

Report of: Head of City Development

To: Executive Board

Date: 25th February 2008

Item No:

Title of Report : Oxford 2026; the Oxford Core Strategy Further Preferred Options

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To approve, for public consultation, the Further Preferred Options document for Oxford's Core Strategy.

decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Goddard

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Board(s) affected: All

Report Approved by:

Portfolio Holder – Councillor John Goddard

Christopher Kaye- Financial and Asset Management

Debbie Chirside – Legal and Democratic Services

Policy Framework:

The production of this document fulfils a commitment of the Local Development Scheme. The Core Strategy will help achieve the strategic aims in the City Council's vision, and also help deliver the key themes and priorities for the City as set out in the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy.

Recommendation(s):

Executive Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the Further Preferred Options document for Oxford's Core Strategy for public consultation; and

2. Authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary minor editorial corrections to the Core Strategy Further Preferred Options document.

Summary

1. Members may recall consultation on the earlier 'Issues and Options' and 'Preferred Options' stages of the Core Strategy in June-July 2006 and March-May 2007 respectively. It is necessary to consult upon a second round of Preferred Options in order to reflect a change in circumstances arising from the publication of the South East Plan Panel Report in August 2007.
2. The purpose of this report is to approve, for public consultation, the Further Preferred Options document. The report explains the background to the Further Preferred Options, particularly in relation to the proposal for an urban extension on Green Belt land at the southern edge of Oxford. The report also sets out the revised timetable towards adoption of the Core Strategy, as agreed by Executive Board in December 2007 and by Council in January 2008.

Purpose of the Core Strategy

3. The Core Strategy will be a key document within Oxford's Local Development Framework (LDF). It will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the City, including which broad areas are suitable for housing and other strategic development needs. Essentially it will be a replacement for the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, but only relating to the City. It will also replace some of the higher-level strategic policies in the Oxford Local Plan. The 20-year timeframe of this document corresponds with the South East England Regional Assembly's (SEERA's) emerging South East Plan (SEP).
4. The Core Strategy will set the policy context for future Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). Once the Core Strategy is adopted, all subsequent DPDs and SPDs must be in conformity with the Core Strategy.
5. An important aspect of the new planning system is the change to 'spatial' policies. This means that the Core Strategy and future planning documents are no longer restricted to land-use considerations, and need to take account of the plans and strategies of other agencies. Spatial planning policies can be delivered in a variety of ways and are not solely reliant on being implemented through development control decisions.

Policy Context

6. The Core Strategy has to be consistent with national planning policy and be in general conformity with the policies of the SEP. However, one of the challenges of spatial planning is to ensure that policies are locally distinctive and do not simply repeat national and regional guidance. The Core Strategy should also identify the main priorities that deliver the spatial aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Research and evidence base

7. The original Core Strategy Preferred Options document was informed by a wide range of research, including the following studies in particular; the Housing Requirements Study (2004); the Housing Viability Study (2004); the draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2007); the draft county-wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007); the Employment Land Study (2006); the Retail Needs Study (2004); and the Green Space Study (2005).
8. Work has been progressing since then on completing the evidence base for the Core Strategy. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment has now been finalised, and the draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is being updated to reflect new Government guidance. A number of further studies have now been published, or are close to completion. These include a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; an update to the Retail Needs Study; a study of the Role of Education and Health Sectors in Oxford's Economy; a Hotel and Short-Stay Accommodation Study; and biodiversity studies relating to potential strategic development sites. All of these studies will be completed in time to inform production of the submission version of the Core Strategy, as well as future DPD's.
9. An Appropriate Assessment (AA) is being undertaken to ensure that the policies in the Core Strategy do not harm the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is a European designated site. The AA will inform the policies in the submission Core Strategy.
10. Transport modelling of the developments proposed in the Core Strategy will be undertaken in summer 2008, once the Central Oxfordshire model currently being developed by the County Council is in place. This modelling work will inform the policies in the submission Core Strategy.

Previous consultation

11. One of the main principles of the new planning system is that local communities and stakeholders should be involved from the outset in the preparation of planning policy documents. Extensive public consultation has therefore been conducted to coincide with the Issues and Options and the Preferred Options stages of the Core Strategy.
12. A summary of the main outcomes of the Preferred Options consultation exercise is contained in Appendix 1. A much fuller report is available to view on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy.
13. Officers have also been holding a series of meetings with key partners and stakeholders throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy in order to understand fully their needs and aspirations.

South East Plan Panel Report

14. Members will be aware that the City Council made representations to the South East Plan (SEP) Examination in Public, arguing that the strategy for the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region in the draft SEP did not sufficiently accommodate the needs of Oxford City. In particular, we argued that there was a compelling case for a strategic review of the Green Belt in order to assess where best to build sustainable communities associated with the City, and that the Plan should allow more opportunities for managed employment growth within Oxford and its immediate environs.
15. The Panel of Inspectors that independently examined the draft SEP supported many of the arguments put forward by the City Council and recommended a number of changes to meet the needs of Oxford, whilst at the same time endorsing further growth in the 'country' towns. The Panel considered that the SEP should be more upbeat about the growth of Oxford, "reflecting an aspiration to maintain its world-class status". The key changes to the Plan recommended by the Panel that particularly affect Oxford are:
 - a) a Strategic Development Area (SDA) on the southern edge of Oxford (Grenoble Road) – the South Oxford SDA – to allow an urban extension of at least 4,000 dwellings just beyond Oxford's boundary;
 - b) increased support for economic growth in the Central Oxfordshire sub-region;
 - c) a higher level of housing for Oxford.
16. In order to accommodate an urban extension, the Panel recommended a highly focused, selective Green Belt review just south of Oxford rather than a more general strategic Green Belt review. Since the land likely to form a southern urban extension lies within South Oxfordshire District, the Panel recommended the production of a joint Area Action Plan between the two authorities to take forward a South Oxford SDA.
17. The Panel supported the argument put forward by the City Council and others that some new employment land could be required within Oxford to avoid undue constraint on the City's economic potential. The Panel Report acknowledges that safeguarded land at Peartree is large enough to meet the lower end of the estimated need for additional employment land in Oxford, although it leaves the precise scale of new land to be determined through the LDF.
18. The draft SEP included a housing provision figure for Oxford of 7,000 dwellings over the period 2006-2026, equating to an average of 350 dwellings per annum. The Panel recommended increasing this figure to 8,000 (400 dwellings per annum) to take account of Oxford's New Growth Points status.

Further Preferred Options

19. It is important that, where the Panel Report recommends new elements in the South East Plan that would significantly affect Oxford, these can be tested and consulted upon prior to submission of the final Core Strategy. Some of the Panel's recommendations, such as those relating to economic growth and housing numbers, do not require any further consultation locally since a wide range of relevant options were put forward in the original Preferred Options document. However, the proposal for a southern urban extension was not directly addressed in the original Preferred Options, and it is therefore appropriate to publish a second round of Preferred Options (called Further Preferred Options). This document is attached at [Appendix 2](#).
20. The Further Preferred Options document is relatively short and has four main sections. The first section is the introduction, which summarises the implications of the Panel Report for the Core Strategy.
21. The second section sets out a revised spatial strategy and key diagram, incorporating the proposed South Oxford SDA. If confirmed in the adopted version of the SEP, the SDA would play an important part in the spatial strategy for Oxford. The Core Strategy needs to address this issue at a strategic level, notwithstanding that the land in question lies outside the City Council's administrative boundary and that detailed planning of the South Oxford SDA would be a matter for a later joint Area Action Plan.
22. The third section focuses on the proposed SDA and sets out options for consultation. Its key message is that any urban extension should be integrated into the urban fabric of Oxford, and that it should be taken forward in the context of wider regeneration opportunities in the local area. The document considers the implications of the SDA for Blackbird Leys centre and for access and transport issues.
23. The fourth section sets out options on the issues of culture and community facilities, which were omitted from the original Preferred Options and which officers consider should now be included.
24. Where a number of options have been identified, the pros and cons of the alternative options are set out alongside the City Council's preferred option. Where only one option seems appropriate, this has been put forward as a preferred approach. It will still be possible for consultees to object to a preferred approach, or to suggest amendments to the approach suggested.
25. It should be noted that the draft SEP and the Panel Report is under consideration by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. The Secretary of State is due to publish Proposed Changes to the SEP in early 2008. There will then be a 12-week

period of consultation on the Proposed Changes before the Plan is adopted later in the year.

26. At the time of writing it appears that the Secretary of State might not publish her Proposed Changes until after the May local elections, which means that consultation on the Further Preferred Options would take place in advance of the SEP Proposed Changes. Whilst this uncertainty in relation to the SEP is not ideal, it is felt that the Panel Report gives a clear steer as to the likely outcome of the SEP process and it would not be appropriate to further delay our Core Strategy by awaiting the Secretary of States' Proposed Changes. Since the Further Preferred Options document has the same status as the original Preferred Options, it would not fetter the City Council's ability to revise the spatial strategy at submission stage should the Government decide not to include the South Oxford SDA in the SEP.

Tests of Soundness

27. A key feature of the new development planning system is the requirement for DPDs to pass nine 'tests of soundness', which are set out in PPS12: Local Development Frameworks and attached to this report at [Appendix 3](#). Publication of the Further Preferred Options document should help ensure the eventual soundness of the Core Strategy, since it is important to be able to demonstrate that policies in the submission plan have been tested and consulted upon at Preferred Options stage and that all reasonable options have been explored.
28. Officers are seeking to obtain informal views from the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) prior to the meeting. If any significant issues are raised by GOSE, they will be reported orally to Members.

Sustainability Appraisal

29. The City Council undertook a detailed Sustainability Appraisal (SA), including a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), alongside preparation of the original Preferred Options document. An addendum to the SA has been produced in respect of the Further Preferred Options. This considers the social, economic and environmental effects of the document, and ensures that, as far as possible, it accords with the principles of 'sustainable development'. Each of the preferred options has been developed, refined and assessed against sustainability criteria. Alternative options have also been assessed against the same criteria.
30. The addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal report (SA/SEA) will be published for consultation alongside the Further Preferred Options document. A short Non-Technical Summary has been prepared and is attached to this report at [Appendix 4](#). A full copy of the SA/SEA addendum is available for Members to view in each of the Party rooms.

Financial and Staffing Implications

31. The production of the Core Strategy is a commitment in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS sets out key milestones, against which the City Council's performance will be monitored and which may affect future levels of Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. The costs of consultation and further work on the Core Strategy will be met from existing budgets.
32. The City Council is a significant landowner and issues relating to the size and location of a southern urban extension, and the regeneration of Blackbird Leys, may affect land within the Council's ownership. However, it is not appropriate to consider the potential financial implications for the Council in assessing the planning merits of particular land-use and development options.

Core Strategy timetable

33. Following consideration by Executive Board, the Further Preferred Options will be subject to a 6-week public consultation period from 7th March to 18th April 2007. During that time, all Members will have a chance to consider the document, as it will be reported to each Area Committee in either March or April. Housing Scrutiny Committee will also consider it during the consultation period. There will be public and stakeholder consultation, with a focus on the south eastern quadrant of the City to reflect the content of the document.
34. Comments and responses collected from public consultation will help inform the submission Core Strategy document. This will be reported to Executive Board and Council, and submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2008. Prior to that, it is envisaged that consultation will take place on the draft policies in June-July 2008. An Examination by an independent Inspector is programmed for April 2009, with adoption expected to be in December 2009.

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Background papers:

The South East Plan Examination in Public: Report of the Panel, (August 2007)

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1	Summary of Preferred Options consultation
Appendix 2	Core Strategy Further Preferred Options document
Appendix 3	Tests of Soundness from PPS12
Appendix 4	Sustainability Appraisal Non-Technical Summary

Appendix 1 – Summary of Preferred Options Consultation

Consultation response

At the close of the consultation, 391 questionnaires had been received (320 summary questionnaires and 71 detailed questionnaires). In addition, a total of 208 letters/emails were received, comprising 164 letters from members of the public and 44 letters from a range of national and local stakeholders. A total of 83 people attended four workshops, around 100 people attended a drop-in session at the Town Hall and around 100 residents attended a public meeting in Summertown.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed a clear predominance of respondents in the over 60 or 45-60 age groups, and a consequent under representation of younger people (particularly the under 25 group). More men than women responded in each age group. Responses were relatively evenly divided between the OX2, OX3 and OX4 postcodes, with the highest proportion coming from OX2 (38%). The City centre area (OX1) only accounted for 7% of the responses, which is to be expected given that this postcode covers a smaller area than the other three.

The under representation of younger people should be borne in mind when considering the results of the consultation. In addition, the fact that many of the responses came from people who were concerned about the proposed strategic development locations may have influenced the results in a more general sense, e.g. in relation to the issue of housing growth.

Key issues

Listed below are the issues that are considered to be of particular significance arising from the Preferred Options consultation:

Housing growth: The preferred option for housing growth proposes a significantly higher level of housing growth for Oxford (550 dwellings per year/11,000 dwellings over 20 years) than set out in the draft South East Plan (350 dwellings per year/7,000 dwellings over 20 years). The preferred option was opposed by the majority of respondents to the questionnaire, many of who favoured alternative lower growth options. However, there was no clear consensus in favour of any of the options presented.

Concerns were expressed about the implications of the proposed level of housing growth for Oxford's transport system, infrastructure and general quality of life. A number of respondents also expressed the view that the level of growth envisaged in the Preferred Options document would threaten the unique character of Oxford, and that the city's housing needs should be met by a review of the Green Belt to accommodate an urban extension on land outside the city boundary rather than building on green spaces within the city.

Conformity with Regional Spatial Strategy: Linked to the above, some respondents argued that the level of new housing should be consistent with the figures in the draft South East Plan, and/or that it is premature for the City Council to be producing the Core Strategy until the outcome of the South East Plan EiP is known.

The prematurity issue was felt to be of particular importance because the spatial strategy for the Central Oxfordshire sub-region was subject to significant objections at the South East Plan EiP. It was argued by some respondents that the recommendations of the EiP Panel in relation to Central Oxfordshire, and the Government's response to these, must inform the choice of spatial strategy for the City and could potentially require an alternative spatial strategy to be drawn up.

SEERA indicated that the housing growth figures in the submission Core Strategy should refer directly to figures for Oxford in the draft South East Plan. GOSE did not comment on the housing numbers or consistency with the RSS, but did advise that more emphasis should be given to cross-boundary issues.

Economic Growth: The issue of economic growth attracted much less comment than housing growth, but some concerns were expressed about the additional pressures on housing, transport and other infrastructure that may arise as a result of the preferred option for managed economic growth. In particular, some respondents pointed to the need to ensure that employment growth in the city does not worsen the current imbalance between housing and employment. There was significant support in the questionnaire for retaining key employment sites, although a few respondents suggested release of smaller sites, or a criteria based assessment, in recognition of the acute need for housing land.

Strategic Locations for Development: The Preferred Options document identified potential strategic locations for development, including five areas of greenfield land within the city. Many representations related to these proposals, with Southfield Golf Course (East and West) and Summertown Safeguarded Land receiving the most significant level of objections (over 100 letters in the case of the Golf Course). Commonly cited concerns included:

- impact on green character of Oxford & intrinsic amenity value;
- impact on biodiversity, including wildlife corridor functions;
- potential increase in flood risk;
- potential impact of increased traffic on constrained road network, residential amenity, air quality etc.;
- inadequate infrastructure to cope with local population increases (e.g. school places);
- loss of community sporting / recreational facility (for Southfield Golf Course);
- need for/appropriateness of further development questioned (a common comment was that Oxford is 'full up' and cannot accommodate further growth in more established urban areas).

Responses to the other strategic greenfield locations were more mixed, with a fair degree of support for the preferred option of mixed-use employment development at the Pear Tree/Northern Gateway area, and also for the option of residential development on Safeguarded Land at Barton.

Research and Evidence Base: Key comments by stakeholders included:

- The Highways Agency highlighted the need to carry out an evaluation of the transport impact on the Strategic Road Network (SRN), i.e. the A34 and M40. The Highways Agency is concerned about the impact on the SRN of the housing and employment growth options, and in particular the proposals for Pear Tree/Northern Gateway and Barton.
- The Environment Agency welcomed the City Council's commitment to produce a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform the submission document, but commented that some of the strategic locations for development are in the floodplain, and will need to be subject to the sequential test in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 25 as part of the SFRA.
- Under European legislation an Appropriate Assessment (AA) will need to be undertaken in order to demonstrate that the policies in the Core Strategy would not harm the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Natural England commented that the AA will enable them to assess the likely impact of the Pear Tree/Northern Gateway proposals (which are fairly close to the SAC), while the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust expressed strong disagreement with the preferred options for housing growth and Pear Tree/Northern Gateway unless the AA demonstrates there would be no adverse impact on the SAC.

Other issues

Set out below is an overview of the other main issues arising from the consultation, in the same order as the Preferred Options document:

Spatial Vision: Views on the proposed Spatial Vision were mixed, although more respondents to the questionnaire agreed with it than disagreed. Comments from those who disagreed with the Spatial Vision mainly related to concerns about the implications of additional growth for traffic, infrastructure and the City's character.

Spatial Strategy: Many of the key points made in relation to the Spatial Strategy have been covered above. However, of significance is the comment from GOSE that the Spatial Strategy is not very clear at present, particularly with regard to the future distribution of housing. SEERA highlighted that the submission Core Strategy should indicate the broad distribution and quantum of housing development and infrastructure requirements.

Housing mix and affordable housing: The preferred options generally received more support than the alternative options on both of these topics.

Some concerns were expressed regarding the viability of the preferred option for 50% affordable housing from residential development, and GOSE indicated the need for up-to-date, robust evidence to support the proposed approach. On housing mix, some respondents supported generally increasing housing density as the most sustainable approach, whilst others specifically objected to further infill flat developments, conversion of family dwellings etc.

Student Accommodation: The preferred option proposes a progressive reduction in the number of students living outside university-provided accommodation to ease pressure on the local housing market. This received a fair degree of support in the questionnaire, with a number of comments about the impact of high student populations on residential amenity and community balance. However, Oxford Brookes University argued that the City Council has not so far produced sufficient evidence to demonstrate a link between numbers of students in rented accommodation and the undoubted housing shortage experienced in Oxford.

Retail hierarchy: The preferred option proposes to change Oxford's existing retail hierarchy by elevating Cowley Centre/Templars Square to the status of a Primary District Centre and creating a new District Centre at Blackbird Leys. These proposals received a high degree of support in the questionnaire. No issues of fundamental importance arose from the consultation, although GOSE indicated more detail is needed about the roles/functions of the various named retail centres. Some respondents did not favour any further retail growth in the City centre, instead suggesting that more focus should be given to District and neighbourhood shopping centres.

Hospitals and Medical Research: The questionnaire produced mixed views on the three options presented in the document, although option 2 (continuing to locate new hospital facilities in Headington where this would be the best location, but seeking to locate new medical research elsewhere) received slightly more support than the other options. A number of concerns were expressed that continuing expansion of health and education institutions in the Headington/East Oxford area would put too much pressure on transport and local housing.

Universities: Two alternative options for the University of Oxford were presented in the document, of which the first option (continuing to locate new development on existing University sites at higher densities, but not allocating new sites elsewhere in Oxford) received more support in the questionnaire than the second option of allocating new sites for activities such as medical research, administration and ancillary facilities. It was noted by some respondents that there are limitations on intensification at existing University sites, and that there may be scope to locate some activities outside Oxford, e.g. at Begbroke. The preferred approach for Oxford Brookes University, which seeks to help OBU produce and implement its master plan, received a fair degree of support in the questionnaire.

Flooding: There was strong support for the preferred option, which proposes to prevent infill housing and student accommodation in areas at risk of flooding (including existing built-up areas) other than in exceptional circumstances. However, some concerns were raised about the impact of development on flood risk, particularly in relation to the proposed development of greenfield sites. The Environment Agency supported the proposed approach, but indicated that a policy is needed for surface water management as well as fluvial flooding.

Transport: There was strong support for the preferred option and the preferred approach relating to short-term and long-term transport infrastructure respectively. A number of respondents also highlighted transport issues in their comments, including the need to improve aspects of bus service routes and ticketing, and to improve the cycle network. Some respondents suggested greater restraint on car use within either central Oxford or within the ring road, in favour of public transport, walking and cycling. Oxfordshire County Council supported the proposed policy approach, subject to certain additions or amendments. However, Network Rail expressed concerns about the deliverability of the Core Strategy's ambition for a new or enlarged rail station, and considered the proposed safeguarding of railway land to be an unnecessary duplication of rail regulations.

Green Belt: There was a mixed response from the questionnaire to the preferred approach, which indicates that the North Oxford Gateway AAP and the Site Allocations DPD will consider the potential for any small-scale review of the Green Belt. GOSE indicated that the Core Strategy should provide sufficient guidance to enable reviews in future DPD's to take place, whilst Oxfordshire County Council argued that it is unnecessary to review the Green Belt at the Northern Gateway in view of the amount of Safeguarded Land at that location.

Developer Contributions/Infrastructure: Whilst the majority of respondents supported the preferred approach, a number of comments were made regarding the pressures on local infrastructure and services, and emphasising that new infrastructure should be in place ahead of development. Amongst the comments received on infrastructure issues, Thames Water suggested that a new policy on utilities development should be included in the Core Strategy and Oxfordshire County Council expressed concern about the implications of housing growth for education infrastructure, especially in North Oxford.

The following preferred options/approaches, which are not specifically mentioned above, all received a high degree of support and raised no issues of major significance during the consultation process:

- Sustainable tourism;
- Community safety;
- Green space;
- Sports facilities;
- Primary care;

- Access to education;
- Townscape character and urban design;
- Historic environment;
- Energy and natural resources;
- Waste and recycling;
- Biodiversity;
- City centre;
- District centres; and
- Regeneration areas

Appendix 3 – Tests of Soundness from PPS12

1. The DPD (Development Plan Document) has been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme
2. It has been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), or with the minimum requirements set out in the Regulations where no SCI exists
3. The plan and its policies have been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal
4. 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
5. It has had regard to the authority's community strategy
6. 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
7. 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
8. There are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring
9. It is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances

Note: In recent Core Strategy Examinations, Test 4 has been sub-divided as follows:

- 4a. It is a spatial plan
- 4b. It is consistent with national planning policy
- 4c. It is in general conformity with the regional spatial strategy

Appendix 4 – Non-Technical Summary for the Core Strategy Further Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal

The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, economic and environmental considerations into the preparation of planning policy documents. The preparation of the SA of the Oxford Core Strategy has involved three key stages to date, namely:

- The production of a Scoping Report setting out what the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal would be, which was issued for consultation in September 2005;
- The production of the SA Report, which was published at the same time as the Core Strategy Preferred Options document; and
- The preparation of an addendum to the SA Report, which is being published to accompany the Core Strategy Further Preferred Options document.

Further Preferred Options

Each of the preferred and alternative options has been assessed against twenty-five sustainability objectives. The effects were assessed with reference to the available baseline information. The assessment judged that many of the options were sustainable.

This Non-Technical Summary does not discuss options where there were no significant sustainability issues.

Summary of Key Findings

Spatial Strategy

The main change to the spatial strategy is the addition of the South Oxford Strategic Development Area (SDA). The revised spatial strategy has not been specifically assessed in the addendum to the SA Report because, with the exception of the SDA, the constituent elements of the spatial strategy had already been assessed in the original SA Report. Options relating to the integration of the SDA with Oxford are assessed in the SA addendum (see below)

South Oxford Strategic Development Area (SDA)

The preferred option to produce a joint Area Action Plan with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) scores higher than the alternative option when compared against the SA objectives.

The preferred option should help achieve more effective integration of the urban extension with the City, as well as providing accessible services and facilities, and contributing to SA housing and employment objectives.

However, the effects of the preferred option are based on assumptions that would need to be secured through a joint AAP with SODC.

The alternative option of not taking action to integrate an urban extension with Oxford (i.e. SODC bring forward their own AAP or a developer-led scheme) does not score well against some SA objectives, such as encouraging urban renaissance and creating vibrant communities¹.

Blackbird Leys centre

The two options for Blackbird Leys centre are both sustainable. However, the preferred option to promote a mixed-use District centre is overall more positive in terms of providing for the development of local employment, improving accessibility to services by local residents and revitalising the area.

However, these effects are based on assumptions that would need to be secured through a more detailed planning policy document (DPD).

Access and transport and the SDA

From the three options for developing accessibility and transport for the SDA, the preferred option scores highest as it aims for a more integrated development of future transport links, locally and City-wide.

Whilst the alternative option 1 focuses on the development of transport links with the City centre, the alternative option 2 focuses on the development of transport links locally (between the SDA and neighbouring areas)².

The preferred option aims for a more holistic approach to transport linkages and accessibility to and from the new urban extension. As a result, it would provide for a range of travel choices, reduce the need to travel by private vehicle, and increase the opportunities for walking and cycling. It would also provide better access to health and other facilities and services throughout the City.

The preferred option would also contribute towards the SA economic objectives, including economic growth and economic revival of regeneration areas, by improving accessibility and transport links between the SDA and surrounding areas (Blackbird Leys, Greater Leys and Littlemore) as well as the rest of Oxford.

¹ Although this option was assessed in the SA, it is not included in the Further Preferred Options document because it is likely to be out of conformity with the South East Plan (if the Panel's recommendations for joint working on the South Oxford SDA are taken forward)

² These options were amalgamated into the Preferred Option in the Further Preferred Options document

Cultural and community development

The preferred option is considered to be sustainable when assessed against the SA objectives. The preferred option scores highest, as this option is flexible in terms of its approach to potential opportunities for locating new facilities in accessible areas, particularly where there is a deficiency in cultural or community facilities.

Alternative option 1 does not score so well against the SA objectives as this option does not aim to protect and promote existing and new cultural and community facilities.

Alternative option 2, which seeks to protect all existing cultural and community facilities, has some sustainability benefits but would be less flexible over the longer term as it would limit potential opportunities for replacing old facilities with new ones³.

³ Although this option was assessed in the SA, it is not included in the Further Preferred Options document because it is not considered reasonable to suggest that the City Council will be able to protect all cultural and community facilities for the next 20 years