

To: City Executive Board

Date: 22 January 2014

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: NORTHERN GATEWAY AREA ACTION PLAN: OPTIONS DOCUMENT

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: City Executive Board is requested to approve the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan Options Document for public consultation.

Key decision? No

Executive lead member: Councillor Colin Cook

Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s):

1. approve the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan Options Document for consultation;
2. approve the proposed amendment to the Local Development Scheme; and
3. authorise the Head of City Development, in consultation with the Executive Board Member, to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document and to agree the designed version before publication.

Appendix 1 – Options Document

Appendix 2 – Proposed amendment to the Local Development Scheme

Appendix 3 – Risk Register

Appendix 4 – Initial EqIA Screening

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) Options Document for consultation. The document is the first major stage towards producing an AAP for this important City Council project. Information that is gathered through the consultation will be used to shape the Proposed Submission Document that will follow in the Summer.

Background to the Northern Gateway project

2. The Core Strategy allocates the Northern Gateway as a strategic employment-led development site. The Core Strategy states that an Area Action Plan will be produced to bring forward development on this site. Situated at Pear Tree in the north of the city, the site is a rare opportunity to provide significant new

floorspace within the city for the innovation and knowledge-based sector that is so important to Oxford's and the regional/national economy. The development also offers the opportunity to provide additional new homes and associated facilities in the form of a thriving and vibrant new community that forms part of Oxford.

3. The Core Strategy is the starting point for the work on the Northern Gateway AAP. However as time has moved on since the Core Strategy was adopted, the AAP will need to be based on up to date evidence and reflect additional factors such as City Deal and the emerging Strategic Housing Market Assessment work, that have arisen in the meantime. In the AAP Options Document we are therefore testing a range of options for size and mix of development which include those in the Core Strategy but are not confined to them.

The Options Document

4. This Options Document is the first formal stage in the production of the AAP, setting out a range of options for consultation. These options are based on technical and financial studies and collaboration with the local community and other stakeholders.
5. The Northern Gateway AAP has six objectives:
 - Strengthen Oxford's knowledge-based economy
 - Provide more housing
 - Improve the local and strategic road network
 - Respond to the context of the natural and historic environment
 - Create a gateway to Oxford
 - Encourage a low-carbon lifestyle/economy
6. The document is structured as follows:

Context:	the strategic policy and site context
Vision & Objectives:	vision for the development and objectives for the AAP
Options:	the preferred options for the AAP based on four themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance and mix of uses • Transport • Design • Environment and sustainability
Preferred Strategy:	how the preferred options combine together to form the preferred strategy for the AAP
Implementation & delivery:	the key implementation and delivery issues and the ways in which they will be addressed to create certainty
Next steps:	The on-going AAP process

7. The preferred options combine together to form the preferred strategy or framework for future development of the Northern Gateway. The components include:

- Focus of the site to be on providing employment development to support the knowledge economy
 - Provision of around 500 new homes
 - Provision of a package of access and highway measures including improvements to Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts and provision of new link road between the A40 and A44
 - Provision of additional spaces at the Park and Ride by decking the site
 - Provision of improved public transport interchange and passenger facilities
 - Provision of a design code to inform the detailed design of the development
 - Carry out a review of the inner Green Belt boundary (only within the AAP area)
 - Provision of a good quality living environment for new residents
 - A mix of housing types and sizes and seek at 50% affordable housing
8. 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. The background documents will be available on the City Council website during (and after) the period of consultation.
 9. Alongside production of the AAP a Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out to ensure that the plan considers the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of policies and proposals. This is available for Members to view in the Members Room and will be published alongside the AAP.
 10. The version of the document attached to this report as appendix 1 is not in its final designed format. Included with the text are several maps and illustrations which will form part of the Options Document when fully designed.

Public Involvement

11. It is important to note that whilst the Options Document is the first document produced during the AAP process, public involvement and consultation has already begun on the Northern Gateway project. The main elements of early consultation have included meetings with stakeholders (e.g. Environment Agency, Highways Agency), service providers (e.g. Local Education Authority, Emergency Services), and neighbouring authorities (e.g. Cherwell and South Oxfordshire District Councils; meetings with local groups and organisations (e.g. representatives of Wolvercote Commoners and Engage Oxford) and, importantly, close working with the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan group.
12. Officers have attended meetings of the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan group and assisted them in running their public workshop, which over 100 members of the public attended. At that meeting there was a series of brief presentations setting the context of the AAP project and the remainder of the evening was structured as a workshop with table discussions facilitated by members of Wolvercote Steering Group and officers of the City and County Councils. This meeting was well received and forms a good basis for moving forward with further public involvement.

Consultation approach

13. This is the first formal stage of consultation; the Options Document is an important opportunity for the public and stakeholders to contribute to the future planning of the Northern Gateway. It is being published to stimulate debate and to invite comments on the realistic options that are available. It is hoped that everyone with an interest in the future of the area – residents, community groups, local organisations, businesses, employers, and providers of infrastructure and services – will take the opportunity to respond to the consultation with their views about the options presented.
14. The Options Document will be subject to a six-week consultation period programmed to run between 14th February and 28th March 2013. To commence this consultation, notification will be sent to everyone that has registered an interest in planning and regeneration issues on the City Council's consultation database; those groups and organisations that have been identified as having an interest in the future of the area; and statutory consultees.
15. A wide range of different tools will be used to publicise the consultation and gather views from the community and stakeholders. These may include exhibitions, drop-in sessions, a summary leaflet, questionnaires, the City Council website and newsletter, press release, posters, attendance at meetings with local groups and organisations and with partners and stakeholders. The Options Document will be made available online, in local and the central libraries and sent to the statutory consultees.
16. Information that is gathered through the consultation will help inform the draft AAP that the City Council will submit to the Secretary of State. A Proposed Submission Document will be published in Summer 2013 when there will be another opportunity for the public and stakeholders to comment.

AAP timetable

17. The following timetable reflects the City Council's ambition to progress the AAP swiftly in order to see development commence promptly.

Early work to develop Options	September 2013 – January 2014
Consult on Options Document	February – March 2014
Consult on Proposed Submission document	July 2014
Submit the AAP to the Secretary of State	September 2014
Hold examination hearing sessions	January 2015
Receive Inspector's Report	May 2015
Adopt AAP	May 2015

18. The Council's Local Development Scheme sets out a three-year work programme for producing planning policy documents. In order to keep the LDS up-to-date it is proposed that an amendment is made to reflect the

timetable for the Northern Gateway AAP. CEB is also requested to approve the proposed amendment to the LDS as set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

Level of risk

19. The contribution of new development at the Northern Gateway is a key priority for the City Council, fundamental to achieving the objectives of the Oxford Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Core Strategy and the Economic Strategy for Oxford. Failure to deliver this development will lead to problems in delivering the Core Strategy and hamper the potential for economic growth.
20. The production of the AAP will require resources in terms of staff time, the commissioning of specialist studies and examination costs.
21. The risk register is attached as Appendix 3.

Climate change and environmental impact

22. The AAP objectives seek to encourage a low carbon lifestyle/economy by: encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport; providing new homes and buildings that use energy and water efficiently; and, by making effective use of renewable and low-carbon energy.
23. The AAP, like all other planning policy documents, is subject to the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process. That process uses sustainability indicators to assess the potential impact of development options emerging from the AAP.

Equalities impact

24. A key theme of the Core Strategy is the focus on providing employment and housing opportunities and this is reflected in the Northern Gateway AAP objectives. An Initial EqIA Screening is attached at Appendix 4.

Financial implications

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

Legal Implications

26. There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report. There are legal requirements that must be followed through the production of the AAP which will be considered by the Inspector at examination.

Name and contact details of author:-

Name Rachel Williams
Job title Principal Planning Officer
Service Area / Department City Development
Tel: 01865 252170 e-mail: rwilliams@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

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