

**Report of:** Planning Services Business Manager

**To:** Executive Board 13<sup>th</sup> August 2007

**Item No:**

**Title of Report :** Consultation response to the White Paper: Planning for a Sustainable Future

### Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report:** To approve for submission to the Secretary of State the responses to the Government's consultation White Paper: Planning for a sustainable future.

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr John Goddard

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Environment

**Ward(s) affected:** All

#### Report Approved by

**Portfolio Holder:** John Goddard

**Legal:** Jeremy Thomas

**Finance:** Christopher Kaye

**Strategic Director:** Sharon Cosgrove

**Policy Framework:** N/A

#### Recommendation(s):

That Executive:

1. approve the attached response to the White Paper for submission to the Secretary of State;
2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document.

#### Summary

The purpose of this report is to consider the response to the Government's White Paper: Planning for a Sustainable Future. The White Paper is a consultation document that includes a series of questions relating to new proposals for the planning system. The response will be submitted as the agreed response of Oxford City Council.

2. Executive Board are asked to approve the attached response for submission to the Secretary of State.

## **The White Paper**

3. The Government published its Planning White Paper - Planning for a Sustainable Future - on 21 May 2007. The White Paper consults on a number of these proposals. The intention of the White Paper is to reform the planning system to make it more responsive and efficient, taking into account Kate Barker's recommendations.
4. Many proposals concentrate on trying to improve the way major, national infrastructure projects are dealt with. It proposes an independent planning commission to handle & decide on major infrastructure projects, and national policy statements on the need for such projects.
5. Some alterations to the new local development framework (LDF) system are also proposed, with the intention of 'ironing-out' some problems. It is proposed that there will be more flexibility in the production process (including consultation) for LDF documents, there will be a consultation prior to submission of the documents to the Secretary of State (rather than on submission as is currently the case) and supplementary planning documents will no longer need to be listed in the local development scheme. Integration of planning consultation with authority wide consultation processes is also proposed.
6. In terms of development control, there are proposals to relax planning controls on development of individual dwellings and small business premises.
7. Other changes alluded to are a new less strict 'needs test' for major retail schemes and more flexible interpretation of Green Belt boundaries. However, there are no consultation questions on these and no detailed proposals. More detail is expected on these issues in the Autumn.

## **The response to the White Paper**

8. Whilst some of the concepts in the White Paper are agreed with, there are fundamental concerns with some suggestions. In particular, there are concerns that proposals for dealing with decisions on nationally significant infrastructure will reduce democratic involvement and accountability. It is feared that it will be more difficult for local residents to have their say on whether a major infrastructure scheme is implemented near them.
9. The White Paper is also a missed opportunity to improve the system for producing planning policy documents. The reforms propose speeding up the production of these documents, but there is a danger that this will not leave enough time to collect the evidence base that is still required, or to consult members of the public properly.
10. Alongside the White Paper, four other documents for consultation have been published. The proposals in these papers are broadly agreed with and none of these papers have wide-ranging implications, so no responses have been prepared.

## **The timetable**

10. Once approved by Executive Board, the response to the White Paper will be submitted to the Secretary of State by 17<sup>th</sup> August.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: response to the White Paper: Planning for a Sustainable Future

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**Background papers:** None

