

To: City Executive Board

Date: 9th June 2010

Item No:

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: Barton Area Action Plan Issues Document

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To approve the Barton Area Action Plan Issues Document for consultation.

Key decision: No

Executive lead member: Councillor Ed Turner

Report approved by:

Executive Board Member: Councillor Ed Turner

Executive Director City Regeneration: Melbourne Barrett

Head of City Development: Michael Crofton Briggs

Finance: Gillian Chandler

Legal: Emma Griffiths

Environmental Development: Paul Robinson

Equalities: Pamela Roberts

Policy Framework: The production of this document will fulfil a key element of the Local Development Scheme. It will build on the strategic policies set out in the Core Strategy Submission Document. This is also one of the five major regeneration projects as identified in the Oxford Regeneration Framework.

Recommendation(s): Members of the City Executive Board are asked to:

1. approve the Barton Area Action Plan Issues Document for consultation; and
2. authorise the Head of City Development, in consultation with the Executive Board Member, to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document before publication.

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Barton Area Action Plan Issues Document. The Issues Document is the first major stage towards producing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for this major City Council project. The AAP is itself part of a wider City Council project to bring forward this strategic site and deliver regeneration benefits to the existing neighbouring communities. The City Council continues to work across its departments and in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to progress this project.

Background to the Barton project

2. The site at Barton is currently safeguarded in the Oxford Local Plan (2005) to contribute towards meeting the city's long term development needs. In the emerging Core Strategy the site "Land at Barton" is allocated as one of the strategic sites for the provision of housing, and a fundamental part of the strategy to deliver much needed housing in the city. Land at Barton is the single biggest opportunity for housing development within the city. It has been initially assessed as being capable of accommodating some 800-1200 dwellings together with supporting amenities.
3. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) has recognised the potential of this site and have already made funding available to resource various pieces of investigatory work to facilitate its release. As well as the potential housing generated on the site the HCA is also interested in the potential for rolling-out regeneration benefits to the two neighbouring estates of Barton and Northway.
4. The vision for this project is therefore much wider than "just" the delivery of new housing but involves providing better connections between existing areas of housing with the rest of the city and providing the catalyst for new investment and improvements to the existing estates. It is important therefore, that other issues beyond those that Planning deals with (such as physical improvements and infrastructure delivery) are considered in this project; including social and economic issues for example. Some of the "softer" regeneration aspects that other departments in the Council are experienced in must be addressed in conjunction. To this end, a cross-departmental project group has been established and the City's Regeneration Steering Group has also prioritised the Barton project. More information on the "non-planning" aspects of the project is provided in paragraph 24 below.
5. From a Planning perspective, the Core Strategy contains a policy that allocates Land at Barton for residential development. When adopted, this policy will give planning certainty for the site. The Core Strategy is currently at examination but has been delayed as a result of legal challenges to the South East Plan regarding the South of Oxford Strategic Development Area. Subject to the Inspector's confirmation that he is in a position to conclude the examination, further hearing

sessions are programmed for the week beginning the 12th July. (The hearing session focused on the Barton site was held in July 2009.) Such a timetable would make it possible to adopt the Core Strategy by the end of 2010.

6. Beyond the Core Strategy, this site will be considered in detail in an Area Action Plan (AAP). The AAP will form part of the Local Development Framework for Oxford and will set a framework for the development of the Land at Barton strategic site and consider its links with the existing areas of Barton and Northway. Opportunities for regeneration in Barton and Northway will also be part of the AAP.
7. With the delay to the Core Strategy, other mechanisms for bringing this site forward have been explored. These options are: producing a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and moving straight to an outline planning application.
8. An SPD is a less robust document than an AAP. An SPD cannot make policy but simply supplement existing policy. It does however involve a slightly quicker production process. In the case of Barton, an SPD could not be completed before the Core Strategy is adopted because it is the Core Strategy that provides the policy for Barton; this means that the benefits in terms of time of moving to an SPD are somewhat reduced.
9. The City Council could progress with an outline planning application for the site. This would likely require much detailed supporting information involving time and expense. Until the adoption of the Core Strategy, that application would be determined against Policy NE.3 of the Local Plan which safeguards the land for longer-term development needs. Success of such an application is difficult to predict at present.
10. The AAP approach provides planning certainty for the site, allows constructive community involvement in the development of plans, involves a rigorous testing of the evidence at planning examination and allows the Council to retain significant control over the site should it even decide to sell it in the future. An AAP would also give more opportunity to affect change in the existing communities of Barton and Northway; if the delivery of the Barton site is about more than simple delivery of housing numbers on the allocated site, but also about regeneration and delivery of infrastructure projects, then the AAP route is preferred.

The Issues Document

11. The Issues stage is the first major step towards the production of the AAP. This stage is intended to stimulate local interest in the project and to gather ideas and comments from interested parties and individuals. The Issues Document (Appendix 1) will be subject to a six-week period of consultation from June 11th to July 23rd (the consultation approach is set out below). Comments and ideas gathered through the

consultation will be used to formulate the preferred options for the AAP. The Preferred Options stage will be the next major step with a document and period of consultation on the preferred approach to the policies. This is currently timetabled for November 2010.

12. The Issues Document is designed to be a concise, easy to read summary of the aims of the project and the key considerations for the policies that will follow. The Issues Document is structured around five key objectives proposed for the AAP. These objectives are:
 - Deliver a strong and balanced community;
 - Facilitate regeneration of neighbouring estates;
 - Improve accessibility and integration;
 - Encourage a low carbon lifestyle; and
 - Introduce design that is innovative and responsive to the locality.There is an opportunity through the consultation to refine these objectives further and develop the vision for the new development and the enlarged community that will be created.
13. Behind this document sits an evidence base that has been compiled to provide background information and studies of the area to inform the AAP process. This evidence base includes for example technical surveys on issues such as flooding, archaeology and biodiversity. The evidence base will be available on the City Council website during (and indeed after) the period of consultation. As the AAP project progresses the evidence base will be expanded and added to, so that by the time the AAP is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination, there is a comprehensive body of work to support the policies and proposals.
14. Alongside production of the AAP a Sustainability Appraisal will be carried out to ensure that the plan considers the potential impacts of policies and proposals, whether environmental, social or economic. The first step in the Sustainability Appraisal is to publish a Scoping Report that sets out the baseline information for the AAP area. The Scoping Report will be published alongside the Issues Document for consultation.

Consultation approach

15. It is important to recognise that whilst this is the first document produced during the AAP process, consultation has already begun on the Barton project. In brief the main elements of early consultation have included meetings with stakeholders and service providers, update reports to North East Area Committee, a regular column in the Barton Community Newsletter, permanent noticeboards in Barton Neighbourhood Centre, Northway Community Centre and at the Roundabout Children's Centre, and, importantly, the establishment of the Barton and Northway Working Group.
16. The Barton and Northway Working Group is made up of nominated local community representatives and elected members. Its aim is to engage local people in the future of the development and regeneration

initiatives. It is initially focused on discussing and providing comments on the AAP work as it progresses, however the role of the group will develop over time. The group has also been asked to comment on plans for wider community involvement in the Barton project.

17. The period for consultation on the Issues Document is 6 weeks and will run in June and July. To commence this consultation, notification will be sent to everyone that has registered an interest in planning and regeneration issues on the City's consultation database; those groups and organisations that have been identified as having an interest in the future of the area; and statutory consultees.
18. In terms of publicity, an article will be placed in the City Council's "Your Oxford" newsletter which is delivered to every home in the city. A press release will be issued and a news item placed on the City Council's website with requests for other local organisations to provide a link on their websites.
19. A series of exhibitions will be held providing a summary of the information available in the Issues Document. The exhibition will be taken to a range of locations as listed below and to be advertised on posters throughout the Barton, Northway and Old Headington area.
 - Barton Bash – 12th June
 - Barton Neighbourhood Centre – 14th-17th June
 - Roundabout Centre – 18th-22nd June
 - Barton Pool – 22nd-24th June
 - Northway Community Centre – 28th June-2nd July
 - Mortimer Hall – 6th July
 - Headington Baptist Church – 8th-11th July
 - Ramsay House – 12th July-23rd July
20. At many of the exhibitions, members of the project team will be available to answer questions. These will take the form of advertised drop-in sessions. These have been arranged to coincide with other events being held at the venues and to provide a range of opportunities to enable people to visit them. Staff will be available at the following drop-in sessions:
 - Barton Bash – 12th June, all afternoon (12.00-5.00)
 - Barton Neighbourhood Centre – 15th June, between 1.00 and 4.00
 - Northway Community Centre – 1st July, between 3.00 and 7.00
 - Mortimer Hall – 6th July, between 3.30 and 7.00
 - Headington Baptist Church – 8th July, between 3.00 and 7.00
21. The Issues Document will be made available on-line, in local and the central libraries and sent to the statutory consultees. In addition a summary leaflet and questionnaire has been produced, this will be delivered to every house in the locality (Barton, Northway and Old Headington) and be available on-line and in libraries and other community facilities as well as at the exhibitions.

22. Information that is gathered through the consultation will be used to shape the Preferred Options stage that follows in the Autumn. It will also be collated and reported in a consultation report which will be published as part of the evidence base. That report will then be updated at each stage of the AAP and will provide an audit trail for the Inspector at the examination whereby issues that have been raised can be traced through the process.

AAP timetable

23. The AAP will be produced in line with following broad timetable with the main periods of consultation highlighted in bold text. However this timetable will be kept under review as this complex project progresses.

Develop issues with community/stakeholders	January-June 2010
Consult on Issues document	June-July 2010
Produce Preferred Options document	June-November 2010
Consult on Preferred Options document	November-December 2010
Produce Proposed Submission document	November-May 2011
Consult Proposed Submission document	May-June 2011
Finalise Submission document	May-July 2011
Submit the AAP	July 2011
Hold examination hearing sessions	November 2011
Receive Inspector's Report	February 2012
Adopt DPD	April 2012

Other work on the Barton project

24. The Barton Project is a corporate priority and it is important to recognise that the AAP is just one stream of work underway to progress it. Regular cross-departmental project group meetings are being held to ensure that all the relevant sections of the City Council are co-ordinated in this matter. This project group includes officers from Property, Planning, Community Housing and Community Development, Legal and City Leisure.
25. Another stream of work in parallel with the AAP relates to the social (or non-physical) regeneration aspects of the project. Barton was identified in the Regeneration Framework as one of the five major regeneration projects for the city. The Framework also proposed production of Area Regeneration Plans for these projects, with the aim of enabling the communities to engage and define the regeneration agenda for their areas. It is considered that this would be most beneficially carried out in conjunction with the AAP so that opportunities are not missed and the regeneration benefits for local people are maximised. It may be helpful for the Barton and Northway Working Group to become involved in this stream of work in addition to the AAP.
26. A third stream of work is related to the City Council's role as landowner. Dialogue continues with Scottish and Southern Energy about their role as secondary landowner in bringing the site forward.

Conversations also continue with the Homes and Communities Agency regarding the options for site promotion and delivering the development.

Level of risk

27. The delivery of the overall Barton project is fundamental to the corporate priority “more housing, better housing for all”. It is also a key plank of the Core Strategy. Failure to deliver housing at the scale intended will lead to significant problems in meeting the city’s housing targets.
28. The production of the AAP in particular will require resources in terms of staff time, the commissioning of specialist studies and examination costs. However this has been significantly met through the involvement of the HCA who have funded and commissioned most of the consultancy work carried out thus far.

Climate change / environmental impact

29. The draft Core Strategy includes a specific chapter on ‘Tackling Climate Change’. This over-arching theme runs through the whole suite of documents in the Local Development Framework. For example 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 low-carbon/renewable energy.
30. The AAP as all other Development Plan Documents will be subject to the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment process, which will use sustainability indicators to assess the potential impact of development options emerging from the AAP. This will include the need to assess the impact of the development upon Bayswater Brook, and in particular the watercourses and hydrology. Measures to avoid and mitigate any potential impacts, such as sustainable drainage measures to prevent pollution of groundwater may therefore be required.
31. As a major scheme, development at Barton provides the opportunity for an area wide energy scheme.

Equalities impact

32. The issue of equalities is addressed through the documents already produced and those proposed in the Local Development Scheme. A key theme of the emerging Core Strategy and the LDS is the focus on regeneration. The Barton AAP will provide an important means to deliver new housing, and regeneration in two of the cities estates. This will significantly address the inequalities affecting existing residents.

Financial implications

33. The costs associated with the production of the AAP are being met through the current resources of the Planning Policy team and budget,

supplemented by funding provided by the Homes and Communities Agency for some of the evidence base studies and monies secured from central government through Growth Points funding. There will be more financial implications of the Barton project as a whole. Reports will come before CEB at various points in the project (and from various city departments) for further specific decisions with their associated financial implications.

Legal Implications

34. There are no specific legal implications arising specifically from the recommendations of this report. There are legal requirements that must be followed through the production of the AAP which will be checked by the Inspector at examination. Early involvement of the community in the vision and issues for the AAP helps meet these legal requirements.

Recommendations

35. Members of the City Executive Board are asked to:
1. approve the Barton Area Action Plan Issues Document for consultation; and:
 2. authorise the Head of City Development, in consultation with the Executive Board Member, to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document before publication.

Appendix 1 – Issues Document

Appendix 2 – Risk Register

Name and contact details of author:

Rachel Williams; rwilliams@oxford.gov.uk; extension: 2170

List of background papers: None

Version number: 6

Appendix 2 – Risk Register

No.	Risk Description Link to Corporate Obj	Gross Risk		Cause of Risk	Mitigation	Net Risk		Further Management of Risk: Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Avoid		Monitoring Effectiveness				Current Risk	
		I	P			I	P	Action: Action Owner:	Outcome required: Milestone Date:	Q 1 ☹	Q 2 ☹	Q 3 ☹	Q 4 ☹	I	P
1	The AAP Issues Document does not receive approval from CEB to proceed to consultation. (More housing, better housing for all, and regeneration strategy)	3	2	Lack of agreement with members and officers and political disagreement with the content of the Issues Document.	Mitigating control: The Issues Document has been carefully written just to identify key issues. No decisions on controversial issues have been taken as yet. The document has been circulated widely among the Barton Project Team for comments in advance of the Committee. Level of Effectiveness: M	2	2	Action: The Head of City Development in consultation with the Executive Board Member is delegated to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document before publication. Action Owner: Rachel Williams Mitigating Control: In event that the Issues Document is not approved - inform the Barton Project Team. Revise the AAP timetable to allow a re-draft. Control owner: Michael Crofton-Briggs	Outcome required: Issues document is approved by CEB for consultation with the community Milestone Date: 9 th June 2010						