

To: City Executive Board

Date: 10 September 2014

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: Designation of Headington Neighbourhood Forum

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To designate the Headington Neighbourhood Forum.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Bob Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning.

Policy Framework: Neighbourhood Forums will be able to produce neighbourhood plans. Adopted neighbourhood plans will contain statutory planning policies to guide development in the neighbourhood plan areas.

Recommendations:

That City Executive Board designates the proposed Headington Neighbourhood Forum as a neighbourhood forum for the Headington Neighbourhood Area.

Appendix 1- Map of the designated Headington Neighbourhood Area that the forum application relates to

Appendix 2- The submitted Neighbourhood Forum Application

Appendix 3- Criteria for designating Neighbourhood Forums set out in the Regulations

Introduction

1. The Localism Act has introduced new rights and powers to enable communities to get directly involved in planning for their areas. Interested communities will be able to come together through a neighbourhood forum and produce a neighbourhood plan. The contents of the neighbourhood plans will be shaped by the local communities. They are to generally

conform with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and promote at least as much development as the Local Plan. Once plans are adopted they will become part of the statutory development plan, and therefore an important consideration when making decisions on planning applications.

2. City Executive Board is asked to consider the proposed Headington Neighbourhood Forum for designation. Neighbourhood forum applications must link to a designed neighbourhood area. The neighbourhood area the Headington Forum application relates to is the Headington Neighbourhood Area (A maps of which is shown in Appendix 1).
3. Planning Regulations set out the requirements for designation of a neighbourhood forum. The neighbourhood forum applications received (see Appendix 2) should be judged against these criteria. The proposed neighbourhood forum has been advertised for a statutory period of six weeks (22nd May-3rd July) and comments were invited. In addition, the Town and Country Planning Act requires the Council to have regard to the desirability of designating an organisation or body—
 - (i) which has secured (or taken reasonable steps to attempt to secure) that its membership includes at least one individual falling within each of the categories of people living in the area, people working in the area and, elected members of the City or County Councils,
 - (ii) whose membership is drawn from different places in the neighbourhood area concerned and from different sections of the community in that area, and
 - (iii) whose purpose reflects (in general terms) the character of that area,

Compliance with planning regulations

4. The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 include the criteria that must be met in neighbourhood area applications. These are shown in Appendix 3.
5. The application received is attached in Appendix 2. Information is provided in the application to show that the conditions as outlined in Appendix 3 are met. The Forum is established for the purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area; has an open membership; includes more than 21 members (ward councillors having been involved) and has a written constitution. Officers therefore recommend the applicants be designated as the Headington Neighbourhood Forum.

Consultation responses

6. The City Council has a statutory requirement to publicise for 6 weeks any qualifying applications we receive for designation of a neighbourhood forum (which gives qualifying groups the status they need in order to develop a neighbourhood plan).

7. The receipt of the Forum application was publicised with the intention of raising awareness within and around the relevant area. Comments were invited, giving people the opportunity to raise objections. Known local groups were contacted directly by letter or email.
8. Only one organisation or body can be designated as a neighbourhood forum in any neighbourhood area. If a designation is made, no other organisation or body may be designated for that neighbourhood area until that designation expires or is withdrawn. This was made clear on the consultation material.
9. Few representations were made during the publicity period. English Heritage sent a general letter about how they may be involved in neighbourhood planning and English Nature, Network Rail and Oxfordshire County Council all confirmed that they had no objections or comments to make.

Environmental impact

10. This stage of the neighbourhood planning process only involves the designation of a forum. No Sustainability Appraisal is required for this stage; however, as plans are drafted it may be necessary to carry out Sustainability Appraisals for any plan assessed as having potentially significant environmental effects.

Equalities impact

11. Consideration has been given to the public sector equality duty imposed by s149 of the Equality Act 2010. Having paid due regard to the need to meet the objectives of that duty the view is taken that the duty is met.

Financial implications

12. The City Council is obliged to offer a certain degree of help to groups as they produce their plans. As well as this, the City Council must consult on draft plans, organise an examination and run the referendum. These requirements will be met from the current resources of the Planning Policy team, supplemented by grants available from central government to district councils for each neighbourhood plan.
13. It should also be noted that, on adoption of a neighbourhood plan (not on designation of a Forum), the local community will be entitled to an increase in the proportion of CIL receipts that are to be spent in the locality with community input. This will rise from 15% of CIL receipts to 25% of CIL receipts. The City Council will retain all the CIL monies but engage with the communities where the development has taken place and agree with them how best to spend the neighbourhood funding element. A neighbourhood forum will not directly receive the money, as it will not be an “accountable body”. All that would change on adoption of a neighbourhood plan would be

that the proportion to spend locally in agreement with the community would rise from 15% to 25%.

Legal implications

14. Officers consider that the information provided is adequate to show that the statutory requirements for the designation of neighbourhood forums are met.

Risk assessment

15. A risk assessment has been undertaken. No significant risks were identified.

Name and contact details of author:-

Name Sarah Harrison
Job title Senior Planning Officer
Service Area / Department City Development
Tel: 01865 252015 e-mail: sbharrison@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None