

DRAFT

To: North East Area Committee

Date: 15th December 2009

Item No:

Report of: Head of City Development

Title of Report: Barton Area Action Plan

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To update Members on the initial stages of the production of the Barton Area Action Plan

Key decision: No

Report Approved by:

Finance: Anna Hedges

Legal: Lindsay Cane

Head of City Development: Michael Crofton-Briggs

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.

Recommendation(s):

Members of the North East Area Committee are asked to confirm their support for the aims of the AAP and progress made to date.

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress made towards the production of the Barton Area Action Plan (AAP). Despite the current delay to the Core Strategy, work on the Barton AAP continues at pace with a focus on carrying out evidence base surveys and community involvement. The City Council continues to work with the

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to bring forward this strategic site and deliver benefits to the existing neighbouring communities.

Background

2. The site as shown in Appendix 1 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.
3. This site will be brought forward through 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.

Vision

4. Land at Barton is the single biggest opportunity for housing development within the city. Its potential contribution towards the vision for Oxford is significant. The site itself has been initially assessed as being capable of accommodating some 800-1200 dwellings together with supporting amenities.
5. 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. 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.
6. The objectives for the Area Action Plan will be developed and refined over the coming months. At the current time however it seems important that the plan seeks to:
 - deliver a mixed and balanced community;
 - facilitate the regeneration of neighbouring estates;
 - improve accessibility and integration;
 - encourage a low-carbon lifestyle; and:
 - deliver quality design that's innovative and responsive to local circumstances.

7. No other sites of this scale and nature have been identified within the city and as such this offers a rare opportunity to develop a new piece of the city and to secure benefits for the existing local communities (including better connections with the rest of the city). As such the Barton project has become a corporate priority with cross-party backing and significant cross-department working.

The Land at Barton site

8. The entire area of Land at Barton as defined by the safeguarded land policy of the Local Plan and shown in Appendix 1. It measures some 36.4 hectares. This is the area bounded by the A40 to the south, Bayswater Brook to the north and the current extent of housing on Barton to the east.
9. Within these 36.4 hectares there are parts of the site that would either be unavailable, difficult to develop, or would need to be accommodated within the development. These parts of the site and their approximate areas are set out below:
 - area within floodplain adjoining Bayswater Brook – 3.6 hectares
 - area of Barton Fields Allotments – 4.2 hectares
 - area of Barton Recreation Ground – 3.3 hectares
 - area of substation – 3.7 hectares (which may be rationalised)Whilst some of these areas will be unavailable for built development there will be opportunities to accommodate some aspects of the development, such as open space, within these zones. This will help to ensure that the remainder of the site, around 23.5 hectares, can be developed efficiently.
10. The majority of the site is in the ownership of the city council with a portion around the substation in the ownership of Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE). Discussions with SSE have identified that a large area around the substation is non-operational and as such they are interested in releasing approximately half of their site for development as part of the wider project. More detailed discussions will follow, through which the mechanism for this will be agreed.

The Area Action Plan

11. The precise boundary of the proposed Area Action Plan will be the subject of further scoping work, consultation and discussions. It is considered that the boundary should include not just the Land at Barton site but also the majority of the existing Barton estate and Northway estate to ensure that the benefits brought to the neighbouring communities are maximised. The inclusion in the AAP will help stimulate investment and regeneration in Barton and Northway. It is important to recognise that inclusion of existing built-up areas within the AAP

boundary does not necessarily imply that those areas might be physically redeveloped.

12. The key planning and housing issues that will have to be considered through the AAP include:
 - Access - how to access the new development whilst minimising the impact on existing roads and residents;
 - Integration – how to connect the new development with existing neighbourhoods and communities;
 - Housing mix – the size, tenure and type of housing to be provided;
 - Supporting amenities – a new primary school should be provided and this could form part of a small neighbourhood centre;
 - Recreation ground - this is built on a former landfill site, whether this facility remains in its current position or is relocated within the site will need to be considered;
 - Allotments – the Core Strategy states that development proposals will be expected to retain the allotments;
 - Electricity substation and overhead lines – relocation of the substation is not viable, however there remains the possibility of placing overhead lines underground to minimise the impact; and:
 - Regeneration – possible regeneration of parts of Barton and Northway; identification of sites for redevelopment and projects for investment.

Community involvement

13. The involvement of the community in developing these plans will be very important. In broad terms there will be 3 significant periods for such involvement during the AAP process. These will take place at the commencement of the process, at the Options stage, and at the Proposed Submission stage.
14. The first period of community involvement begins now and runs through until the spring. The primary aim of this is to develop objectives and a vision for the AAP and the communities involved. It is essential that the process of developing the vision is carried out with the full involvement of as many members of the local communities as possible in order to make it inclusive and meaningful. A broad range of methods designed to reach as many people as possible will be used, for example poster campaigns, leaflets and mail outs, the internet, exhibitions and interactive displays. This period will also be used to raise general awareness of the project and gather contacts for people who will be interested in working through the process with us. The wider community is currently being invited to register their interest in this project (at www.oxford.gov.uk/consultation) which will enable us to invite them to workshops and exhibitions throughout the production of the AAP.
15. The second period coincides with the publication of an options document for the AAP. That document will contain options for policies and

proposals and will be used to test these before they are finalised. The options document is planned for consultation in June and July 2010. At that time the methods used are likely to involve exhibitions, workshops and questionnaires together with contacting local groups and organisations and everyone who has previously expressed an interest in the project.

16. The third period involves consultation on the draft AAP (the proposed submission document). This is currently programmed for January/February 2011. By this point the policies and proposals will be drafted (in line with the comments received at the options stage) and people will be asked to comment on the detail of the draft document. At this stage the community involvement is more formal as it relates to details of wording and is likely to involve a published document with an accompanying comment form.
17. Outside these periods of involvement, several on-going measures will be employed to ensure good coverage and engagement. One such measure will be the establishment of a working group comprising local community representatives and members which will be able to advise on plans for wider community involvement and help guide and provide comments on the AAP work as it progresses. This group will be established early in the process. In addition it is envisaged that further reports will come before North East Area Committee to provide updates on the progress and ask for input into the policies and proposals as they emerge. Other measures that are likely to take place include work with the local schools. Planning Aid is assisting with this in establishing a project for local children to develop their visions for their community.

Current work

18. Some initial work was carried out with the HCA's involvement, to support the allocation of the site in the Core Strategy examination. However detailed work and investigations are now required to begin to inform the AAP.
19. One element of this work involves the carrying out of various evidence base surveys. Surveys on issues such as flooding, archaeology and biodiversity are currently being carried out with the results being available to feed into the AAP work.
20. The second element alongside this is community involvement. This is at an early stage to date with initial meetings having been held and planned with various stakeholders. These stakeholders include local community groups, residents associations, local businesses and public sector service providers. Work will continue in this area through December and January.

21. The third element of work currently underway relates to the City Council's role as landowner. Dialogue continues with Scottish and Southern Energy about their role and with the HCA regarding the options for delivering the development. It is planned that a paper outlining the various options will be before City Executive Board in the New Year.

Timetable

22. The AAP will be produced in line with following broad timetable:

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|---|-------------------------|
| Gather background evidence base | September 09-January 10 |
| Develop options with community/stakeholders | January-May 2010 |
| Publish Options document | June 2010 |
| Consult on Options document | June-July 2010 |
| Produce Proposed Submission document | August-November 2010 |
| Publish Proposed Submission | December 2010 |
| Consult on proposed Submission | December 10-January 11 |
| Finalise Submission document | January-February 2011 |
| Publish Submission document | March 2011 |
| Hold examination hearing sessions | July 2011 |
| Receive Inspector's Report | September 2011 |
| Adopt DPD | November 2011 |

23. Informal community involvement and evidence base gathering will continue through the winter and the first formal document publication will take place in June next year. That document will present the options for the development and will seek community views on them before a preferred approach is taken and detailed policies and proposals are drawn up.

Finance

24. There are no financial implications.

Level of risk

25. The delivery of Land at Barton is fundamental to the Core Strategy as a whole and to the corporate priority "more housing, better housing for all". Failure to deliver housing at the scale intended will lead to significant problems in meeting the city's housing targets. The principle of developing this site was debated at the Core Strategy examination however and with the advice of the Government Office of the South East, it is considered that there is minimal risk to continuing this project in advance of the Core Strategy Inspector's Report.
26. The production of the AAP 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

27. 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 renewable energy.
28. 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.
29. 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.

Equalities

30. 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.

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Background papers:

Appendix 1 - Map showing the Land at Barton Strategic Site.

Version number:

Appendix 1 - Map showing the Land at Barton Strategic Site

