

Report of[x1]: Head of City Development

To[x2]: Executive Board 11th June
Council 30th June

Item No[EM3]:

Title of Report [x4]: Inspector's Report into the West End Area Action Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report[x5]: To adopt the West End Area Action Plan.

Key decision[x6]: Yes

Board Member[x7]: Colin Cook

Scrutiny Responsibility[x8]: Environment

Ward(s) affected[x9]: All

Report Approved by [EM10]

Board Member:[EM11] **Colin Cook**

Legal:[EM12] **Jeremy Thomas**

Finance:[EM13] **Sheppard**

Executive Director:[EM14] **Mel Barrett**

Policy Framework[x15]: 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 help deliver the key themes and priorities for the City as set out in the Community Strategy.

Recommendation(s)[x16]:

That Executive Board recommend to Council that they:

1. note the comments of the Inspector's Report into the West End Area Action Plan; and:
2. adopt the West End Area Action Plan as part of the Local Development Framework.

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Summary

1. The City Council has now received the binding comments of the Inspector's Report into the West End Area Action Plan (AAP). 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 adopt the AAP. Council is asked to adopt the document.

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 AAP 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.
5. Work began on producing the AAP in September 2005. Over the three year period a series of technical studies and draft AAP documents have been produced, and a series of workshops and exhibitions have been held engage the public and stakeholders in the process. The West End Executive (Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and SEEDA) and the West End Steering Group (representatives of a range of organisations with an interest in the West End) have been fully involved in the drafting of the AAP.

The Examination into the West End Area Action Plan

6. Members will recall approving the submission draft AAP for submission to the Secretary of State in May 2007. The submission draft AAP was submitted in June and published for a six-week period of public consultation. 32 parties took the opportunity to make comments directly to the appointed Inspector (Dr Shelagh Bussey) and these were considered as part of her examination into the document.
7. The Inspector was tasked by the Secretary of State with assessing the soundness of the AAP against a series of nine tests of soundness set by the government. Those tests of soundness are:
 - 1) it has been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme;
 - 2) it has been prepared in compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement;

- 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, and has had regard to any other relevant plans, policies and strategies relating to the area;
 - 5) it has had regard to the authority's Community Strategy;
 - 6) the strategies/policies/allocations in the plan are coherent and consistent between development plan documents prepared by the authority;
 - 7) the strategies/policies/allocations represent the most appropriate in all 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; and:
 - 9) the plan is reasonably flexible to enable it to deal with changing circumstances.
8. In January 2008 the Inspector held a series of hearing sessions where she invited some of those parties (14) to take part in round table discussions. Five days of topic-based hearing sessions were held between January 15th and 25th.

The Binding Inspector's Report

9. The Inspector's Report was received on April 28th and published the day after. The Inspector found that with a number of amendments, the West End Area Action Plan would meet all the tests of soundness and can therefore be adopted. Appendix A to this report consists of a table of the Inspector's amendments.
10. Unlike in the old planning system, (whereby authorities could choose whether to take up an inspector's recommended changes) the Inspector's Report and changes are binding. There is therefore no opportunity to consider the merit of the changes and whether to incorporate them or not. The City Council must therefore now incorporate the changes set out in the Inspector's report and to adopt the AAP.

The AAP

11. The AAP has now been updated to include the Inspector's changes. As this is a large document, in two volumes, it has not been appended to this report but a copy has been made available in each of the party rooms. If any member specifically requires a hard copy of the document, please contact Planning Policy.
12. Once adopted by Council, the AAP will form part of the Local Development Framework for the city. This means that it will have Section 38(6) status, making it part of the statutory development plan. The AAP will become the starting point for the consideration of planning applications in the West End. The adopted document will be available on our website.

13. The AAP is the first development plan document that Oxford has had reach this stage. The AAP will now join the adopted supplementary planning documents and the “saved” Local Plan in the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will shortly become the second development plan document to face the examination process.

Appendix A: The Inspector’s amendments

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Background papers[x18]: Inspector’s Report

