

# Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Planning

Author: Ben Davis

Telephone: 07717 271941

E-mail: [ben.davis@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:ben.davis@southandvale.gov.uk)

Cabinet Member responsible: Roger Cox

Tel: 01367 243360

E-mail: [roger.cox@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:roger.cox@whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

DATE: 24 November 2016

## **Consultation and Communication Strategy for Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options Consultation – February 2017**

### **Recommendation**

1. The committee is invited to:

- make recommendations to the cabinet member for planning policy for any alterations to the draft Consultation and Communication Strategy for the Local Plan 2031 Part 2

### **Purpose of Report**

1. Scrutiny Committee requested at their meeting on 24 November 2016 that a draft Communications Strategy is presented setting out the Council's approach to preparing for public consultation on the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options February 2017.
2. This consultation and communication strategy sets out the Council's approach to preparing the Local Plan 2031 Part 2, Preferred Options document for public consultation. The principles set out in this document are consistent with the Council's Community Engagement Charter (2015) and emerging Statement of Community Involvement (2016). The approach is also in accordance with the

Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012). It is also aligned with the council's latest communication strategy.

## **Strategic Objectives**

3. The Communications and Consultation Strategy for the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 supports the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives by supporting the delivery of sustainable communities and wellbeing.

## **The objectives of this strategy**

4. The objectives that we will achieve include the following:
  - ensure local communities and the wider audience are aware of the differences between the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Local Plan 2031 Part 2. In particular, what the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 will achieve and how it will complement the Local Plan 2031 Part 1
  - ensure effective communication between councillors, management teams and internal departments with regard to the Local Plan 2031 Part 2
  - provide stakeholders and communities across the districts with an opportunity to influence the plan-making process
  - gather as much information as possible from stakeholders to assist with the development of planning policies and site allocations
  - ensure legal compliance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and relevant legislation and regulations
  - communicate the process and outcomes to local communities across the District through publication of a consultation statement that will set out how the comments made during the consultation have been considered before moving to the next stage of plan-making

## **The project team**

5. The key officers and stakeholders are listed below:

### **Project team:**

Project Sponsor:	Head of Service
Project Officers:	Planning Policy Project Lead
	Planning Policy Officer(s)
	Community Engagement Officer(s)
	Communications Officer

## **Key stakeholders**

6. The planning regulations establish minimum requirements for consultation as part of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 process. These regulations require the Council to consult specific consultation bodies. These organisations are listed in **Appendix 1**.

7. Given the scope of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2, it is important that the Council engages with as many people and organisations as possible. The regulations allow this and require the Council to consult with general consultation bodies.
8. The Council will also undertake timely, effective and conclusive discussions with key delivery stakeholders in preparing the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options.
9. The Council will consult and engage with communities on the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options in accordance with the emerging SCI.
10. Example audiences that the Council will consult and engage in the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 include the following:
  - Councillors both cabinet members and wider councillor representation across the District
  - Council Officers including for example Development Management and other key departments (e.g. Didcot Garden Town project team)
  - Town and Parish Councils
  - Neighbourhood Plan Steering and/or Working Groups
  - Residents, local businesses, other interested representatives, hard to reach groups (e.g. targeted work with access groups, ethnic minority groups and young people)
  - Community/voluntary sector groups and organisations
  - Oxfordshire County Council
  - Statutory bodies and organisations, e.g. Natural England, Highways England, Historic England
  - Local Enterprise Partnership
  - Infrastructure and service providers
  - Adjoining authorities through the Duty to Cooperate
  - Site agents, developers, planning agents and landowners

### **Duty to co-operate and joint working arrangements**

11. The National Planning Policy Framework states that public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those that relate to strategic priorities. Councils are required to work collaboratively to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly coordinated and clearly reflected in individual local plans. The Council will be expected to demonstrate evidence that it has successfully cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when the Local Plan is submitted for examination. As part of examining the “soundness” of plans, inspectors will be required to assess whether a plan has been prepared in accordance with the duty to cooperate.
12. Joint working between the Council and neighbouring councils is already well established. In particular, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils jointly commission evidence studies to support their Local Plan preparation.

13. At an Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) level, appropriate arrangements are being put in place to facilitate the duty to cooperate on strategic planning issues across the county. In addition, joint working arrangements are also being developed between the Council and OCC in order to address strategic cross boundary issues as part of the Local Plan process.

## **Responsibility for communications**

14. Good and effective communication is the responsibility of all those involved in the project. The Communications Team is the council's professional lead on communications.

15. The Communications Officer will be responsible for delivering a supporting communication campaign to promote the consultation using a mix of channels including written and digital.

16. The project team is responsible for driving the delivery of core messages, the consultation material and arranging and managing events.

17. The project team is responsible for agreeing content with the communications team to ensure it is accurate.

## **Main communication channels**

18. Useful media tools will include the following:

- **Council website** – information and details of the consultation will be published on the Planning Policy web page and Home page
- **Social Media, e.g. Twitter and via active local community webpages and bloggers** – provides details of the consultation in an interactive format. Promotes an opportunity to generate interest and discussions and provide links to online consultation methods
- **Council Newsletters** – Vale News and Outlook
- **Letters and Emails** – notifications will be sent by letter and/or email to those registered on the council online consultation database
- **Update Bulletins** – published on the Council website and sent by email to Town and Parishes, key stakeholders and consultees that are registered on the council online database. Bulletins will be used to disseminate information clearly and concisely to the wider audience
- **Press releases** – published on the Council website, proactively sold into the local media. This will set out details of the consultation and where the consultation documents can be viewed
- **Statutory notices** – formal notices will be placed in the local newspaper and informal notices in other newspapers circulating across the district. The notice will set out the details of the consultation, including how to comment and where the consultation documents can be viewed
- **In Focus** – article published in this newsletter setting out details on the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options consultation for staff and councillors

## **Main consultation methods**

19. The main methods the Council will use when undertaking consultation include the following: See Appendix 2 for further detail

- **Stakeholder workshops** – to be arranged with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholders to facilitate discussion on the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Preferred Options.
- **Public meetings** – conveys information to local communities in an effective way in a wider forum and offers opportunities for further discussion with a question and answer session
- **Exhibitions (manned)** – information can be presented visually to the audience using posters, exhibition boards etc. These could be in addition to local events organised by partner organisations
- **Market Stalls** – located at targeted market events at the weekend to engage with a wider audience
- **Questionnaires and response forms** – designed to allow participants to comment on the consultation documents
- **Leaflets, posters and bulletins** – presents information in a clear and visual way for the audience
- **Intranet** – promoting the Local Plan consultations to staff

20. Further details on the proposed consultation methods is set out in **Appendix 2**

## **Viewing consultation documents**

21. While the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 2 will be the main focus of consultation, there will be a wide range of supporting documents that will need to accompany the plan. These include evidence base documents and reports required by planning regulations, including Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, which will be subject to consultation as the same time as the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 2. All documents will be available to view and access on the council website. The online consultation database will also allow people to view and respond to the consultation online.

22. However, it is recognised that not everyone is able to access the online consultation system, so paper copies of response forms will also be made available at local deposits e.g. local libraries in accordance with the SCI.

23. Paper copies of the main consultation documents draft Local Plan 2031 Part 2, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats and Regulations Assessment will also be made available to view at the Council Offices at Milton Park and at Abbey House.

## **How to comment, consideration of comments and feedback**

24. Each stage of consultation on the Local Plan requires the submission of written or electronic comments known as representations. For convenience, the Council will make the main document available for comment on the website, along with providing hard copies at local deposit points, including libraries, town and parish councils and the council offices.

25. Supporting documents will also be made available on the council website. Where possible the Council tries to encourage people to respond to consultations online. The Council's preferred means of receiving comments is through the online consultation system via the Council's website. The online consultation system helps to manage representations quickly and efficiently. It also allows respondents to provide their own summaries to representations that helps us to avoid any risk of misinterpretation of respondent concerns.
26. However, it is recognised that not everyone is able to use the online consultation system, therefore paper copies of response forms will also be made available at the council offices and local deposit points. Guidance notes will also be provided on the Council website to aid completion of responses.
27. Once representations are received, they will be added onto the Council's online consultation system. Once processed in this way, acknowledgement emails will be sent to all those who have submitted representations electronically. Representations submitted by post will only receive an acknowledgement if a reply email address is supplied.
28. At the end of each stage of consultation, all representations will be considered and analysed by officers. A response will be formulated and changes will be proposed to the document, where necessary.
29. Following each stage of consultation, a consultation statement will be prepared that clearly identifies how comments have been considered and informed the next stage of the plan-making process. This statement will form part of the Council's submission to the Secretary of State and is scrutinised through Examination. These statements will always be subject to internal quality control and peer review as the document will form part of the evidence submitted to the Secretary of State and subject to independent review at Examination.

### **Key milestones**

30. The key stages for the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 are set out below:

February/March 2017	Public Consultation on 'Preferred Options' Draft Plan (Reg 18)
October/November 2017	Public Consultation prior submission for Examination (Reg 19)
February/March 2018	Submit Plan and supporting documents to Secretary of State for independent Examination (Reg 22)
May 2018	Examination of the plan by an independent Planning Inspector
December 2018	Formal adoption and publication of the plan

31. Each of these milestones will be supported with communication activities. We will work with the community engagement officers and the communications team to develop a more detailed consultation and communications plan and

timetable to explain more detailed key messages and communications channels at each specific milestone.

### **How to contact us**

32. If you have any queries through the local plan process, the Planning Policy Team can be contacted using the following email address :

[planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

Alternatively, please contact the Customer Services Team by phone **01235 422600**.

### **Financial Implications**

33. Not applicable

### **Legal Implications**

34. Not applicable

### **Risks**

35. Not applicable

# APPENDIX 1: SPECIFIC GENERAL CONSULTATION BODIES IDENTIFIED IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (LOCAL PLANNING) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2012

Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the specific and general consultation bodies that the council is legally required to consult on when preparing Planning Policy documents. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/regulation/2/made>

## Specific consultation bodies include the following:

- (a) the Coal Authority(b),
- (b) the Environment Agency(c),
- (c) the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (known as English Heritage)(d),
- (d) the Marine Management Organisation(e),
- (e) Natural England (f),
- (f) Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587),
- (g) the Highways Agency,
- (h) a relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area,
- (i) any person—
  - (i) to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under section 106(3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and
  - (ii) who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the local planning authority's area,
- (j) if it exercises functions in any part of the local planning authority's area—
  - (i) a Primary Care Trust established under section 18 of the National Health Service Act 2006(g) or continued in existence by virtue of that section;
  - (ii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 6(1)(b) or (c) of the Electricity Act 1989(h);
  - (iii) a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986(i);
  - (iv) a sewerage undertaker; and
  - (v) a water undertaker;
- (k) the Homes and Communities Agency(j);

(a) 1996 c.16.

(b) See section 1 of the Coal Industry Act 1994 (c.21).

(c) See section 1 of the Environment Act 1995 (c.25).

(d) See section 32 of the National Heritage Act 1983 (c.47).

(e) See section 1 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 (c.23).

(f) See section 1 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (c.16).

(g) 2006 c.41.

(h) 1989 c.29. There are amendments to these provisions which are not relevant to these Regulations.

(i) 1986 c.44. There are amendments to these provisions which are not relevant to these Regulations.

(j) See section 2 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (c.17).



**General consultation bodies include the following:**

- (a) voluntary bodies some or all of whose activities benefit any part of the local planning authority's area,
- (b) bodies which represent the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in the local planning authority's area,
- (c) bodies which represent the interests of different religious groups in the local planning authority's area,
- (d) bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons in the local planning authority's area,
- (e) bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area;

## APPENDIX 2: DRAFT TIMETABLE FOR CONSULTATION MILESTONES FROM NOVEMBER 2016 TO APRIL 2017

Indicative date	Key milestone	Possible Locations
January/February 2017 (Dates TBC)	All Councillor Workshop	Milton Park
February/March 2017 (Dates TBC)	Town and Parish Council Workshop (high level presentation on LPP2 content and consultation methods)	Milton Park
February/March 2017 (Dates TBC)	Stakeholder Workshop	Milton Park
January 2017	Vale Local Plan Update Bulletin – LPP2 preferred options consultation arrangements	N/A
March 2017 – April 2017 (Dates TBC)	Market stall events run alongside exhibitions  Postcards used to increase awareness and include simple links to consultation material on the council website.	<b>Possible Options</b>
		Wantage County Market (occurs Friday and Saturday weekly)
		Abingdon Farmer's Market (occurs third Friday of each month)
		Didcot Orchard Centre Thames Valley Farmer's Market (occurs every second Saturday of the month)
		Didcot Orchard Centre Saturday market (occurs once a month)
March 2017 – April 2017 (Dates TBC)	Exhibitions – manned	To run alongside market stall locations e.g. Abingdon, Didcot (Cornerstone), Faringdon, Wantage (The Beacon)  Consider other possible locations
March 2017 – April 2017 (Dates TBC)	Exhibitions – static	Abingdon Library
		Botley Library
		Didcot Library
		Grove Library
		Kennington Library
		Wantage Library
		Milton Park, Milton

		Abbey House, Abingdon TBC
March 2017 – April 2017 (Dates TBC)	Consider potential community engagement with hard to reach groups e.g. schools and colleges	
March 2017 – April 2017 (Dates TBC)	Public meetings (Presentation and Question and Answer session)	Abingdon and Oxford – Fringe Sub Area (Abingdon)
		South East Vale Sub – Area (Wantage and Grove)
		Western Vale Sub – Area (Faringdon)
		Other key locations likely to be affected by the Local Plan Part 2