

To: City Executive Board

Date: 23rd July 2008

Item No:

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: Oxford's Local Development Scheme 2008-2011

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To approve the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2008-2011 for submission to the Secretary of State

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Cllr Ed Turner

Report approved by:

Finance: Chris Kaye

Legal: Lindsay Cane

Policy Framework: The production of this document will fulfil a key element of the new Local Development Scheme. It will also build on policies set out in the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, and emerging policies within the Core Strategy 2026. This document seeks to improve Oxford's environment, economy and quality of life in line with the City Council's vision for Oxford.

Recommendation(s):

1. approve the Oxford Local Development Scheme 2008-2011 for submission to the Secretary of State; and
2. authorise the Planning Policy Manager to alter the text of the Local Development Scheme before submission to the Secretary of State to the extent felt necessary in the light of advice from the Government Office for the South East and the Planning Inspectorate, and to make any necessary editorial corrections.

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is for Executive Board to approve Oxford City Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is a project plan and does not constitute a policy document. It explains how, and when, Oxford City Council will be producing the various documents that will comprise the Local Development Framework (LDF).
2. City Executive Board are asked to approve the Local Development Scheme for submission to the Secretary of State and to authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any editorial corrections necessary prior to submission.

Vision and strategic aims

3. The production of the LDS fulfils a statutory requirement, and also supports the City Council's vision. The LDS sets out a schedule of documents that together will form the Local Development Framework that will help achieve the strategic aims of the City Council's vision. The LDS and the LDF will also help deliver the key themes and priorities for Oxford as set out in the Community Strategy.

Background and context

4. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Development Frameworks will replace the current development plans (including the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016) and will contain the detailed policies and proposals to guide development in Oxford. As time progresses, more documents will be added to the LDF folder in order to provide a complete suite of policy documents.
5. The LDS is critical to the successful project management of the LDF, and sets out the work programme and resources required to prepare the policies and proposals. The LDS covers a three-year period from 2008-2011, and replaces all previous versions. The LDS is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
6. The LDS is reviewed annually to reflect changes in circumstances and priorities in the city and also, of particular importance this year, changes to statutory instruments and government policy. In June the government published amendments to the Development Plan regulations and a revised policy document on the production of these documents. As such the review of the LDS this year has been more thorough than a simple rolling-forward of the programme. A note explaining the significant differences between last year's LDS and this year's is attached to this report at Appendix 2.
7. The Local Development Framework currently comprises:
 - Saved policies of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted 2005)
 - Statement of Community Involvement (adopted 2006)
 - Development Plan Documents:
 - West End Area Action Plan (adopted 2008)
 - Supplementary Planning Documents:

- Affordable Housing (adopted 2006)
 - Natural Resource Impact Analysis (adopted 2006)
 - Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans (adopted 2007)
 - Planning Obligations (adopted 2007)
 - Telecommunications (adopted 2007)
 - Balance of Dwellings (adopted 2008)
 - Annual Monitoring Report (published 2007 and reviewed annually)
8. This represents significant progress in the period since 2004; however there are more areas to be addressed through policy documents. As such, this LDS sets a programme for the following documents to be produced (or commenced) in the period 2008-2011:
- Development Plan Documents:
 - Core Strategy
 - Site Allocations
 - Development Management Policies
 - Northern Gateway Area Action Plan
 - Barton Area Action Plan
 - Supplementary Planning Documents:
 - West End Streamlined Contributions
 - Blackbird Leys Neighbourhood Centre
 - Natural Resource Impact Analysis SPD – review
 - Affordable Housing - review
 - Statement of Community Involvement - review
 - Annual Monitoring Reports
 - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (annual review)

Consultation

9. The LDS has been discussed with City Council colleagues in other business units and with key stakeholders including the County Council, Environment Agency and Planning Inspectorate. This has ensured that there is support for the approach and priorities identified, that the programme fits in with and complements the strategies and timescales of others, and that the issue of resources from sources outside Planning has been resolved.
10. Community involvement and consultation will be key features in the production of the LDF. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the policy for involving communities and stakeholders in policy preparation and revision and in the planning application process.

Financial and staffing implications (level of risk)

11. The production of and LDS and LDF is a key statutory function of the Council. The LDS must be submitted to the Secretary of State via the Government Office for the South East for approval. Failure to deliver the documents in the LDS would result in failure to qualify for a significant payment through the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

12. It should be noted that this is a very challenging timetable and that there is a potential risk of these projects slipping. Resources in the Planning Policy team are tight and will be stretched to meet these commitments. It is considered however that the timetables set in the LDS are achievable (on the basis that the currently advertised vacancies are filled) although there will be very little spare capacity within the team.
13. The production of documents in the LDS will require the input of resources beyond the Planning Policy team. The support of staff from other business units will be key, as will the input of expertise from outside the Council. Various evidence base studies will be required to help formulate and defend policy positions, and the use of professional graphics designers and the organising of community involvement events will also have a financial impact. The examination of Development Plan Documents will require the hiring of a Planning Inspector and Programme Officer. These costs will depend substantially upon the number of objections received and therefore the requirement for an oral hearing. Related to this, the City Council may require the services of Counsel to represent us at a hearing which will itself incur costs. The costs associated with these documents will be managed to ensure that the planning policy budget is not overspent.

Climate change / environmental impact

14. The production of this suite of documents shows clear commitment to the issue of climate change. The LDF already contains a Supplementary Planning Document on the issue of Natural Resources Impact Analysis which sets out the requirements for energy, water and resource efficiency and for the generation of on-site renewable energy. This document will be reviewed in the next period. The West End Area Action Plan contains various policies on this theme including the proposal for an area-wide energy scheme. The draft Core Strategy includes a chapter on "Tackling Climate Change". These are themes which will run through the whole suite of documents in the LDF. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment work is carried out alongside a number of planning documents produced, which help achieve the objective of achieving sustainable development.

Equalities impact

15. The issue of equalities is similarly addressed through the suite of documents in the LDF. A key theme of the emerging Core Strategy and therefore the LDS 2008-2011, is the focus on regeneration. The planning process will be used, not just to incorporate and manage growth for its own sake, but also to use growth as a lever for regenerating some of the more deprived areas of our city. Following the successful production of the West End Area Action Plan, further area-specific planning documents will be produced for Barton, Northern Gateway and Blackbird Leys. These documents will aim to accommodate growth and to deliver regeneration benefits to the existing, wider communities as well.

The next stages

16. Following the approval of the LDS, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State via the Government Office for the South East. The LDS will come into effect four weeks after being submitted unless the Secretary of State intervenes and requests more time or more work to be done. This should not occur however as City Council officers have been in close contact with the Government Office and drafts have been submitted for comment throughout the preparation of the LDS.
17. When the LDS takes effect copies will be made available for inspection and it will be published on the City Council's website. Work will begin (or continue) on the documents identified in the LDS in line with the individual timeframes set out. The LDS will be reviewed and rolled forward on an annual basis.

Appendix 1 – Oxford's Local Development Scheme 2008-2011

Appendix 2 – Explanatory note on the changes to the LDS

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List of background papers: none