in-house, by the County Council, and outside consultants to build up the evidence base for the Preferred Options</p> <p>Strategic Partnership: Input into the Preferred Options Document</p> <p>Steering Group: Input into the Preferred Options Document</p> <p>Public Consultation: workshops held for stakeholders and for the public, undertaken to facilitate discussion about the Preferred Options Document</p>
Submission AAP	December 06 - June 07	<p>Background evidence: studies undertaken in-house, by the County Council, and outside consultants to build up the evidence base for the Submission Document</p> <p>LSP: Input into the Submission Area Action Plan</p> <p>Steering Group: Input into the Submission Area Action Plan</p>
Examination and adoption	June 07 – October 08	<p>Representations on tests of soundness: public to submit such representations, Inspector to consider these</p> <p>Examination: Inspector to hear representations and write binding report</p> <p>Adoption: City Council to make Inspector's changes and Council to adopt the document</p>