

 Report of: **Planning Services Business Manager**


 **Environment Scrutiny Committee**

 Date: **14th February 2007**

 **Agenda No:**

 Title of Report : **Core Strategy Preferred Options**

Summary and Recommendations

 **Purpose of report:** To offer the Environment Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to feed into preparation of the Preferred Options document for Oxford's Core Strategy. The Preferred Options document will be published for public consultation at the end of March 2007.

 **Key decision:** No

 **Portfolio Holder:** Councillor John Goddard

 **Scrutiny Responsibility:** Environment

 **Ward(s) affected:** All

Report Approved by:

Policy Framework:

The production of this document fulfils a commitment of the Local Development Scheme. The Core Strategy will set out the strategic planning framework for Oxford to 2026, and as such will help to implement many aspects of the Council's vision, including improving the environment where we live and work; providing more affordable housing; creating local prosperity and sustaining full employment; improving transport and mobility; and making Oxford a safer City.

Recommendation(s):

1. To note the contents of the report; and
2. To highlight any particular issues or suggestions that the Environment Scrutiny Committee wish to be considered by the Executive Board.

Introduction

1. Members may recall consultation on the early 'Issues and Options' stage of the Core Strategy at Area Committees in July 2006. Officers have since been preparing a 'Preferred Options' document, which will be reported to Executive Board on 19th March 2007.
2. This report provides an opportunity for the Environment Scrutiny Committee to comment on some of the key strategic planning issues facing Oxford, and to highlight any particular comments or suggestions that Members wish to be considered by Executive Board.

Purpose of the Core Strategy

3. The Core Strategy will be a key document within Oxford's Local Development Framework (LDF). It will set out the key elements of the planning framework for the City, including which broad areas are suitable for housing and other strategic development needs. Essentially it will be a replacement for the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, but only relating to the City. It will also replace some of the higher-level strategic policies in the Oxford Local Plan. The 20-year timeframe of this document corresponds with SEERA's emerging South East Plan.
4. The Core Strategy will set the policy context for future Development Plan Documents (DPD's) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's). Once the Core Strategy is adopted, all subsequent DPD's and SPD's must be in conformity with the Core Strategy.
5. An important aspect of the new planning system is the change to 'spatial' policies. This means that the Core Strategy and future planning documents are no longer restricted to land-use considerations, and need to take account of the plans and strategies of other agencies. Spatial planning policies can be delivered in a variety of ways and are not solely reliant on being implemented through development control decisions.

Policy Context

6. The Core Strategy has to be consistent with national planning policy and be in general conformity with the policies of the South East Plan. However, one of the challenges of spatial planning is to ensure that policies are locally distinctive and do not simply repeat national and regional guidance. The Core Strategy should also identify the main priorities that deliver the spatial aspects of the Community Strategy.

Research and evidence base

7. The Core Strategy Preferred Options document will be informed by a wide range of published research and evidence, including the following studies in particular; the Housing Requirements Study (2004); the

Housing Viability Study (2004); the draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2007), which will be published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options; the draft county-wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007); the Employment Land Study (2006); the Retail Needs Study (2004); and the Green Space Study (2005).

8. Work is currently underway on updating the Retail Needs Study and on two further pieces of research: the Role of Education and Health Sectors in Oxford's Economy; and the Hotel and Short-Stay Accommodation Study. In addition, it is intended to shortly commission a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the whole of Oxford. These studies will be completed in time to inform production of the submission version of the Core Strategy, as well as future Development Plan Documents, such as the Site Allocations DPD.

Previous Consultation

9. One of the main principles of the new planning system is that local communities and stakeholders should be involved from the outset in the preparation of planning policy documents. In line with this principle, the City Council conducted an extensive public consultation exercise last summer to coincide with the publication of Oxford 2026; the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper. The purpose of this first stage of public consultation was to seek views on how Oxford should plan for, and manage, change and development over the next 20 years.
10. The consultation aimed to involve the whole community by sending a questionnaire to each household in Oxford. In addition, specific letters were sent to a wide range of organisations, including statutory bodies, interest groups, and developers. Twelve staffed exhibitions were held in locations across Oxford.
11. A brief summary of the main findings of the consultation exercise is contained in Appendix 1. A much fuller report is available to view on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy.

Preferred Options Stage

12. Officers are currently working on a Preferred Options document, which will set out the Council's preferred spatial strategy and the various options for delivering that strategy. This will be a consultation document rather than a draft Core Strategy, but is an important milestone towards the production of the submission document.
13. An assessment known as Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), is being undertaken on the Core Strategy during its production. This considers the social, economic and environmental effects of the document, and ensures that it accords with the principals of 'sustainable development'. Each of the

preferred options is being developed, refined and assessed against sustainability criteria. The Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA/SEA) will be published for consultation alongside the Preferred Options document.

Draft Spatial Vision and Objectives

14. The Core Strategy's spatial vision and objectives form the starting point for the development of the strategy and subsequent policies. Members may wish to comment on the draft spatial vision, which is attached to this report at [Appendix 2](#), or on the draft spatial objectives, attached at [Appendix 3](#).

Key Issues

15. It would be helpful to obtain the Scrutiny Committees' views on how the Core Strategy should deal with the key strategic planning issues facing Oxford. To focus the debate, a few important questions are set out below, together with a brief explanation of the potential options available. Officers will be present at the meeting to provide more details on the background to these issues where appropriate.

Housing

16. The Core Strategy will determine the level of housing that is most appropriate in Oxford for the next 20 years. The Housing Requirements Study 2004 shows that there is a need for between 1,700 and 1,800 new affordable dwellings per year in Oxford, yet the draft South East Plan target for all forms of housing in the City is only 350 a year. Setting a higher target in the Core Strategy would help to meet more of Oxford's pressing housing need.
17. In considering housing numbers, it should be borne in mind that the land supply on previously developed (brownfield) sites is likely to reduce during the next 20 years. To date a large amount of development in Oxford has gone on brownfield land, e.g. during 2005/06, 99% of housing completions were on brownfield land compared to the South East Plan target of 60%. However, a number of the larger brownfield sites, such as those in the canal corridor, have now been developed or are currently being brought through the planning process.
18. In addition, many residents are concerned about the cumulative impact of infilling and intensification on Oxford's character. Policies could be introduced to incorporate more family housing in new developments, and potentially to restrict the number of family homes being converted to flats, but this would clearly impact on future rates of brownfield development.

19. The Committee may therefore wish to comment on the options for housing numbers set out below, in light of the fact that the higher the housing target in the Core Strategy, the more likely that some residential development will be required on greenfield land. Likewise, the Committee may wish to comment on whether or not planning policies should make more provision for family accommodation, bearing in mind that the consequence of this would be to increase the likelihood of future housing development on greenfield land.
20. Options for housing numbers include:
 - to plan for enough sites only to meet the draft South East Plan target of 350 dwellings per year/7,000 dwellings over 20 years
 - to plan for enough sites to meet the current Local Plan/Structure Plan target of 433 dwellings per year/8,660 dwellings over 20 years
 - to plan for enough sites to meet predicted population growth, which would involve some 550 dwellings per year/11,000 over 20 years
 - to go higher than 550 per year to meet some of the backlog of unmet demand.

Employment

21. The Employment Land Study in 2006 highlighted the various strengths of Oxford's economy, including its world-class entrepreneurial universities and hospitals, and internationally known research base and 'brand'. The Study indicated that most of the main competing locations have fewer land and labour constraints than Oxford, and a possible future shortage of suitable employment space could threaten the City's role as a leading centre of knowledge based industries.
22. The Committee may wish to comment on the options set out in the Employment Land Study, which included:
 - 'minimal growth' (no new allocations, protect and modernise existing key sites, new jobs 1,000)
 - 'managed growth' (allocate one reserve site 17.5 ha plus West End 2 ha, protect and modernise existing sites, new jobs 4,500)
 - 'medium growth' (allocate one reserve site and urban extension 37.5 ha, plus West End 2 ha, protect and modernise existing sites, new jobs 8,500)
 - 'higher growth' (allocate two reserve sites and urban extension 57.5 ha, plus West End 2 ha, protect and modernise existing sites, new jobs 12,500)

Retail

23. Assuming that the Westgate development goes ahead, and that the site to the west of St Aldate's and south of Queen Street allocated in

the Local Plan is also implemented, there is likely to be little or no land available in the City centre for future retail growth. The Core Strategy needs to consider where any future retail need could best be accommodated.

24. Options being considered include designating Cowley/Templars Square as a Primary District centre capable of accommodating more development, and/or including some retail development as part of a new mixed-use District centre at Blackbird Leys. The Committee may wish to comment on these or suggest other options for consideration.

Climate Change

25. The City Council already has some innovative planning policies relating to energy issues, including the adopted SPD on Natural Resource Impact Analysis (NRIA). It also has a range of planning policies to reduce the need to travel and encourage sustainable modes of transport, including applying a 'sequential test' to the location of large developments and restrictions on the level of car parking.
26. The Committee may wish to suggest other ideas for inclusion in the Core Strategy, either in relation to mitigating climate change or adapting to its impacts. For instance, an issue to consider is whether a virtual moratorium should be imposed on future infill development within flood zone 3A (areas with a high probability of flooding). This would affect significant built-up areas in south and west Oxford.

Greenfield Land

27. If greenfield land is required for development during the next 20 years, there are three possible options within Oxford, namely:
 - A review of the Green Belt (excluding land in the flood plain or which is designated for its nature conservation interest);
 - Safeguarded Land (this is land between the built-up area and the inner edge of the Green Belt that has been protected in the Local Plan to meet possible longer-term development needs); and
 - Other open space, e.g. lesser-used playing fields.
28. The Committee may wish to comment on the relative merits of the above options, and on the relative merits of development on the three areas of Safeguarded Land inside the City's boundary. These are:
 - Pear Tree (16 hectares) – two parcels of agricultural land either side of Woodstock Road and adjacent to the A34;
 - Barton (36 hectares) – an area of agricultural land adjacent to Barton estate but separated from rest of Oxford by the A40;

- Summertown (17 hectares) – a mixture of agricultural land and school playing fields behind Summerfield School, between Summertown District centre and Cherwell valley green wedge.

The Core Strategy timetable

29. Following consideration by Executive Board, the Preferred Options will be subject to a 6-week public consultation period from 30th March to 11th May 2007. During that time, all Members will have a chance to consider the document, as it will be reported to the April cycle of Area Committees.
30. Comments and responses collected from public consultation will help inform the submission Core Strategy document. This will be reported to Executive Board and Council, and submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2008. An Examination is currently programmed for summer 2008, with adoption anticipated to be in March 2009.

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Background papers:

None

Appendix 1 – Summary of Issues and Options Consultation

Consultation response

1. At the close of the consultation, 2,205 questionnaires had been received (2,147 leaflets and 58 stakeholders questionnaires). In addition, a further 40 letters were received from stakeholders. Age groupings of respondents were fairly even apart from the under 25 group, which accounted for only 4% of responses. More women than men responded in each age group. Responses were relatively evenly distributed between the OX2, OX3 and OX4 postcodes, with a minor advantage from OX4. The City centre area (OX1) only accounted for 10% of the responses, which is to be expected given that this postcode covers a smaller area than the other three.
2. Whilst the consultation proved to be generally very successful, there was clearly an under-representation of younger people in the survey and the results therefore need to be read with that in mind. In addition, despite contacting representatives of many community and hard to reach groups, and selecting venues for the exhibitions ranging from the staff canteen at BMW to the Asian Cultural Centre in East Oxford, it is acknowledged that there was limited meaningful engagement with hard to reach groups.

Results of the public questionnaire

3. These are the main findings of the questionnaires sent to residents and completed at exhibitions. Results have been combined in order to give a general impression of the issues raised.

Housing

4. Providing more housing was the least popular choice when asked how to improve quality of life in Oxford, although a significant minority considered it the most important factor. In terms of housing requirements, family housing was considered to be the greatest need with purpose built flats and housing for the elderly also enjoying good support. Conversions, student accommodation and live/work units were thought of as the least important dwelling types for the City. Respondents felt that new developments should be built to higher densities and concentrated on brownfield land, whilst the options of building on Safeguarded Land and reviewing the Green Belt also enjoyed some support. Perhaps unsurprisingly, residents strongly opposed building on greenfield land such as playing fields within the City.

Employment

5. Creating more jobs was also an unpopular choice in terms of improving quality of life. In terms of employment uses, the top priorities given by

the respondents were high-tech research and development, and the education and health care/hospital sectors. Tourism had some support but is not a priority, while industrial and office development were considered the least suitable options.

Transport

6. There is a large consensus to reduce traffic congestion in order to improve quality of life; transport was also the top priority that the public would like to see change by 2026. Improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists was considered a priority, whilst providing more car parking facilities was not. The idea of congestion charging was clearly disliked. Improving roads and junctions for all traffic and developing a rapid mass transit system had dispersed values, gaining both positive and negative support.

Leisure and Retail

7. The highest priority for improving the attractiveness of the City centre to shoppers was the promotion of greater choice and more specialist shops while one of the less popular options was simply for more shops. Improving the appearance of the shopping environment was also considered relevant but the provision of more car parking attracted little support. In terms of leisure facilities, an indoor arena gained the greatest support, whilst new and improved parks and indoor sports facilities were also considered necessary. Cultural attractions were deemed to be the lowest priority.

Results of the stakeholder questionnaire

8. The majority of stakeholders agreed with the Core Strategy's spatial issues, suggested list of visions and objectives, but added other issues/objectives etc to be considered alongside them. They also concurred very closely with the results of the public questionnaire regarding types of housing, transport, employment, leisure, shopping and the location of future development. The only major difference between the two questionnaires was the results of the improving quality of life issue, where many stakeholders believed that providing more housing would be of positive benefit.
9. Both sets of respondents were in agreement about the kind of city they would like to see and what is most important to preserve. They would like Oxford to be perceived as an environmentally aware, historic and cultural city, with relatively little support for the car-free and high-tech city options. Unsurprisingly, there was consensus that it is most important to preserve Oxford's character, history and culture, together with its natural and built environment. Likewise, there was agreement across both questionnaires that transport is the most important thing to change in Oxford over the next 20 years.

Results of the workshops

10. Whilst the stakeholders workshop was reasonably well attended, the public workshop was poorly attended. This may have been due to the hot weather, insufficient advance publicity, or the fact that at this early stage the Core Strategy had not generated any significant local press coverage.
11. Both workshops sparked interesting debate across a range of topics, including housing, economic growth, transport, the natural and built environment and wider quality of life issues. Although there was some agreement about the key issues facing Oxford, no consensus emerged in terms of the strategic planning framework; i.e. some people supported a policy of managed growth, whereby further expansion takes place within and adjoining the City, whereas others favoured a policy of containment with growth being directed towards the County Towns.

Appendix 2 – Draft Core Strategy Spatial Vision

Our vision of Oxford is a city that celebrates its unique character, while embracing the changes that are necessary to ensure its continued prosperity in the 21st Century. A city that is proud of its past, but also modern and forward-looking.

The Local Development Framework will aim to promote Oxford's distinctive identity and its many assets. That means conserving and enhancing the city's outstanding heritage and its most prized green spaces, and also supporting carefully managed growth and innovation in areas where Oxford already excels; education, healthcare, scientific research and manufacturing. Tourism will be managed so as to maximise its benefits to the City.

The transformation of the West End and the expansion of retailing, leisure and cultural activities in the City centre will ensure that Oxford is a vibrant urban centre able to play a leading role within the region. At the same time, we aim to enhance the character and role of district and neighbourhood centres in the City so that local communities can access the essential services they need close to their homes.

Success can bring its own problems, and chief amongst those is the need to address Oxford's housing shortage: the City needs more affordable and family homes. We aim to ensure that Oxford continues to find innovative ways to reduce the impacts of traffic, and that development is supported by appropriate services and infrastructure. We will seek to improve the public realm and to achieve a standard of urban design that matches Oxford's worldwide reputation.

A key part of our vision is that Oxford should be a city where everyone is able to achieve a high quality of life, and where all of our diverse communities feel safe, are valued, and are able to share in the city's success. The Local Development Framework will seek to promote social inclusion and development will be planned to bring the maximum benefits to all parts of Oxford, especially areas in need of regeneration.

Alongside development to meet today's needs comes a responsibility to future generations. Our vision is that Oxford will be at the forefront of innovative efforts to tackle climate change, and that the City will lead the way in measures to minimise the use of natural resources. Oxford's Local Development Framework will seek to ensure that growth and change go hand in hand with the highest standards of environmental protection and management.

Appendix 3 – Draft Core Strategy Spatial Objectives

1. To provide the development required to meet Oxford's needs, ensuring an appropriate balance of housing and employment growth in the context of other competing land uses
2. Ensure that all new development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure provision and community facilities
3. To promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities in employment, healthcare and education across Oxford
4. Ensure an appropriate mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to meet existing needs and future population growth as far as possible
5. To provide a range of leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities
6. Strengthen and diversify Oxford's economy and provide a range of employment opportunities across the City
7. Promote Oxford as a centre of excellence for higher education, health services and medical and scientific research
8. Maintain and strengthen the local, national and international role of Oxford as a tourist destination
9. Maintain and strengthen the regional role of Oxford city centre as a primary focus for shopping, employment, leisure and cultural activities, with District centres providing a complimentary role.
10. Maintain, enhance and promote access to Oxford's rich and diverse natural environment
11. To help protect people and their property from flooding
12. Preserve and enhance Oxford's exceptional historic legacy, important views and the distinctive townscape characteristics of Oxford's neighbourhoods
13. Ensure that all new development delivers a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm
14. Maximise the reuse of previously developed land and make full and efficient use of all land, having regard to the distinct character of each neighbourhood
15. Maximise Oxford's contribution to tackling the causes of climate change and to minimise the use of natural resources
16. Ensure that new developments are located in accessible locations to minimise overall travel demand
17. To support a reduction in car use, minimise the impact of traffic and support walking, cycling and the use of public transport

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 12 February 2007

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Phelps (Chair), Councillor Tanner (Vice-Chair), Councillors Hollander, Pressel, Royce and Scanlan.

Also in attendance: Councillor Fooks (Cleaner Environment Portfolio Holder).

OFFICERS PRESENT FOR THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE MEETING: Sharon Cosgrove (Strategic Director, Physical Environment), Jeremy Thomas (Head of Legal & Democratic Services), Steve Pickles, Adrian Roche, Mark Jaggard (Planning Services Business Unit), Paul Spencer (Environmental Health Business Unit), John Kulasek (Asset Manager Manager), Andrew Davies, Claire Taylor (Strategy and Review Business Unit), Emma Griffiths, Kate Chirnside, Colin Gregory (Legal and Democratic Services Business Unit).

82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clarkson and Cole.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None Received

84. URGENT BUSINESS – Thames Towpath

The Chair agreed to certify as urgent business, a discussion on the circumstances of the recent accident at the Thames Towpath near Port Meadow. A person had died after falling into the Thames from the towpath. The Committee noted that the police were investigating the incident and that the exact circumstances of the events were as yet, unknown.

Members agreed that while respecting the sensitive aspects of the incident, there were questions that needed to be answered, particularly in relation to the requests made to the Council to repair this section of the towpath in the weeks before the accident.

The Committee agreed to ask officers to prepare two separate reports on this matter. The first should outline the current arrangements for repairing the towpath, who was responsible and whether the Council could act alone in such matters or proceed with repairs without S42 funding from the County Council. This report should also address whether the requests made by Councillor Dhall were acted upon, and whether the towpath should be sealed

off when it was considered dangerous or when the river levels were higher than normal. The Committee felt these issues should be addressed quickly and would consider setting up a special meeting to consider this report if it was available before their next scheduled meeting.

The second report was to be on the longer term plans for dealing with towpath repairs - specifically, the funding arrangements and the possibility of a "concordat" with other interested parties such as the university colleges, the Environment Agency and the County Council. The Committee would consider this report at its meeting on the 23rd April. In the meantime, the Committee recommended Executive Board that work on this continues so as not to delay progress.

Resolved to ask the Strategic Director (Physical Environment) to:

- (1) Prepare an urgent report to a special meeting of the Committee if required, which addresses the duty of care issues for the Council in relation to the towpath;
- (2) Prepare a second report for the April Committee meeting and Executive Board to consider future policy options for towpath repair funding, considering options such as a "concordat" with interested parties.

Resolved to recommend to the Executive Board

- (1) That work on the funding of towpath repairs progresses quickly and isn't delayed by the request from the ESC to see a report on the matter in April, if agreement with partners is reached before their next meeting.

85. PUBLIC SESSION

There was a request from Mr. Jonathan Blinsman to address the meeting on the report on the Trap Grounds, which was on the Committee's agenda. The Chair agreed to take the report as the next item.

86. THE FUTURE OF THE TRAP GROUNDS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Planning Services Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended).

Steve Pickles briefly updated the meeting on the events surrounding the designation of the Trap Grounds as a town green and on the associated land and planning issues.

Councillors asked a number of questions, in particular with regard to the possibility of identifying alternative sites in accordance with the details of the decision on the town green designation. The Committee noted that there

was no real possibility of identifying another site which would meet the requirements as an alternative. The possibility of providing access across the land to serve the primary school would also remain unresolved following the designation decision.

Mr Blinsman said that he was speaking on behalf of the Friends of the Trap Grounds and said that the officer's report on the future status of the Trap Grounds was welcomed in principle. It was hoped that the Friends of the Trap Grounds would be able to work with the Council on the future management of the land, including volunteers to carry out some of the physical duties.

Resolved to endorse the recommendations to the Executive Board and to welcome the offer of assistance made by the Friends of the Trap Grounds.

87. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

The Environmental Health Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended).

Paul Spencer introduced the report and answered Members questions. and during the discussion a number of points were raised as follows:

The Committee discussed the Council's target to reduce CO2 emissions by 25% by 2010 compared to the 2005 baseline figure. It was noted that there was a further target to reduce CO2 emissions by 3% each year indefinitely. The Committee was told that the 2005 baseline figure had not yet been established, but this was one of the key tasks in the Climate Change Action Plan. The Committee felt it was important that this was done quickly in order to test whether the action plan is contributing to a reduction of CO2 emissions.

Paul Spencer confirmed that ongoing work with the Climate Change Action Team would ensure that data was accurately interpreted so that a baseline figure could be established. It was also important to put in place the systems whereby reliable information could continue to be made available in order to sustain a monitoring programme.

There was also a need to establish where energy savings could be made. More consistency was required on the existing data relating to council buildings and business travel. The current practice was to follow the example of the Carbon Trust which was quite rigorous. The Committee agreed that a clear strategy outlining future practice was required.

While noting the updated version of the Climate Change Implementation Plan, the Committee discussed other areas where savings could easily be made such as reducing the heating in the Town Hall. The plan was an evolving one and a strategy would become clearer as more realistic targets were established.

Resolved to ask the Climate Change Action Team to prepare a further report for the Committee's June meeting setting out the 2005 baseline for CO2 emissions.

88. CORE STRATEGY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Planning Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended).

Adrian Roche and Mark Jaggard introduced the report and answered Members questions. During the discussion a number of points were raised as follows:

In relation to Housing, the Committee agreed that the preferred housing option would be that which resulted in the highest number of housing units being achieved, including family accommodation and affordable dwellings. However, the declining availability of suitable land was recognised with many brownfield sites now accounted for. Development in future years may have to take place on greenfield land. That said, the Committee supported the option of building more than 550 units a year to meet housing need. They also supported a limitation on flat conversions.

In relation to Climate Change, the Committee again confirmed its commitment to a 3% annual reduction of carbon emissions and felt that the document should reflect the council's commitment to this. In addition, other businesses, organisations and individuals in Oxford should achieve this ambition. The document should reflect this aim.

The Committee acknowledged the pressures for further retail development in the city centre, but endorsed the idea of greater emphasis being placed on local retail centres, such as the development of a mix use district centre in Blackbird Leys.

The Committee didn't come to a consensus on whether there should be a moratorium on development within flood zone 3a. Members suggested that reference was made to the Environment Agency flood map so that members of the public and area committees would be aware of the size of the affected area. Members did accept that tough decisions on the use of protected land may have to be taken to realise Oxford's development plans.

Resolved to ask the Head of Planning to refer the Committee's comments to the Executive Board to consider when it discusses the Core Strategy Preferred Options report.

89. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATOR MONITORING

The Strategy and Review Business Manager submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended).

During the discussion a number of points were raised as follows:

The Committee asked about the suitability of targets and noted details on stretch targets which were designed to try and achieve additional performance beyond set targets. Sharon Cosgrove explained that the Chief Executive was preparing a timetable for target setting for 2007/08 and that this was an Executive Board responsibility. Environment Scrutiny Committee would be given the opportunity to comment on the targets for 2007/08 at their next meeting.

The Committee welcomed the data on performance by the Street Cleansing teams and asked that the Committee's congratulations be forwarded to City Works.

Noted the latest performance figures as set out in the Cleaner, Greener Group monitoring schedule which would continue to be updated to include further information on prosecutions for fly tipping. The Committee said that it would still like to see more fact based information rather than aspirations for improvement.

The number of motorised vehicles entering the city continued to be a problem and it was suggested that a further review of the Oxford Local Transport Plan might be required. Claire Taylor said that the County Council were continuing to monitor information as detailed in the reports and that County officers would be invited to the next meeting to discuss the matter further.

Members also made a series of comments and requests on the schedule of BVPI results with quartile positions and results against targets. They were:

BV166a (Environmental Health Checklist of Best Practice) – What does this mean?

In relation to BV199a (The % of streets dirty), could future reports include comparative data with other Council's in our "waste group" so that it is possible to compare performance to similar authorities.

BV84 (Cost of Household waste per household) It was noted that the collection of waste per household was in the bottom quartile. The Strategic Director (Physical Environment) told the Committee that a value for money exercise on this service was to be carried out in 2007/08. The Committee asked to see the results of this work.

Resolved to ask the Strategic Director (Physical Environment) and the Corporate Performance Manager to prepare a report for the next Committee meeting on performance targets for 2007/08.

To invite officers from Oxfordshire County Council to attend a future Committee meeting to explain the link between the number of car journeys into Oxford and the Local Transport Plan.

90. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Manager submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

While noting a schedule of those issues on which the Committee had made recommendations during the council year, Members said that it was more important to ensure that the process of reporting recommendations and receiving subsequent information on progress with implementation or otherwise was sound.

The Committee asked about the outcome of a number of particular recommendations including lack of information of events in Cutteslowe Park. Sharon Cosgrove said that the events team was again currently down by one person but that she would look into the matter and report back. Andrew Davies reported on the situation with regard to other recommendations to the Executive Board where it appeared that there had been an inadequate response from the Executive Board.

Members highlighted a number of instances where they would like to see recommendations referred back to the Executive Board for further consideration. Andrew Davies agreed to progress the matter. The recommendations were:

Draft Supplementary Planning Documents On Planning Obligations - The ESC recommended that the Executive Board consider whether anything could be about the fact that small, piecemeal developments were outside of the s106 framework and yet the cumulative effect of these developments on the local infrastructure was very significant.

Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy - ask the OWP to reconsider the targets for waste reduction as scrutiny felt these should be more ambitious and go beyond stabilising current levels of waste to a reduction.

Oxford Plan Consultation - Resolved to recommend the Executive Board that steps be taken to ensure that Council facilities and buildings be less vulnerable to the effects of climate change through such measures as the installation of covering shade for play areas and blinds for the windows in homes for the elderly to provide protection from extreme weather conditions.

Resolved to refer these recommendations back to Executive Board for consideration.

91. QUORUM

The Committee noted that it became inquorate at 12.03pm and agreed that it would continue informally.

92. LITTER AND STREET CLEANING REVIEW

Andrew Davies reported verbally that the Review Group had decided not to progress with a review into litter and street cleansing due to the KPMG Value for Money audit and Encams review of the service, which are currently taking place. However, the Review Group was interested in the results of this work and a further full report would be prepared for the Committee's April meeting.

93. LEISURE FACILITIES BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee noted that the report on the review had been postponed due to the Business Managers current absence through illness. The Committee reiterated that it would wish to see the report when it was produced before it was submitted to the Executive Board.

94. WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager submitted a report (previously circulated and now appended).

The Committee asked for an update on the new Recycling Scheme to be made to the April meeting. Other matters for inclusion in the Work Programme were riverbank repairs and maintenance, performance targets, CO2 emissions baseline information and an update on bus shelters. Andrew Davies confirmed that he would update the Work Programme.

95. REPORT BACK FROM EXECUTIVE BOARD

Noted the details of recommendations from the Committee to the Executive Board and a number of issues had been picked up in the report considered earlier in the meeting.

96. MINUTES

Resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2007.

97. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

The meeting started at 9.30 am and ended at 12.15 pm.