

Date: 26 January 2006

TO: All Members of the Executive
FOR ATTENDANCE

TO: All Other Members of the Council
FOR INFORMATION

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** to be held in the **GUILDHALL, ABINGDON** on **FRIDAY, 3RD FEBRUARY, 2006** at **2.30 PM**.

Yours faithfully

Terry Stock
Chief Executive

Members are reminded of the provisions contained in Part 2 of the Local Code of Conduct, and Standing Order 34 regarding the declaration of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

A G E N D A

Open to the Public including the Press

A large print version of this agenda is available. Any background papers referred to may be inspected by prior arrangement. Contact Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer on telephone number (01235) 540307.

Map and Vision

(Page 10)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting, together with a copy the Council Vision are attached.

STANDING ITEMS

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the public minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6 January 2006, (previously circulated).

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

In accordance with Part 2 of the Local Code of Conduct and the provisions of Standing Order 34, any Member with a personal interest must disclose the existence and nature of that interest to the meeting prior to the matter being debated. Where that personal interest is also a prejudicial interest, then the Member must withdraw from the room in which the meeting is being held and not seek improperly to influence any decision about the matter unless he/she has obtained a dispensation from the Standards Committee.

4. Urgent Business and Chair's Announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the Chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the Chair.

5. Statements and Petitions from the Public Under Standing Order 32

Any statements and/or petitions from the public under Standing Order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

6. Questions from the Public Under Standing Order 32

Any questions from members of the public under Standing Order 32 will be asked at the meeting.

7. Referral under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules

In accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Rules, to receive feedback from consultation on the budget as follows:

1. from the consultant undertaking focus group consultations
2. businesses (if any) which attended budget briefings
3. the Opposition Group input (if any)

8. Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees

Scrutiny Committee – 19 January 2006
Audit Service Area Annual Report 2004/05

The Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 19 January 2006, considered issues arising out of the Audit Service Area Annual Report 2004/05. Councillor Roz Smith, the Executive Member with responsibility for Audit was in attendance at the meeting to assist the Committee better understand the working relationship between a Portfolio Holder and an Assistant Director. In considering this matter, the Committee referred the following to the Executive for consideration:-

- The Executive should ensure that in the interests of transparency there is an adequate public debate at its meetings on issues contained in individual Annual Reports and that such discussions are recorded in the Minutes of the meeting
- Operational reports, such as Service Plans, should be drafted so that acronyms used are spelt out in their full form in the first instance. Such reports could also include a glossary of terms used. Furthermore, a rolling glossary of terms used across the Council could be held on the Council's website

9. Items Deferred from the Previous Meeting

None

10. Financial Monitoring

(Pages 11 - 13)

Members are requested to consider any significant budget variances and the requests for virement or permanent budget adjustments.

KEY DECISIONS

11. Forward Plan

(Pages 14 - 18)

To receive the Forward Plan containing Executive decisions to be taken from February to May 2006.

Recommendation

that the Forward Plan be received.

12. Final Budget Proposals 2006/07

The Executive is requested to consider how its final budget will be presented to the Council.

Recommendation

That the Executive invites the Chair of the Executive to delegate authority to himself to prepare and submit to Council the final budget proposals for 2006/07.

13. Local Development Framework: Draft Statement of Community Involvement

(Pages 19 - 91)

At its meeting held on 23 January 2006, the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group received and considered report 213/05 (attached to this agenda for information) regarding the draft Statement of Community Involvement. The draft Statement was placed on deposit for public consultation from 25 November 2005 to 6 January 2006. The report summarised the responses received and recommended changes to the draft document. The Advisory Group considered these in detail and agreed with the recommended changes.

The Advisory Group considered additional information received from a local resident, Mr Hocken, for reference to be made to the issue of a potential air quality monitoring assessment declaration as a result of any planning application being explicitly included in paragraph 6.4. However, the Advisory Group felt this to be unnecessary. In relation to Thames Water's proposed reservoir, the officers were asked to update the draft Statement as further information

became available. The Advisory Group also noted that the Ramblers' Association would be consulted as part of the Local Development Framework despite not appearing in the list of consultees in Appendix 1.

The Executive is requested to adopt the recommendations of the Advisory Group for the draft Statement of Community Involvement to be updated and submitted to the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- (a) *that the representations made to the draft Statement of Community Involvement be agreed, as set out in the schedule appended to report 213/05;*
- (b) *that the draft Statement of Community Involvement be approved for submission to the Secretary of State as amended in Appendix A; and*
- (c) *that prior to the publication of the draft Statement of Community Involvement, authority to make minor and editorial and presentational amendments be delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning).*

OTHER MATTERS

14. Local Plan to 2011: Grove Development Forum

(Pages 92 - 103)

At its meeting held on 23 January 2006, the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group received and considered report 212/05 (attached to this agenda for information) regarding the Grove Development Forum. In March 2004, the Council agreed to investigate setting up a development forum to help with the delivery of the proposals for the development of the strategic housing site to the west of Grove. The forum would consist of local council representatives and other stakeholders, including local employers. The report looked at the principles of establishing a process of information dissemination, discussion and consultation with local people.

The Advisory Group considers that the forum should consist of twelve elected members representing the local community (1 County Councillor representing Wantage/Grove; 3 Grove Parish Councillors; 1 East Challow Parish Councillor; 1 East Hanney Parish Councillor; 1 Wantage Town Councillor; 3 District Council Ward Members for Grove; 1 District Council Ward Member for Wantage Segsbury; 1 District Council Executive Member). However, when transport and flooding/drainage issues are discussed, there should be an invitation to other local Parish Councils from the surrounding area to send a representative. As the forum will be advisory only with no voting ability, it is suggested that it is not necessary for there to be proportional representation under the Widdicombe Rules. The Advisory Group agrees with the report's proposals for the role of the forum and the employment of independent external facilitators to manage it. The suggested scope and content of the first two meetings is also supported.

Members also asked that the Executive sought legal guidance as a matter of urgency for elected Members of the forum. Members should be advised of what they could do and should not do in their role as a forum member, bearing in mind that some may be Members of the Development Control Committee that determines the planning application.

Recommendations

- (a) *that the Grove Development Forum be established, as set out in paragraphs 5.1 to 5.9 of report 212/05;*
- (b) *that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to appoint an external facilitator to lead*

the forum, and to confirm the source of funding for this;

- (c) *that the number of elected representatives be limited to 12 (1 County Councillor representing Wantage/Grove; 3 Grove Parish Councillors; 1 East Challow Parish Councillor; 1 East Hanney Parish Councillor; 1 Wantage Town Councillor; 3 District Council Ward Members for Grove; 1 District Council Ward Member for Wantage Segsbury; 1 District Council Executive Member) for the core group of the forum, but when transport and flooding/drainage issues are to be discussed representatives from other surrounding Parish Councils should be invited to attend and participate; and*
- (d) *that the Executive seeks legal guidance as a matter of urgency for elected Members of the Grove Development Forum. Members should be advised of what they can do and should not do in their role as a forum member, bearing in mind that some may be Members of the Development Control Committee that determines the planning application.*

15. Draft Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

(Pages 104 - 133)

At its meeting held on 23 January 2006, the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group received and considered report 211/05 (attached to this agenda for information) regarding the draft Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has published a consultation paper on this new Planning Policy Statement. This and the good practice guides to be published alongside it will replace the old Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) statement 3 and its updates. The closing date for comments is 27 February. The Executive's comments are sought.

The key sections of draft Statement are attached at Appendix 1 to the report for information. The report highlights the key areas which the Council could support and where objections and concerns should be raised. In summary, the Advisory Group had serious reservations about the document and considered the proposed PPS3:

- moves from a plan-led system to one of responding to market demand
- is contrary to the Government's objectives of ensuring sustainable development, community involvement in the planning process, prioritising the development of brownfield sites; the efficient and timely provision of infrastructure and securing the maximum amount of affordable housing through the planning system
- lacks clarity and will significantly increase the complexity of the processes for preparing development plans with major resource implications

The Advisory Group considers that:

- low cost market housing can have a role to play in providing affordable housing in areas where house prices are not as high as the Vale (paragraph 4.1 of the report refers)
- additional resources will be needed to complete the studies and assessments introduced in the draft Statement in a reasonable timescale (paragraph 4.3)
- investing in areas of low demand will help to bring forward brownfield sites for redevelopment (paragraph 4.5)
- car ownership is not the same as car use and that adequate car parking needs to be provided in residential areas (paragraph 4.9)
- the Government should be more explicit about the funding to be available for affordable housing (paragraph 4.10)
- paragraph 4.12 of the report should be strengthened before a response is made to the Secretary of State. The demand-led planning ethos set out within the draft Statement must not allow the precious rural environment to be destroyed.

The Advisory Group feels strongly that the draft Statement is seriously shortsighted in its principles. This is an all-party view. Copies of the Executive's resolved position should be publicised by being sent to the Local Government Association, the Planning Officers' Society, the

five Oxfordshire Members of Parliament, other Oxfordshire District Councils, and be posted on the Council's website. There should also be a press release and a 'user-friendly' executive summary for the website and the press.

Recommendations

- (a) *that the comments contained in the bullet points above, Section 4 and Appendices 2 and 3 to report 211/05 all be sent to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as the basis of this Council's comments on draft Planning Policy Statement 3 and its associated draft guidance, subject to paragraph 4.12 being strengthened to urge protection of the precious rural environment; and*
- (b) *that copies of the Executive's resolved position be publicised by being sent to the Local Government Association, the Planning Officers' Society, the five Oxfordshire Members of Parliament, other Oxfordshire District Councils, and be posted on the Council's website. An executive summary and a press release should be posted on the Council's website.*

16. Green Travel Plan

(Pages 134 - 151)

To receive and consider report 221/05 of the Assistant Director (Planning).

Introduction and Report Summary

The Council is committed to the development of a Green Travel Plan (GTP) for its staff and elected Members which embraces travelling thoughtfully to, from and whilst at work. In doing so, the Council acknowledges the frequently held view that the success of a Green Travel Plan depends on its ownership by staff.

The first Vale GTP, developed in 2004/05, received only limited support from staff and unions. Accordingly, in listening to the comments made on the original Plan, the Council now aims to take forward a new GTP which contains a range of more moderate measures which would be easier to implement; and to proceed at a more measured pace whilst continuing to signal the Council's commitment to green travel.

The purpose of this report is to up-date Members on the development of the revised GTP and seek the endorsement of the Executive on the measures proposed in phase 1 of the plan, which will allow this phase to be developed through to implementation.

The Contact Officer for this report is Gordon Willcox, Section Head (Transportation), telephone 01235 540390

Recommendations

That the Executive :

Endorse the measures for phase 1 of the Vale's Green Travel Plan as set out in appendix C of this report, whilst noting that this project is not a Council Priority, and requests that the Assistant Director (Planning) commence the detailed planning of the individual measures within phase 1 of the Plan, subject to budgetary constraints and the availability of staff resources.

Agree that the Assistant Director (Planning) in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for the Vale's new Green Travel Plan, at the appropriate time, determine the launch date for the Plan, and advise the Executive accordingly.

Expressly for the purpose of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, agree that the necessary deemed consent be sought for the provision of new cycle parking adjacent to The Abbey House, Abingdon.

Request that the Chief Executive undertake a review of the Council's existing Flexible Working Arrangements Policy.

17. Reservoir

(Pages 152 - 154)

To receive and consider report 222/05 of the Reservoir Advisory Group.

Introduction

At its meeting on 6 January 2006, the Executive noted that a Reservoir Advisory Group had been set up to advise the Executive on matters relating to Thames Water's provisional proposal for a reservoir to the south-west of Abingdon. The Advisory Group met on 17 January to consider the latest position and has made recommendations below.

The contact officer for this report is Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer, telephone 01235 540307.

Recommendations

that the Advisory Group's business remains confidential until the Advisory Group has indicated otherwise and recommends so to the Executive; and

that this Council should act as if it were the determining authority in any application for a reservoir proposal.

18. Empty Homes

(Pages 155 - 165)

To receive and consider report 223/05 of the Strategic Director.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Executive will be aware that the approved Housing Strategy for 2004/5 - 2007/8 contains an action to develop a specific strategy to address the issue of empty homes in the private sector across the District.

This report introduces this strategy to the Executive and considers the implications of its implementation.

The Contact Officer for this report is Paul Staines (Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety) (01235 547621)

Recommendation

That the Executive approve the Empty Homes Strategy attached as appendix 1 to this report.

19. Customer Contact Strategy

(Pages 166 - 175)

To receive and consider report 224/05 of the Strategic Director.

Introduction and Report Summary

This report draws on a number of sources notably:

- The Consultants Report in respect of Customer Contact Strategy
- Business Case in respect of Customer Contact Strategy

- Project Appraisal Local Services Point 2
- Consultants Report in respect of partnering and/or outsourcing of Revenue and Benefit Services and
- Best Value Review Revenues and Benefits

The report draws together the issues arising from the above documents and recommendations for the adoption of a Customer Contact Strategy.

The Contact Officer for this report is Tim Sadler Strategic Director, 01235 540360.

Recommendation

That the Executive recommends to Council the Customer Contact Strategy attached to this report.

20. Freedom of Information Act

(Pages 176 - 179)

To receive and consider report 225/05 of the Monitoring Officer and Solicitor.

Introduction and Report Summary

As Members will be aware, the above legislation came into force on 1st January 2005 and gives the public the right to request information from the Council which then has an obligation to respond promptly and within 20 working days by either disclosing the requested information or refusing to disclose on the basis of one of the statutory exceptions.

The 2000 Act gives greater public access to general information held by Public Authorities, like the Council and the 2004 Regulations provide a specific statutory regime for the disclosure of environmental information. Although “the right to know” is similar in both cases, the provisions are not identical and this is relevant when considering the issue of charging the public for the information sought.

The Council now has the benefit of one year’s experience of dealing with this legislation and 12 months on the time is right to decide whether or not the Council should seek to charge for the information in the future.

The Contact Officer for this report is David Quayle, Monitoring Officer and Solicitor [telephone number: 01235 540312].

Recommendations

To note that there is currently no charging Policy in respect of “right to know requests for information and to consider whether such a Policy should be approved by the Council.

If Members are of the opinion that a Policy should be put into place, then the Executive is invited to consider the draft Policy attached at Appendix A and to recommend its adoption by the Council.

21. Exclusion of the Public, including the Press

The Chair to move that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act when the following items are considered:

- Item 22 Minutes
(Category 7 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority).
(Category 9 - Any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services).
- Item 23 Property Matters
(Category 9)

EXEMPT INFORMATION UNDER SECTION 100A(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

STANDING ITEMS

22. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Exempt minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6 January 2006, (previously circulated).

OTHER MATTERS

23. Property Matters

To consider any property matters.



OUR VISION AND AIMS

Our Vision is to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community

The Vale of White Horse District Council aims to:

Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives

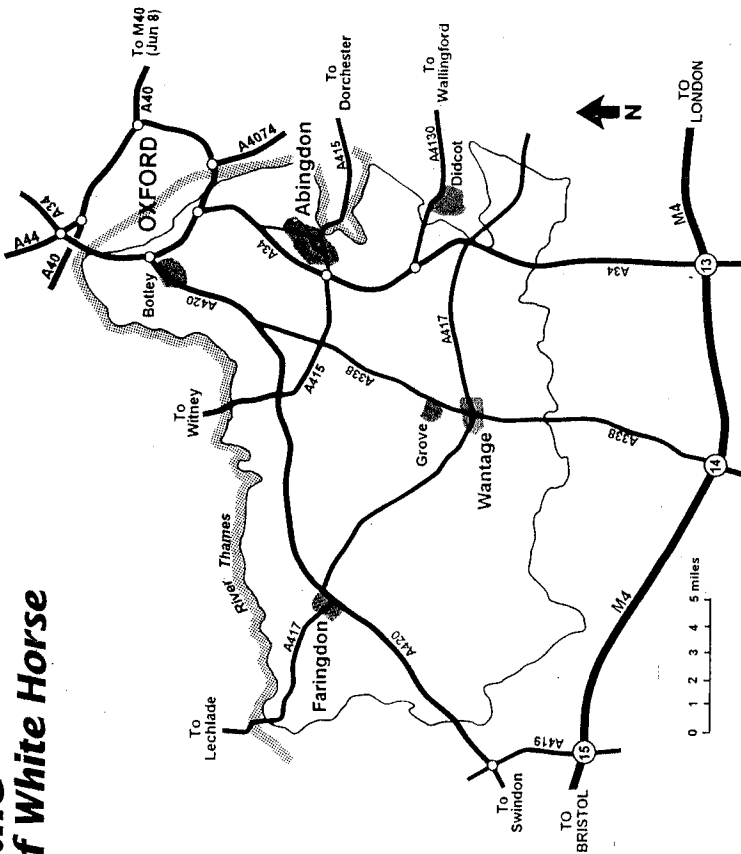
Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents

Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale

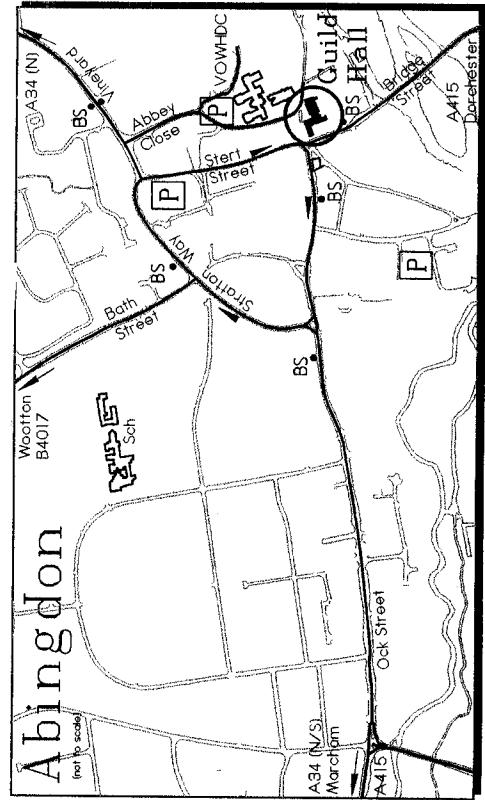
Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential

Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale

Protect and improve our built and natural environment



Guildhall, Abingdon



KEY : BS = Bus Stop

LOCATION MAP



Note for Executive Briefing

Virements received during the period to 23 January 2006

Key to Type

- 1 Within a subjective within a cost centre
- 2 Within a Cost Centre but across subjective headings
- 3 Within the cost centres of a service area
- 4 Across service areas
- 5 Over £10,000

No.	Date received	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Virement Total £	Virement Percentage	Reason	Preventative Action	Type	Authorised by Director	TO BE AUTHORISED by EXECUTIVE
1	03/01/2006	418	F00	ICT	421	F00	ICT	3,000	1.2%	Budget for resale goods has not been covered by recharges to users.	Review position at year end and consider whether	1	Y	N
2	03/01/2006	435	T51	Mortgages	436	T51	Mortgages	170	5.0%	Insufficient budget for telephones	Review position at year end and consider whether	1	Y	N
3	03/01/2006	403	T56	Benefit Fraud	402	T56	Benefit Fraud	270	1.5%	Insufficient budget for tools and equipment	Review position at year end and consider whether	1	Y	N
4	03/01/2006	418	T49	Benefits Admin	414	T49	Benefits Admin	5,000	4.5%	To provide budget for printing and application forms	Review position at year end and consider whether	1	Y	N
5	16/01/2006	452	K50	Performance Management	424	N50	Corporate Core	4,500	19.0%	To provide additional budget for subscriptions	SBCF submitted for 2006/07	4	Y	Y
6	16/01/2006	423	A00	Economic Development	414	A00	Economic Development	1,000	0.6%	Insufficient budget for printing and distribution of 2006 Visitor Guide	Contain costs in 2006/07	1	Y	N
7	16/01/2006	435	A00	Economic Development	424	A00	Economic Development	1,000	0.6%	Insufficient budget for printing and distribution of 2006 Visitor Guide	Contain costs in 2006/07	1	Y	N
8	16/01/2006	436	A00	Economic Development	424	A00	Economic Development	1,000	0.6%	Insufficient budget for printing and distribution of 2006 Visitor Guide	Contain costs in 2006/07	1	Y	N
9	18/01/2006	101	B00	Building Control	101	T93	DSO	20,290	4.5%	Change salary allocations of AD Building Control to reflect DSO responsibilities	Will be corrected for 2006/07 as part of normal salary allocation review	5	Y	Y
10	18/01/2006	103	B00	Building Control	103	T93	DSO	1,800	0.4%	Change salary allocations of AD Building Control to reflect DSO responsibilities	Will be corrected for 2006/07 as part of normal salary allocation review	3	Y	N
11	18/01/2006	105	B00	Building Control	105	T93	DSO	3,230	0.7%	Change salary allocations of AD Building Control to reflect DSO responsibilities	Will be corrected for 2006/07 as part of normal salary allocation review	3	Y	N
12	18/01/2006	310	B00	Building Control	310	T93	DSO	500	0.1%	Change salary allocations of AD Building Control to reflect DSO responsibilities	Will be corrected for 2006/07 as part of normal salary allocation review	3	Y	N
Total Virements								41,760						
Note														
Summary														
Total Type 1								11,440						
Total Type 2								-						
Total Type 3								5,530						
Total Type 4								4,500						
Total Type 5								20,290						
Total								41,760						

Note to Executive

Permanent Budget Adjustments requests received to 23 January 2006

Key to Type

- 1 Within a subjective within a cost centre
- 2 Within a Cost Centre but across subjective headings
- 3 Within the cost centres of a service area
- 4 Across service areas
- 5 Over £10,000

No.	Date received	Account From	Code From	Cost Centre Name	Account to	Code To	Cost Centre Name	Adjustment total £	Reason	Type
1	22/12/2005	909	T49	Benefits Admin	901	T49	Benefits Admin	35,780	Income budget against wrong account code	5
2	22/12/2005	418	T37	Business Rates	414	T37	Business Rates	2,000	Budget held against stationery but should be for printing	1
3	22/12/2005	424	T37	Business Rates	438	T37	Business Rates	1,000	Provide budget for bank charges	1
4	22/12/2005	202	T46	Homelessness	202	U29	Temporary Accommodation	2,900	Construction of a budget to reflect true cost of temporary accommodation (this was missed when changes made in September)	3
5	22/12/2005	403	T46	Homelessness	403	U29	Temporary Accommodation	500	Construction of a budget to reflect true cost of temporary accommodation (this was missed when changes made in September)	3
6	22/12/2005	402	T46	Homelessness	402	U29	Temporary Accommodation	5,500	Construction of a budget to reflect true cost of temporary accommodation (this was missed when changes made in September)	3
								47,680		
Summary										
Total Type 1								3,000		
Total Type 2								-		
Total Type 3								8,900		
Total Type 4								-		
Total Type 5								35,780		
Total								47,680		

Note to Executive

Supplementary estimates approved by Strategic Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council

No.	Date received	Account From	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Account To	Cost Centre Code	Cost Centre Name	Supplementary Estimate Total	Description
1	04/01/2006	498 Contingency Adjustments	N80	Contingency	424 External Services	M90	Development Policy	£140,000	Full cost of the Local Plan Inquiry to be paid in 2005/06 rather than split between 2005/06 & 2006/07. (Met from Local Plan Inquiry Fund)
2									
3									
4									
Total Supplementary Estimates								£140,000	

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FORWARD PLAN

CONTAINING EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN FROM 1 FEBRUARY 2006 - 31 MAY 2006

This Forward Plan sets out a schedule of Key Decisions likely to be taken over the four-month period shown above. It is a rolling plan, subject to change monthly. A Key Decision is a decision of the Executive which is likely to result in: the Council incurring significant expenditure or making significant savings; a high proportion of the community being affected; or an impact on two or more agendas or services. Executive decisions can be taken by the Executive as a whole, a committee of the Executive, an individual Member of the Executive, an Officer of the Council, an Area Committee, through joint arrangements with other bodies, or another Council.

Where the decision is to be taken by the Executive, this comprises the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jerry Patterson, and the following elected Members: Councillors Mary de Vere, Tony de Vere, Richard Farrell, Joyce Hutchinson, Roz Smith and Tessa Ward.

Representations can be made on any of the following issues before a decision is taken. Representations must be made to the relevant contact officer shown below by 5pm on the working day preceding the date of the decision.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact Officer	Documents used
Abingdon Area Community Grants		Abingdon Area Committee 1st Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. (01235) 540695 toby.warren@whitehor.sedc.gov.uk	Grant applications
Financial Monitoring		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	This item will appear on the Executive agendas each month	Executive Portfolio Holders	Consultation with budget holders	Steve Bishop, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer Tel. (01235) 540332 steve.bishop@whitehor.sedc.gov.uk	2005/06 Budget
Budget 2006/07	KEY	Executive 3rd Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Tony de Vere	Budget consultation process	Steve Bishop, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer Tel. (01235) 540332 steve.bishop@whitehor.sedc.gov.uk	Budget preparation documents

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Local Development Framework: Draft Statement of Community Involvement	KEY	Executive 3rd Feb 2006	March 2006	Local community and stakeholders	Consultation with the local community and stakeholders	Rodger Hood Tel. 01235 540340 e-mail: rodger.hood@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	Consultation responses to draft Statement of Community Involvement and Government guidance
Local Plan to 2011: Grove Development Forum		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Tony de Vere	Consultation with Strategic and Local Plan Advisory Group	Katie Barrett Tel. 01235 540339 E-mail: katie.barrett@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Tugwell Field, Wantage		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Consultation with Oxfordshire County Council, Wantage Silver Band and Wantage Concorde Football Club	Tim Sadler, Strategic Director Tel. 01235 540360 E-mail: tim.sadler@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Green Travel Plan		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Tessa Ward	Consultation with staff	Gordon Willcox Tel. 01235 540390 E-mail: gordon.willcox@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	Draft Green Travel Plan
Five Year Audit Plan		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	December 2005	Councillor Roz Smith	Scrutiny Committee	Sam Turner Tel. 01235 547615 e-mail: sam.turner@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	Previous Audit Plan
Empty Homes		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	January 2006	Councillor Mary de Vere	Not applicable	Paul Staines Tel. 01235 547621 e-mail: paul.staines@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Customer Contact Strategy		Executive 3rd Feb 2006	September 2005	Councillor Roz Smith	LSP2 Project Board and IEG Steering Group	Tim Sadler, Strategic Director Tel. 01235 540360 tim.sadler@whitehorse dc.gov.uk	None.
Financial Services Procurement	KEY	Executive 23rd Feb 2006	February 2006	Councillor Mary de Vere	Consultation with Scrutiny Committee and South Oxfordshire District Council	Steve Bishop, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer tel. 01235 540332 e-mail: steve.bishop@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	Tender documents
Waste Strategy: Shortlisting of Disposal and Collection Options		Executive 3rd Mar 2006	January 2006	Councillor Tony de Vere	Consult Oxfordshire Waste Partnership	David Stevens Tel. 01235 540378 E-mail: david.stevens@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	None.
Tree Strategy		Executive 3rd Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Tim Sadler, Strategic Director Tel. 01235 540360 E-mail: tim.sadler@whitehorse dc.gov.uk	None.
Youth Strategy		Executive 3rd Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Voluntary and community sector and the Council's Youth Forum	Tim Sadler, Strategic Director Tel. 01235 540360 E-mail: tim.sadler@whitehorse dc.gov.uk	None.
North East Area Community Grants		North East Area Committee 7th Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. (01235) 540695 toby.warren@whitehorsedc.gov.uk	Grant applications

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2011	KEY	Executive 9th Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Tony de Vere Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group	To consider the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector's report and his recommendations to modify the Local Plan	Rodger Hood Tel. 01235 540340 e-mail: rodger.hood@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	Local Plan Inquiry Inspector's Report
South East Area Community Grants		South East Area Committee 14th Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. (01235) 540695 toby.warren@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	Grant applications
West Area Community Grants		West Area Committee 23rd Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. (01235) 540695 toby.warren@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	Grant applications
Abingdon Area Community Grants		Abingdon Area Committee 28th Mar 2006	March 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. (01235) 540695 toby.warren@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	Grant applications
Waste Strategy: Endorse Final Agreed Waste Collection and Disposal Scenario(s) for Oxfordshire 2010 to 2035		Executive 7th Apr 2006	April 2006	Councillor Tony de Vere	Consult Oxfordshire Waste Partnership	David Stevens Tel. 0235 540378 E-mail: david.stevens@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	None.
Community Grants		Executive 21st Apr 2006	April 2006	Councillor Joyce Hutchinson	Not applicable	Toby Warren Tel. 01235 540695 E-mail: toby.warren@whitehor sedc.gov.uk	None.

Decision	Key decision?	Decision maker	Date first published	Consultees	Consultation method	Contact	Documents used
Election of Vice-Chair, Appointment of Meetings and Representatives to Outside Bodies, Delegation to Executive Members		Executive 17th May 2006	May 2006	Leader of the Council	Executive Members		None.

Anthony
17/01/06

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
TO THE LOCAL PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP
23 JANUARY 2006

Local Development Framework: response to the draft Statement of Community Involvement

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 The draft Statement of Community Involvement was placed on deposit from 25 November 2005 to 6 January 2006. This report summarises the representations received during the deposit period and recommends appropriate changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement for submission to the Secretary of state as set out in Appendix A.

1.2 The Contact Officer for this report is Grant Audley-Miller, Section Head (Environmental Planning & Conservation) 01235 540343.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 *That the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group recommend the Executive to:*

- 1) *Consider the representations made to the draft Statement of Community Involvement and agree the recommendations set out in the attached schedule*
- 2) *Approve the draft Statement of Community Involvement to the Secretary of State for submission as amended in Appendix A*
- 3) *That prior to the publication of the draft Statement of Community Involvement minor and editorial and presentational amendments be delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning)*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

3.1 This report complies with the Council's Vision Statement and aims.

4.0 The draft Statement of Community Involvement

4.1 The Draft Statement of Community Involvement was placed on deposit from 25 November 2005 to 6 January 2006. It was sent free to all the Consultation Bodies contained in Appendix 1 and the List of Bodies and Organisations in Appendix 2 of the draft Statement. In addition over 200 individuals and other organisations who had previously expressed interest on being kept up to date on progress on the Local Plan were notified by letter of the publication of the draft Statement.

4.2 The document and the forms for making representations were available at the Local Services Points in Abingdon and Wantage and the Council's offices at Faringdon, at libraries throughout the district and at Didcot and the Westgate Centre.

4.3 Notices were placed in the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald at the start of the consultation period. A press release was sent out to the media identified in Appendix 2 of the draft Statement and resulted in articles in the Oxford Mail and the Herald series. In addition an informal notice was placed in Council News. The document and representation forms were also available at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy/LDF which included a downloadable version of the document together with forms for making comments.

5.0 **Consultation Responses**

- 5.1 Over 60 individuals and organisations made a total of just over 120 representations. 28 were representations in support and 71 were comments. 26 representations were submitted by e-mail.
- 5.2 Out of the 120 representations received there were 46 general complaints and Chapter 6 Community Involvement in Planning Applications received the most, a total of 30
- 5.3 The Officers have been encouraged by the nature of the representations received. There were a significant proportion that supported the SCI and many were concerned to ensure that the representee was included on the SCI database and that they would continue to be kept informed on progress on the preparation of local development documents. Other key themes of the representations were concerns that consultation periods for planning applications are too short and that consultation on both planning applications and development plan documents should involve as many groups and organisations as possible.
- 5.4 Officers attended a meeting of the Youth Forum to explain the process. The response was that short summary documents should be used wherever possible and made as colourful and attractive as possible and it would be helpful if officers could visit schools for consultation exercises with students. These are matters of detail but should be kept in mind when designing consultation leaflets and arranging consultation events in the future. Officers have agreed to regularly update the Forum on progress on the LDF.

6.0 **Other Changes to the draft Statement of Community Involvement**

- 6.1 The officers have taken the opportunity to re-examine the document and suggest a number of changes to add clarity and update and correct the draft for formal submission. These changes are in addition to the recommendations set out in the schedule and are both highlighted.

7.0 **Next Stages**

- 7.1 Following approval by Council the Statement of Community Involvement will be submitted to the Secretary of State in March and a request for a public examination will be lodged. It is not known at this stage if the examination will be undertaken solely by written representations or if any objector might wish for a formal hearing.

RODGER HOOD
Assistant Director (Planning)

TIM SADLER
Strategic Director

Background Papers:

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
GENERAL	
<p><u>Support</u></p> <p>381/1 UKAEA, 403/1 English Nature, 418/1 Ministry of Defence, 441/1 SEEDA, 486/1 Wm Morrison Supermarkets, 506/1 South East and South West Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, 513/1 The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Church, 620/1 Charney Bassett Parish Council, 665/1 Sunningwell Parish Council, 728/1 Bovis Homes Ltd, 743/1 Persimmon Strategic Land (Western), 768/1 The Oxford Green Belt Network, 791 Didcot Town Council, 967/1 The Church Commissioners for England, 801/1 Dr H A Dickinson, 968/2 Gallagher Estates and Gleeson Homes, 971/1 Mrs Sheila Cotton All these respondents generally support the SCI and wish to be kept informed on progress on the LDF.</p> <p><u>Objections</u></p> <p>382/2 Letcombe Brook Project Officer hopes that the SCI will be effectively updated to improve the consultation process on ecology and sustainability.</p> <p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>386/1 GOSE suggest that for those where English is not their first language or otherwise have optical or literary difficulties the Council may wish to add on the front or back cover of all LDF documents text in English and other locally appropriate languages why the document is important and hence why people would want to read it and the means by which they can do so.</p> <p>386/2 GOSE suggest it would be advisable to add the Council's name to the footer on each page.</p> <p>386/3 GOSE consider it would be helpful if the Council could emphasise that the new system has a very different philosophy and practice – it is not a re-branding of the old system. As a result everyone will need to change the way they do things, e.g. councils, stakeholders, developers, etc.</p> <p>386/1 GOSE suggest that the Council may wish to highlight in some way the words or phrases explained in the glossary and to include text at the beginning of the document to alert users to this practice.</p> <p>413/1 The Highways Agency expect to be consulted on any Local Development Documents that may impact on the motorway and all-purpose trunk road network. In particular, they would expect to be consulted on all Development Plan Documents. Where a meeting is</p>	<p>The support is welcomed.</p> <p>Agreed The Council will monitor the LDF process and assess the consultation methods used and how appropriate and effective. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>The officers in consultation with the Council's communications officer are looking into the possibilities of improving the document along the lines suggested by GOSE and will make an oral report at the meeting.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Amend footer on each page to include 'Vale of White Horse District Council'.</p> <p>Noted RECOMMENDATION: Page 1 para 1.4 Add new sentence to end of paragraph 1.4 to read 'The new development plan system has a very different philosophy. Local development frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to managing development. As a result all those involved, the public, developers, town and parish councils and local organisations will all need to change the way they involve themselves in the plan making process.'</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: That the submission document be amended accordingly.</p> <p>The Highways Agency are a statutory consultee for Local Development Documents, and as such they are listed in Appendix 2. As a statutory consultee, they must be</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>considered appropriate on issues relating to the trunk road network, they would prefer a one to one meeting.</p> <p>They also note that it is a formal statutory requirement, under the General Development Procedure Order 1995, to consult the Highways Agency on planning applications.</p> <p>549/1 The British Wind Energy Association welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in response to the consultation. They consider that they are in a unique position to comment on the circumstances which will affect future growth and development of the Sector. In particular they refer to the 'South West Public Engagement Protocol for Wind Energy' which discusses the various options for community involvement at each stage of the planning process and offers guidance on how to deliver these options effectively and appropriately.</p> <p>They emphasise the importance of local planning authorities highlighting in their SCI what level of community involvement they consider appropriate.</p> <p>609 South West Regional Assembly have indicated they will respond but have not done so.</p> <p>625/1 Cumnor Parish Council consider Sections 2-5 contain too much jargon.</p> <p>627/1 Drayton Parish Council in addition to their comments later in the schedule also comment that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are concerned at the replacement of the Local Plan with a Local Development Framework at all – we do not appear to have been consulted on this issue. • 'Considerable resources' have been allocated, but an actual budget figure would allow comment on proper use of council tax funding. • Thinks that the Parish Council should be identified as the main channel for local opinion on all planning matters. • If this process is to give value for money there 	<p>consulted about all planning policy documents considered relevant to them, which is likely to be all of them. However, as they have expressed an interest to be consulted on all development plan documents, this has been noted.</p> <p>It should be noted that this is only for relevant planning applications.</p> <p>Noted It is considered that the draft SCI gives adequate advice on the timing and level of community involvement in the preparation of development plan documents and the consideration of planning applications.</p> <p>Noted Their point is understood but this arises from the different documents and different stages of preparation. A number of textual changes have been put forward by officers to bring the document up to date and improve clarity. A complete crib version outlining the changes recommended in this schedule and those textual changes recommended by officers is attached to this schedule.</p> <p>The Council is required to produce the Local Development Framework under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. There is no scope for consultation on this requirement.</p> <p>The SCI is required to show that the process of involvement can be resourced and managed effectively. The Council considers that the draft SCI in Section 6 achieves this.</p> <p>The Council has a responsibility to involve and listen to all sections of the community and to balance all these views. The Government guidance set out in PPS12 stresses that local authorities should be getting more people involved in the planning process as early as possible. The Parish Council's view that it should be identified as the main channel for public opinion runs counter to this advice. The Parish Councils will have a very important role but the District Council has a responsibility to ensure widespread public involvement. It should also be noted that all development plan documents when submitted to the Secretary of State have to be accompanied by a statement setting out how consultation has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement. See para 5.31.</p> <p>The Parish Council's concerns are noted but this is not an</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>needs to be a commitment to a greater responsiveness in the practical context of informed planning, relating to such issues as achieving and maintaining a range of housing matched to local demographic socio-economic needs and good design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be interesting to see in future whether all the strategies for consultation are indeed implemented. <p>639/2 Grove Parish Council consider the document repetitious and unnecessarily long.</p> <p>715/1 South East England Regional Assembly do not wish to comment at this stage but would remind the Council that its development plan documents should be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and take account of the emerging Draft South East Plan, Part 1 (Core Regional Policies).</p> <p>773/1 National Grid while supporting the SCI wish to emphasise the role of the National Grid and to highlight areas and issues where they feel consultation with National Grid would be appropriate in future Development Plan Documents. They consider that as an important stakeholder they should be involved in the preparation, alteration and revision of relevant Development Plan Documents which may affect their assets including policies and plans relating to the following issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies relating to overhead transmission lines Policies relating to the diverting or undergrounding of overhead transmission lines Development adjacent to high voltage overhead lines Other policies relating to infrastructure or utility provision Policies relating to development in the countryside Landscape policies Allocating of sites for residential development adjacent to their assets Waste and mineral plans <p>In addition they also want to be consulted on significant planning applications, which may affect their assets. This will ensure that the transmission of electricity and gas and the role of National Grid is not compromised.</p>	<p>issue for the State of Community Involvement which is concerned with the processes of community involvement.</p> <p>It is a requirement for the Council to review the SCI. In addition the Council will monitor the LDF process and assess the consultation methods used and their appropriateness and effectiveness. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Noted These organisations are all included on the consultation list. RECOMMENDATION: No change be made to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Some consultation documents are unavoidably technical in nature and have to contain specific information to comply with the regulations. A number of textual changes are proposed to improve clarity and are set out in the attached crib version.</p> <p>The comment is noted but is not relevant to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>National Grid are included in Appendix 2 and will be consulted on development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.</p> <p>Noted. The posting of all new applications on the website will assist organisations such as the National Grid in monitoring applications and if necessary submit comments. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Noted. All these respondents are included in the</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>678/1 Cherwell District Council, 719/1 Gloucestershire County Council, 725/1 Bellway Homes, 800/1 Lime Walk Gospel Trust, 913/1 Vale Strategic Partnership, 938/1 CAMRA Vale of White Horse Branch, 950/1 Mrs M Werrell, Mr J D Werrell and Ms J M Dennie, 959/1 G L Hearn, 960/1 Morgan Cole Solicitors, 961/1 Christopher Strang Associates, 962/1 Broadway Halyon, 963/1 Hids Copse Residents Association, 964/1 Mrs K Bitmead, 965/1 Mrs Lisa Auchinole All these respondents wish to be kept informed on progress on the LDF.</p> <p>801/1 Dr H A Dickinson who supports the draft SCI comments that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the timing of consultation exercises needs to avoid public holidays because this can cause difficulties for parish councils and other councillors. for the residents of Cumnor there are six main area of concern relating to housing development, preservation of the Green Belt, major housing developments, smaller developments and their cumulative impact, enforcement, appeals and development of gated communities the key for community involvement is that the community is enabled to participate 'meaningfully'. <p>915/1 West Waddy ADP consider that the SCI is overlong and would benefit from a summary. There is no allowance in the response form for the comments that form neither objection or support.</p> <p>972/1 Persimmon Homes Wessex comment that the SCI is confusing, repetitive and over long and not in accordance with the Companion Guide to PPS12.</p> <p>The text should be revised to make clear that representations received will be assessed with the overall context provided by relevant planning policy statements and guidance and local consultation cannot override national or regional policy.</p> <p>In respect of consultation the SCI should clearly state</p>	<p>database.</p> <p>The Local Development Scheme is an ambitious and tight programme and it may not be possible to avoid the summer holidays and other public holidays to achieve the timetable. However, wherever practicable the Council will attempt to avoid consultation at such times. A sentence could be included to recognise that the Council will, where practicable, and without prejudice to its Local Development Scheme, avoid public holidays and the summer holiday period. RECOMMENDATION: Page 14 para 5.12 add new sentence to read 'Where practicable the Council will attempt to avoid public holidays and the summer vacation period when holding public consultation exercises'.</p> <p>Noted. The Parish Council will be kept informed of the progress on the relevant development plan documents.</p> <p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement seeks to widen community involvement particularly at an early stage, so that the community can make a real difference in terms of influencing policy and the future of the area. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>This is noted. See response to Persimmon below. The form for the submission stage will be modified to take account of this. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>For the draft Statement of Community Involvement to adequately set out community involvement, the SCI needs to be of this length. It should be noted that GOSE have not objected to the length of the document. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Page 11 para 5.2 add after paragraph a new sentence to read 'Views expressed by the community will be considered within the overall context of national and regional guidance and other policies of the District Council.</p> <p>The detail of the management of any particular consultation exercises are not appropriate for inclusion in</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>that attendees at interactive consultation events will be sent a comprehensive record of discussions held. Also it should be made clear that the Council will seek to participate in joint consultations in certain circumstances.</p> <p>The Council needs to be careful about how different methods of consultation are used.</p>	<p>the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Noted</p>

SECTION 2 – The Local Development Framework and associated documents

<p>Comments</p> <p>Para 2.1 and Fig 1.</p> <p>386/5 GOSE consider that SCI users may find it helpful if text were added to explain role/timing and authorship of the Regional Spatial Strategy.</p> <p>Para 2.6 and Fig 1.</p> <p>386/6 GOSE note that the AMR will also review/report upon any particular issues/trends in or affecting the area generally and/or that may have a bearing on the future need for the timing of LDF documents.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: After para 2.1 add new paragraph to read ‘The regional spatial strategy is being prepared by the South East Regional Assembly and all the Council’s development plan documents must comply with it. Further information is available on SEERA’s web site www.southeast-ra.gov.uk.</p> <p>This will be part of the process of revising the Local Development Scheme. There is therefore no need to alter the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
---	---

SECTION 3 – Consultation on the Statement of Community Involvement

<p>Support</p> <p>Para’s 3.4 and 3.5</p> <p>551/1 The Theatres Trust are pleased that paras 3.4 and 3.5 explain about the data base and wish to have it confirmed that they are included. They consider a link to the database within the SCI would be useful</p> <p>Comments</p> <p>Para 3.1</p> <p>627/3 Drayton Parish Council are concerned by the 18 month cycle of the Statement of Community Involvement and what scale of projects go through this cycle.</p> <p>Para 3.9</p> <p>386/7 GOSE sentence regarding public housing is repeated.</p>	<p>The Trust is included. An electronic link as suggested will be investigated.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>This is the timetable for preparing the Statement of Community Involvement and sets out how the Council will consult on the preparation of the development plan documents. It will only be considering consultation arrangements and not specific projects or documents.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Paragraph 3.9: last sentence delete.</p>
--	---

SECTION 4 – The Council’s Vision and Principles for Community Involvement

<p>Objection</p> <p>Para 4.2</p> <p>386/8 GOSE consider it may be helpful to include a definition of hard to reach groups in the glossary and</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Add to glossary ‘Hard to reach</p>
--	--

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>give some examples.</p> <p>568/1 Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot consider that many institutions and organisations in or around Oxfordshire have national or international reputation for the work they do, including the University of Oxford, organisations at Harwell Business Centre, the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, CEH Wallingford, HR Wallingford, CABI, the Environment Agency, the Henley Business School, the Culham Science Centre, CEH Oxford, the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (ILAM) etc. Many employers of these organisations, together with all others who live in the Vale of White Horse District, can contribute knowledge and experience from their training and other interests to achieving sustainable development within the District. Accordingly a new bullet point should be added to paragraph 4.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise the considerable knowledge and experience which is potentially available to VWHDC within the community. Following the principles of Local Agenda 21, we will use this resource when possible and appropriate to inform decisions we make in the planning process. <p>789/1 The Wilts & Berks Canal Trust object because they have problems in communication over planning applications due to the area covered.</p>	<p>groups can be any group of people whose views are difficult to access through regular consultation. They can include people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and young people.'</p> <p>Many of these organisations are included in the Business and Commerce Section of Appendix 2. Those that are not included will be added to the list for consultation in the preparation of development plan documents. There is no need to amend the statement</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Page 45 Appendix 2: Add the suggested organisations to the Appendix.</p> <p>The Council considers this to be an internal matter for the Trust. However, the inclusion of all new planning application on the Council's web-site should assist the Trust.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
SECTION 5 – Implementing the Vision	
Support	
<p>Para 5.10 791/2 Didcot Town Council warmly welcome the undertaking to provide copies of documents and details of consultation timetables at Didcot Library.</p>	Noted
<p>Para 5.36, 791/3 Didcot Town Council strongly support the proposed notification of relevant consultation bodies who will then be able to take part in a further 6 weeks consultation period.</p>	Noted
Para 5.8	
<p>787/1 Blewbury Parish Council consider that to help parishes give attention to major issues the Vale can help by marking planning related mail so it can be passed quickly to the parish planning committee.</p>	<p>While understanding this concern it should be noted that all correspondence relating to planning applications have prominent references to the Town and Country Planning Acts. The Local Plan and LDF consultation letters also have prominent references to the Local Plan or LDF.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>
Objections	
Para 5.7	
<p>741/1 Martin Grant Homes consider it would be</p>	<p>The draft Statement of Community Involvement does indicate that other meetings may be arranged with</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>helpful if the Council would meet with other stakeholders in the draft stages of the local development documents preparation where appropriate.</p>	<p>stakeholders where considered necessary and subject to resource availability. RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
<p>763/2 Michael Hocken objects to paras 5.11 and 5.36 regarding the formal notices being published in the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Herald and Gazette and any informal notices in the Oxford Times and Herald Series. But 6.4 refers to the Herald Series, the Oxford Times and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald. No justification or explanation is given for this discrepancy.</p>	<p>The discrepancy arises because of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations 2004 that specify for the purposes of development plan documents 'by local advertisement' means publication on at least one occasion in a local newspaper circulating in the whole area of the local planning authority. The use of the Oxford Mail and Wiltshire Gazette Herald most closely achieves this requirement and achieves a balance between meeting statutory requirements and resources. Different regulations allow planning and other applications to be advertised in other local newspapers. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
<p>Para 5.11</p> <p>568/3 Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot consider that a publicly available listing of the expected forward programme of consultations will facilitate community involvement in the planning process. This will enable voluntary and community groups to use their limited resources to the best effect in engaging with the preparation of local plans. A new sentence should be added to read "We will maintain an up-to-date schedule of expected consultations (with approximately a 6-month time horizon) on the Council's website."</p>	<p>This particular point is addressed by the range of measures outlined in paragraph 5.11. In addition the Local Development Scheme sets out the main consultation stages up to and including 2008. This is available on the Council's website. However the idea put forward would be helpful. RECOMMENDATION: Page 14 last sentence of para 5.11 add new sentence to read 'The Council will maintain an up-to-date schedule of expected consultation exercises on its web site'.</p>
<p>Para 5.12</p> <p>568/4 Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot consider that consultations should avoid where possible the need to prepare responses during the summer months when many residents (and Council officers) plan to take holidays. To facilitate participation, particularly from those with family responsibilities, they suggest that for situations where the Council has some control over the timing of consultation a commitment is made by adding the following: "To facilitate participation, particularly of those with family responsibilities, we will aim to schedule formal public consultations not to cover more than two weeks of the Oxfordshire schools' summer vacation period."</p>	<p>The Local Development Scheme is an ambitious and tight programme and it may be not possible to avoid the summer holidays and other public holidays to achieve the timetable. However, wherever practicable the Council attempts to avoid consultation at such times. A sentence could be included to recognise that the Council, will where practicable, and without prejudice to its Local Development Scheme avoid public holidays and the summer holiday period. RECOMMENDATION: See response to representation 801 made by Dr H A Dickinson.</p>
<p>627/2 Drayton parish Council consider 6 weeks is too short for a parish council to make informed comments.</p>	<p>While understanding the concerns of the Parish Council, the 6 week period they refer to is set out in the Town and Country Planning regulations. Maintaining a schedule as recommended in response to the campaign for a sustainable Didcot will assist in overcoming Drayton Parish Councils concern. RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
<p>Para 5.13</p> <p>516/1 Churches Together in Oxfordshire object because "Many 'hard to reach' groups are not literate in English and with the methods of representation given in this paragraph they will be excluded from involvement. Resources should be made available so that these marginalized members of society are included. A new sentence should be added to paragraph 5.13 to read "For those persons unable to communicate in writing or English, the opportunity to make representation should</p>	<p>The difficulty of 'hard to reach groups' is recognised and this is a helpful comment. The Council has had no requests in the recent past to make documents available in other languages. While the Council will look sympathetically on any requests for interviews to receive comments on development plan documents, resource implications may mean that the Council may not</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>be available by interview using interpreters where necessary.”</p> <p>Para 5.58</p> <p>741/2 Martin Grant Homes consider the guidance is not entirely clear on who is required to prepare sustainability appraisals and why. It would be helpful if the paragraph contained further guidance explaining when the local planning authority will undertake sustainability appraisals of site provided by developers and at what stage the developers will be required to do this.</p> <p>Para 5.60</p> <p>568/2 The Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot consider it essential for all bodies listed in Appendix 1 to be aware of the publication and availability of the SA reports to facilitate the integrated assessment of the environmental effects of proposed development and instigate the appropriate round-table discussions. A new bullet point should be added to the end of para 5.60:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Inform all statutory consultation bodies, as listed in Appendix 1, of the publication of Sustainability Appraisal Reports: to do this we will use electronic means, indicating the location of the report in question on the Council’s website.” 	<p>necessarily make this facility available to all those individuals that request it.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Page 14 para 5.13 add new sentence to read ‘People unable to communicate in writing or English the Council may be able to make their comments by interview with officers of the Council.’</p> <p>The statement at paragraph 5.58 is quite clear that anyone proposing an alternative site at the submission stage will be required to submit a Sustainability Appraisal for that site. That is the only stage at which a developer will be required to submit a sustainability appraisal in support of a site.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>The Council will make the Sustainability Appraisal available all stages of preparing development plan documents and this is set out in the draft Statement of Community Involvement. See Figures 3 and 4.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to be made to the Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
<p>Comments</p> <p>Para 5.19</p> <p>425/1 The National Trust consider that the draft SCI is well laid out and easy to read, and reflects the operational principles for community involvement as set out by Government in Planning Policy Statement 1 and in the ODPM paper <i>Community Involvement in Planning: the Government’s Objectives</i>.</p> <p>They comment that paragraph 5.19 sets out the ‘Evidence Base’ for the LDF. The National Trust would support the involvement of the public in formulation of this evidence base. It may be useful to briefly explain what is involved in this ‘evidence base’, in other words the combination of both the assessment of data and statistics as well as opinion of the public. This may assist the public to be aware that their future involvement on the options leading to the core strategy will be highly valued.</p> <p>The Glossary on page 51 is very useful and may also benefit from the addition of a definition regarding the ‘evidence base’ as involved in the production of a LDF.</p> <p>Figs 3 and 4</p>	<p>The Council welcomes the support of the National Trust. The Council will be consulting on the evidence base and this is set out in the draft Statement of Community Involvement but it is not considered necessary to change the SCI as suggested as the public involvement in the evidence base is only through consultation.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: Add to the Glossary the following ‘Evidence Base. The information and data gathered by local authorities to justify the ‘soundness’ of the policy approach set out in the Local Development Documents, including physical, economic and social characteristics of an area’.</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>386/9 GOSE consider SCI users may find it helpful to add the statutory regulation numbers to the diagram.</p> <p>Para 5.21 and 5.58-5.61</p> <p>386/10, 368/11 GOSE consider it would be helpful if GOSE were added to the list of those consulted on the various stages/iterations of the Sustainability Report. Also it would be helpful if all documents were submitted electronically to GOSE.</p> <p>Para 5.61</p> <p>915/2 West Waddy ADP consider the use of the word 'may' implies the Council 'might not' consult other relevant organisations.</p> <p>639/1 Grove Parish Council consider that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notice of at least one week should be given to interested bodies before the start of any consultation period • any changes shown on the Vale's web-site or at public libraries must be made known to interested parties and should preferably be conveyed by e-mail and not solely in the press. E-mail alerts should also be made available to anyone who requests them • Exhibitions – either staffed or un-staffed – should be held at times convenient to the public with adequate notice and also when the buildings are open (the last OCC exhibition was held in Old Mill Hall but the building was shut for most of the time) • How are the 1,000 members of the Citizens Panel selected? • Page 26 bullet point 5 should read 'publish' not public • How would any questionnaires be distributed? <p>Paras 5.46-5.57</p> <p>972/2 Persimmon Homes Wessex consider that the section of SPDs is unclear in that it does not identify how long the consultation process will be at each stage. Persimmon consider that it should be six weeks.</p>	<p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Amend Figures 3 and Figures 4 to include Statutory Regulation numbers.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Para 5.60 and other appropriate points in the text add new bullet point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a paper copy and an electronic copy to the Government Office for the South East and the Planning Inspectorate. <p>There is no specific requirement in the regulations to consult the organisations in Appendix 2 at this stage. The wording is considered appropriate as it indicates that it may only consult organisations if it is relevant to do so. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>The Local Development Scheme and the use of the Council's web-site will assist in giving advance warning of consultation exercises. See also recommendation made in response to representation 568/3 by the Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot.</p> <p>The Council will look to see what use could be made of e-mail. It has to be recognised however that only a small proportion of the respondents have asked to be notified by e-mail. The preference still seems to be by letter and public notice. RECOMMENDATION: That the Council endeavour to use email as a means of communication when requested.</p> <p>As far as practicable the Council attempts to hold exhibitions in accessible locations at convenient times, but this is governed by the availability of suitable venues.</p> <p>It is a sample of 1000 people selected to represent the overall profile of the Vale.)This has been changed in the revised draft.)</p> <p>This is a detailed matter not appropriate for the Statement of Community Involvement. This will be decided for each consultation exercise when decisions have been made about the type of leaflets to be distributed and the area and timescale for their distribution.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Page 24 para 5.51 last bullet point. Add to end of sentence 'which to comply with the regulations will last from 4 to 6 weeks'.</p>

SECTION 6 – Community Involvement in Planning Applications

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
Support	
General	
<p>622/1 Chilton Parish Council consider the intentions of the SCI are good but its main comment is what notice will be taken of community comments if they are not in line with Government or Council policy or agendas.</p>	<p>All comments will be taken into account but the weight afforded to them will depend upon the need to take into account Government and Council policy. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>
Paras 6.1-6.28	
<p>627/4 Drayton Parish Council support these paragraphs which are clear and helpful for those who have to make informed comments.</p>	Noted
Para 6.3 bullet point 4	
<p>625/3 Cumnor Parish Council welcomes access to electronic copies of planning applications.</p>	Noted
Para 6.6	
<p>625/5 Cumnor Parish Council approves of this initiative.</p>	Noted
Para 6.7 bullet point 2	
<p>625/6 Cumnor Parish Council approves of this initiative.</p>	Noted
Para 6.23	
<p>665/2 Sunningwell Parish Council consider that it would be helpful if there were better channels of communication for the earliest stage of an application, particularly those that could be difficult or contentious.</p>	<p>The Council encourage, but cannot require, applicants to discuss with residents and local town and parish councils their proposals in advance of submitting planning applications. The Statement of Community Involvement reiterates this and could therefore help to achieve earlier involvement. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p>
Para 6.25	
<p>741/3 Martin Grant Homes welcome the approach to pre-application consultations but to improve the soundness of the statement it would be better if the text was amended to introduce a degree of flexibility on pre-determined dates for taking applications to Committee.</p>	<p>The Council's overriding priority is to ensure applications are determined within the Government's targets and therefore will determine the date for taking applications to committee to ensure the determination period complies with this target. This is particularly important now that the Council has been named as a Planning Standards Authority. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>
Para 6.28	
<p>791/4 Didcot Town Council consider that this set is a useful explanation of the position regarding the Upper Thames Reservoir Proposal and support the undertaking to develop specific consultation arrangements and would simply ask for an assurance that arrangements will seek the views of close neighbours of the Vale of White Horse District Council.</p>	Noted
Para 6.21	
<p>625/7 Cumnor Parish Council approve of the initiative to improve the electronic accessibility of the planning service.</p>	Noted

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>Objections</p> <p>General</p> <p>763/1 Michael Hocken objects because despite DEFRA guidance no mention is made of mechanisms for integrating development quality issues into the development plan or planning application process. Also no mention is made of access statements.</p> <p>969/1 British Waterways welcomes its inclusion in the list of other consultation bodies. They consider that British Waterways should be considered as a body that can offer advice on planning applications that will affect future restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal and would wish to be considered on any major applications that affect the agreed line of the canal.</p> <p>966/1 Stephen Bowley Planning Consultancy object because the SCI is silent on the question of the timescales for determining planning applications. They consider that the application of rigid timescales for the determination of planning applications can limit time for negotiations, consultation, submission of amendments and the completion of any legal agreements. They suggest that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A section of timescales should be included which should provide for 'a local performance agreement'. This would provide for timeframes for major application being set locally • There should also be provision for exclusions of time being agreed at the request of applicants – without the planning authority being penalised through planning grant. Applicants are more concerned with a 'good' rather than 'quick' decision. <p>Para 6.3 – Bullet point 4</p> <p>627/6 Drayton Parish Council consider 21 days is a very short time for parishes to respond to planning applications.</p> <p>958/1 Mr P G Holland considers that when the Council sends a letter to residents they should enclose an A4 sheet showing the location and outline drawing indicating the proposed change(s). The District Council is better equipped to do this than the Parish Councils and it would give residents more time to respond.</p> <p>Para 6.5</p>	<p>The Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared in accordance with the appropriate ODPM guidance. 'Access Statements' are one of a number of suggestions in 'Changes to the Development Control System' Second Consultation Paper issued by the Government in March 2005. The outcome of that consultation process is not yet known, and it is not clear what the Government's timetable is for deciding whether to require the inclusion of 'Access Statements' with planning applications and listed building consent applications.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>While the Council sympathises with this response it is required to meet the Government's targets for processing planning applications by 2006/2007. There is no flexibility and no provision for any local targets or performance indicators.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>21 days is considered sufficient time for parishes to respond to consultations on planning applications. Any longer would prejudice the Council's ability to determine planning applications within the Government's targets.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>This approach is not practicable bearing in mind the targets the Council is now required to meet and the resource implications of such an approach. However the ability to view applications on the Council's web site will help to address this concern.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>349/2 The Ramblers Association object to the third sentence and consider the word 'may' should be substituted by the word 'will'.</p>	
<p>443/1 Sport England South East consider that this paragraph should be strengthened to state that the Council will ensure all statutory consultations are carried out on all relevant planning applications. In line with guidance in Circular 08/2005 it should also be stated that the Council will ensure all statutory consultees receive sufficient information to make a substantive reply. This is critical bearing in mind the 21 day deadline will not start until the statutory consultee has received all the information it needs to provide an informed response.</p>	<p>The concern is noted and a change to the sentence could clarify the intention to consult relevant organisations. RECOMMENDATION: Page 30 para 6.5. Third sentence to read 'A range of relevant local non-statutory bodies who can offer valuable advice will.'</p>
<p>Para 6.15</p>	<p>Noted Displaying all planning applications on the Council's web-site will assist this. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>
<p>741/4 Martin Grant Homes consider that this paragraph suggests only those who have submitted written representations will be able to speak at planning committee. It is understood that ordinarily anybody who registers an intention to speak at Committee has the right to do so.</p>	<p>Paragraph 6.15 could be amended to make clear that any person may address the Committee if they register a wish to speak. RECOMMENDATION: Page 31 para 6.15, penultimate sentence add after parish meeting 'and any other person who registers a wish to speak'.</p>
<p>Para 6.16</p>	<p>10 days notice is considered sufficient bearing in mind the procedures and timetables the Council is required to observe. Dates of forthcoming Committee Meetings are known many weeks or months in advance and are published on the Council's web-site. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>
<p>627/1 Drayton Parish Council object because 10 days notice is not sufficient for a parish council to attend a Development Control Committee.</p>	<p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: That the text be amended where appropriate to refer to 'applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation'.</p>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>General</p>	
<p>972/3 Persimmon Homes Wessex consider that Section 6 is potentially unsound as it does not refer to other applications such as listed building and demolition of buildings within conservation areas, advertisements, trees, walls etc.</p>	
<p>446/1 Thames Water Property Services would expect to be consulted on most major applications. They refer to a 'Guide for LPAs on Planning Applications and Development Consultation with Thames Water Utilities as Statutory Water Sewerage Undertaken' as being of assistance to the Council in determining which planning applications to consult Thames Water on and when finalising the SCI. Generally they consider the earlier they are involved in the process the greater the opportunity they have to make known their concerns regarding the ability of infrastructure to support development; ensure any proposed development has no detrimental impact on their assets or their service provision and allow them to work with developers and other agencies to enable the issues caused by development to be mitigated or a compromise to be reached.</p>	

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>Para 6.3</p> <p>915/3 West Waddy ADP consider the Statement of Community Involvement should state that the Council will strive to put all applications on the web. A reference to para 6.6 should be included in this paragraph.</p> <p>Para 6.3 Bullet Point 1</p> <p>625/2 Cumnor Parish Council feels that letters should be sent more widely not just for larger proposals but for telecom masts for instance.</p> <p>Para 6.4</p> <p>625/4 Cumnor Parish Council considers the current definition of major development is set too high at 10 or more dwellings.</p> <p>446/4 Thames Water Property Services stress there is need for realistic consultation periods with water and sewage undertakings in the preparation of Local Development Documents.</p> <p>Para 6.19</p> <p>915/4 West Waddy ADP support the Council's aim.</p> <p>Para 6.22</p> <p>915/5 West Waddy ADP consider the Council should be more open and specific about what service will be actually provided at the pre-application stage.</p> <p>Para 6.24</p> <p>443/2 Sport England South East consider this paragraph should be strengthened to state the Council will expect applicants, where appropriate, to consult with all statutory consultees. This would speed up the whole process and enable any issues and concerns raised by the statutory consultees to be taken into account at the pre-application stage, rather than delaying the Council in determining the application once submitted. This is helpful to Sport England South East in carrying out their statutory consultee duty.</p> <p>791/6 Didcot Town Council suggest that this paragraph should advise developers to make contact with relevant town/parish councils.</p>	<p>All new applications under the Town & Country Planning Regulations are now included on the web-site. Updating of para 6.21 as set out in the crib version covers this concern RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement.</p> <p>Applications with such a wide impact are usually advertised in the local weekly press and by a site notice in addition to the neighbour notification. This is set out in para 6.4 of the draft Statement of Community Involvement. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Major development proposals are defined by the Government.</p> <p>Agreed. The draft Statement of Community Involvement at various places e.g. paras 5.7 and 5.29 stresses the need not only to consult with, but to meet with key stakeholders. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>All matters relating to development proposals are open to discussion with planning officers prior to the submission of applications. It is not considered necessary to change the draft Statement of Community Involvement. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>The Council cannot require developers to consult with statutory consultees. A change to the paragraph could refer to statutory consultees. RECOMMENDATION: Page 33, para 6.24 third sentence 'In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to consult with national organisations and statutory consultees such as'</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>Para 6.27</p> <p>814/1 Sunningwell Parishioners Against Damage to the Environment object and suggest that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 'some' and 'consider' are removed from the first sentence to remove the discretionary aspect of these applications. 2) 'relevant and/or appropriate general interest groups be added after 'Parish Councils' to ensure wider diversity of community involvement. If this is accepted the section title should be amended. <p>Para 6.28</p> <p>386/12 GOSE understand that Thames Water and DEFRA have had discussions as to the potential options available in the event that an Upper Thames Major resource Development is pursued. GOSE suggest the Council contact Thames Water before submitting the Reg 28 SCI in order that it may reflect the latest position or, if it remains unclear the options.</p> <p>446/2 Thames Water Property Services stress that at this moment in time whilst re-evaluation and other studies are being concluded, Thames Water is not in a position to confirm the resource scheme option and site that the Company wishes to promote through to application. However, as Thames Water has stated a reservoir to the South West of Abingdon is the Company's provisionally preferred option for a major water resource development in the Upper Thames Area. The decision to proceed or not with this provisional preference will be made in the Spring of 2006, and as identified by the Council in paragraph 6.28, it is Thames Water's intention to use the Compulsory Works Order Procedure under S167 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to secure the necessary authorisations. However, although no planning application would be submitted to the Council it does not negate the need for planning permission, which is the current inference of paragraph 6.28 – rather, at the same time as Thames Water submits the CWO, the company is able to invite the Secretary of State to grant deemed planning permission for the proposed works at the same time as making the Order by virtue of section 90 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.</p> <p>Thames Water is committed to consultation through this procedure and is developing the Company's own strategy for consultation in line with best practice contained within planning guidance published by the ODPM.</p> <p>Thames Water welcomes the intention of the Council to develop specific consultation arrangements for the development of an Upper Thames Major Resource, and will be publishing the Company's own strategy in the</p>	<p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Para 6.24 second sentence amend to read 'They could consider involving not just individual residents but town and parish council's, local amenity groups and residents organisations'.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Page 33 para 6.27 delete 'consider making' and substitute with 'make'.</p> <p>These groups will need to make their representations either through the Parish Council or direct to the Planning and Development Committee. It would not be appropriate for the Committee to establish the principle of meeting with individual general interest groups on planning applications as this could prejudice Council's ability to determine planning applications within the Governments targets. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Agreed. Note the response from Thames Water below. RECOMMENDATION: Page 34 para 6.28 second sentence, amend to read 'Thames Water has indicated that the decision as to whether to proceed will be made in 2006 and if it is decided to proceed, it will be submitting proposals at some time during 2007'. Page 34 para 6.28 fourth sentence add to end 'and if granted the Secretary of State would grant deemed planning permission for the proposed works'.</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>Spring of 2006. The Council is welcome to draw on this it is wishes, and Thames Water will also provide assistance to the Council (as requested and as appropriate) in the development of its own consultation arrangements.</p> <p>627/5 Drayton Parish Council consider the reservoir proposals seem to by-pass the LDF.</p> <p>741/5 Martin Grant Homes It would be helpful and improve soundness of the SCI if fuller clarification of the consultation arrangements for non-planning major infrastructure proposals were included.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>This is correct. As will be clear from the response from Thames Water, they intend to use the Compulsory Works Order Procedure under 5167 of the Water Industry Act 1991. This is reflected in the draft Statement of Community Involvement at para 6.28. RECOMMENDATION: See recommendation made in response to 386/12 GOSE.</p> <p>This is the only such proposal of this scale and the Council is not yet in a position to specify the consultation which will be developed during 2006. RECOMMENDATION: No change to the draft Statement of Community Involvement</p>

SECTION 9 OTHER COUNCIL STRATEGIES

Objections

Para 9.5 bullet point 3

500/1 North Wessex Downs AONB consider that the third bullet point is incorrect and legally inaccurate. The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan is clearly the responsibility of the Vale of White Horse District Council and the SCI should reflect this. It would be logical to include the AONB Management Plan under the second bullet point relating to documents prepared in partnership with other organisations. They refer to South Oxfordshire's approach is appropriate.

Agreed

RECOMMENDATION: Page 38 para 9.5 second bullet point, add to end of sentence 'and the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan'. Para 9.5 third bullet point delete 'the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan'.

500/2 North Wessex Downs AONB object because there is no section relating to joint documents and links to other organisations. It would be helpful to have such a section to the SCI, which would reflect the fact that the Council works jointly in partnership with other organisations to devise strategies and policies i.e. the North Wessex Downs AONB.

Agreed

RECOMMENDATION: Page 38 add new paragraph 9.6 to read 'The Council works jointly with other authorities to devise strategies for, for example, the North Wessex Downs AONB and integrated transport strategies. These working arrangements will continue and consultation on any documents will (where practicable) run concurrently'.

The SCI should recognise that there may be some instances where the Council may prepare DPDs or SPDs jointly or in partnership with other local planning authorities, or other partners, e.g. the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners. In these circumstances the SCI could make it clear that the Vale's approach to community involvement would need to coordinate with that being undertaken by the other partners involved. This would still however enable the Council to adopt such documents independently. They refer to South Oxfordshire's approach in their SCI.

Appendix 1

349/1 The Ramblers Association object to the

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>omission of the Ramblers Association which has over 500 members in the Vale from Appendix 1.</p> <p>446/3 Thames Water Property Services consider it should be referred to in the list of specific consultation bodies at Appendix 1 as Thames Water.</p>	<p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Appendix 1 delete 'Water Companies' and substitute 'Thames Water'</p>
<p>Appendix 2 <u>Support</u></p>	
<p>791/5 Didcot Town Council consider this a concise recognition that planning and development matters may have an impact beyond the borders of the district. It is less clear when the Council will consult these adjoining communities and they consider there should be specific acknowledgement of their role in a new paragraph 6.5.</p> <p>Objections</p> <p>803 Kemp & Kemp object to the omission of their company from the list of bodies and organisations at Appendix 2 referred to at paragraph 5.5 and 5.19 of the Statement of Community Involvement</p> <p>Comments</p> <p>332/1 BBOWT are pleased to be included.</p> <p>382/1 Letcombe Brook Project Officer suggests that The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre be included under Environmental Interest Group. The error regarding the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum be amended. Other interest groups be added.</p> <p>386/13 GOSE noted that it is only necessary to consult central government departments where they have large land holdings in an area. It is not necessary to consult them under other circumstances, given that GOSE acts on their behalf in the South East Region.</p> <p>443/3 Sport England South East comment that as Sport England is the brand name for the 'English Sports Council' only Sport England South East need to be included in the Appendix.</p> <p>403/2 English Nature welcome the inclusion of the many wider consultation bodies concerned with wildlife as nature conservation in Appendix 2. They consider it useful to include the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.</p> <p>500/3 The North Wessex Downs AONB wish their group to be included under General Interest Groups.</p> <p>550/1 The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre consider they should be included in Appendix 2 under the Environmental Interest Groups. Abingdon Naturalists Trust might usefully be added.</p> <p>900/1 Radley College suggest that educational establishments are included under their own heading.</p>	<p>Para 6.5 states that the organisation which the Council will consult will vary with the nature of the proposal and its location. It will be for the Council to consider which neighbouring Councils are consulted when a planning application has been made.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: That the entries for the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre and the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum be amended and the group highlighted by the Letcombe Brook Officer be added to the database.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted RECOMMENDATION: Amend Appendix 2 by deleting 'English Sports Council' and inserting 'Sport England South East'.</p> <p>Noted RECOMMENDATION: Amend Appendix 2 to include the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>See recommendation made in response to English Nature.</p> <p>Agreed RECOMMENDATION: Appendix 2 add new categories</p>

Summary of Representations	Observations & Recommendation of the Assistant Director (Planning)
<p>915/6 West Waddy ADP wish their entry to be read West Waddy – ADP.</p> <p>968/1 Gallagher Estates & Gleeson Homes are pleased to be included.</p>	<p>'Educational Establishments' to include Radley College.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
Glossary	
<p><u>Comments</u></p> <p>386/14 GOSE consider SCI users may find it helpful to include a few contact details where people can find out more about the matters included in the glossary, e.g. The Planning Portal, ODPM web-site and Vale of White Horse web-site.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: A new Appendix 5 be added to include contact details or organisations involved in the planning process as set out in the attached CRIB version.</p>

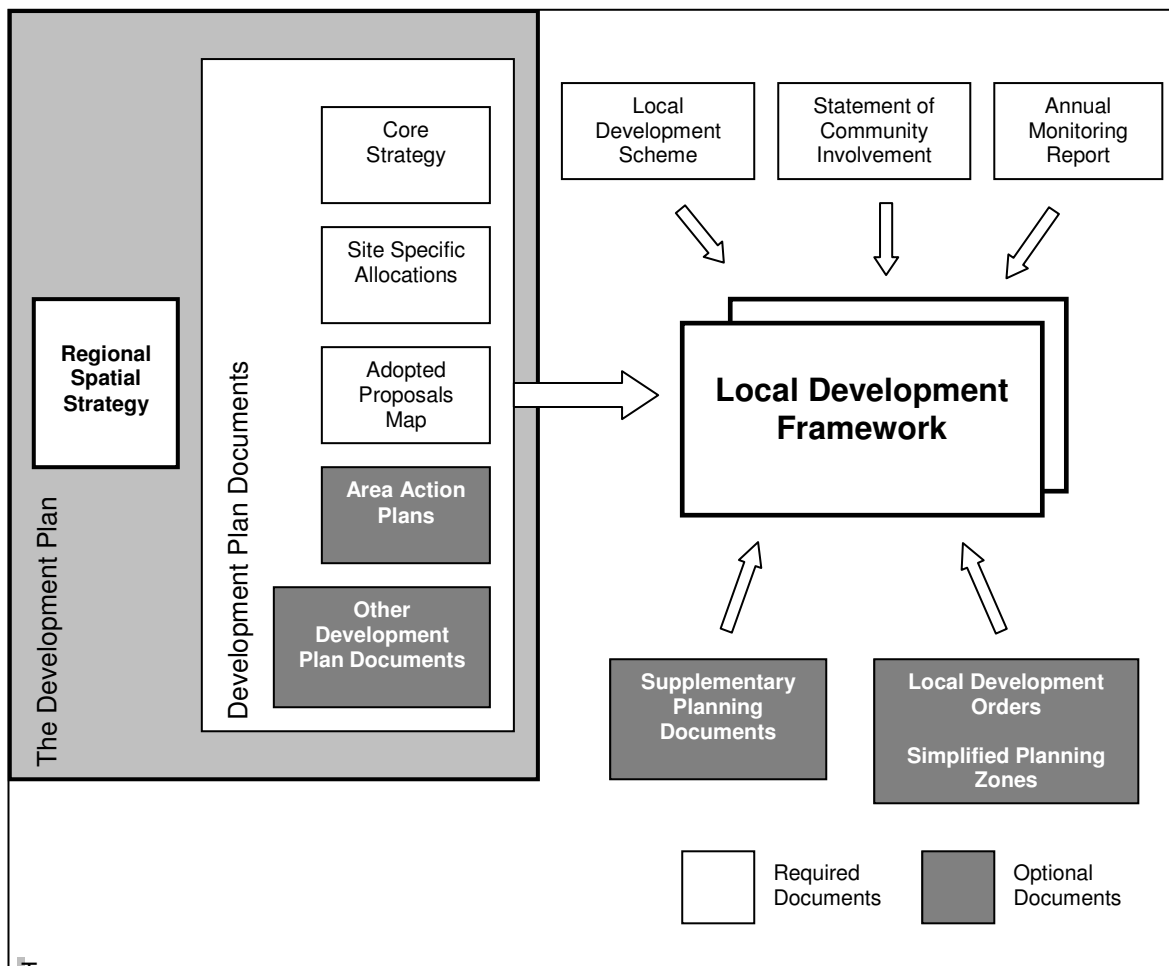
1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the District Council to produce a new development plan for the Vale called a Local Development Framework. In due course the Local Development Framework will replace the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011.
- 1.2 The Local Development Framework will be different from the Local Plan in a number of ways. For example, it will have a broader focus and will be made up of a portfolio of documents produced over time, rather than being a single document. The new Local Development Framework will also be more closely related to and reflective of other strategies of the Council, including the Community Strategy and the Housing Strategy for example. It will be one of the ways in which some of the objectives set out in those strategies can be taken forward through the planning process.
- 1.3 The way in which the Local Development Framework will be progressed and monitored will also be different from previous Local Plans. The Council is required to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is a project plan and timetable for the production of the main Local Development Framework documents. In addition, the Council will have to assess the sustainability of all its Local Development Documents and any associated Supplementary Planning Documents and produce Sustainability Appraisal Reports. It will also be required to monitor the performance of policies within the Local Development Framework publishing the results in an Annual Monitoring Report. More information about the nature and content of these various documents is set out in Section 2 of this statement.
- 1.4 One of the key objectives of the new development plan system is greater community involvement – getting more people involved throughout the planning process, and particularly at an early stage, so that they can make a real difference in terms of influencing policy and the future of the areas in which they live or work. The new development plan system has a very different philosophy. Local development frameworks are intended to streamline the local planning process and promote a proactive, positive approach to the ongoing development and as a result all those involved the public, developers, town and parish councils and local organisations will need to change the way they involve themselves in the plan making process.
- 1.5 To this end, the Council is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which sets out its strategy for ensuring continuous community involvement throughout the different stages of producing and reviewing the Local Development Framework. It also explains how the community will be consulted on planning applications so that their views can be taken into account.

2.0 THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

2.1 A Local Development Framework (LDF) is similar to a Local Plan because it will contain the Council's policies and proposals to guide development in the Vale. However, the format of the LDF will be different to the Local Plan because it will consist of a number of documents prepared over time rather than being a single document. The LDF comprises two types of LDF local development documents; those that will contain the Council's planning spatial policies and proposals, and those that will explain associated with the process of preparing and monitoring the individual LDF development plan documents. Details are given below of the documents the Council intends to produce and, where relevant, the progress it has made in preparing them. The regulations and government guidance governing the LDF process are also referred to.

Figure 1 Key documents that form the Local Development Framework



The Regional Spatial Strategy is being prepared by the South East Regional Assembly and all the Councils development plan documents must comply with it. Further information is available on SEERA's web site www.southeast-ra.gov.uk

Process Documents

The Local Development Scheme (LDS)

- 2.2 The LDS describes in detail the Council's programme for the completion of the current Local Plan and the production of the LDF documents that will eventually replace it. The programme includes "consultation milestones" to inform people about the likely timing of the stages at which they can be involved in these processes. The LDS will be reviewed in an Annual Monitoring Report and rolled forward when required so that new documents can be added and account taken of progress on the programme.
- 2.3 The Council's first LDS 2005-2008 has already been prepared and came into effect in April 2005. In developing the LDS the Council consulted with the Government Office for the South East and the Planning Inspectorate as required by the Regulations. The LDS is currently being updated and should be replaced by March 2006 will be updated from time to time. An up-to-date copy will be available on the Council's web site together with information about any proposed updates.
- 2.4 The LDS is available for inspection at the Council's Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and at the area office in Faringdon. It can also be viewed or downloaded from the Council's web site www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy/LDF. The updated LDS will be available on the Council's web site in February 2006.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

- 2.5 The Statement of Community Involvement (this document) is part of the Local Development Framework. Its purpose is to set out why, how and when the community will be invited to participate in the production of LDF documents and to explain how the public can be involved in the consideration of planning applications.

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

- 2.6 Starting in 2005 the Council must submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the Secretary of State no later than the end of December each year to set out progress on producing the Local Development Framework and assess the effectiveness of key policies. It will cover the period from 1st April to 31st March and will assess the implementation of the LDS and the extent to which development plan policies are being successfully implemented. A copy is available to view or download from the Council's website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy/LDF, and to view or purchase from the Council's Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and at the area office in Faringdon.

Policy Documents

Development Plan Documents (DPD)

2.7 A key part of the Council's Local Development Framework will be Development Plan Documents, a number of which the Council are required by Government to produce, others of which are optional. At the present the Council's intention is to produce the following Development Plan Documents:

- A Core Strategy document setting out the policy framework for development in the District and including a core diagram (required)
- A Site Specific Designations and Allocations document – identifying the sites allocated for development in the Vale (required)
- A Proposals Map – illustrating the land use implications of strategy derived from the Development Plan Documents (required)
- A Development Control Policies document setting out the development control policies that will facilitate the implementation of the core strategy (optional)

2.8 Each of these documents will have a role in setting the spatial planning policy framework to guide future development in the Vale. Once they are adopted they will replace the saved policies from the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 which this Council expects to adopt in July 2006. In addition the Council may prepare Area Action Plans. Although none are proposed at the current time, such plans will be subject to the same consultation procedures as outlined for all Development Plan Documents.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

2.9 In addition to Development Plan Documents, the Council intends to produce Supplementary Planning Documents. These can either expand upon a policy or proposal contained in saved policies from the adopted Local Plan or a policy or proposal contained in the Core Strategy, once it is adopted. They can either be topic based or focus on the development of a particular area, taking the form of a development brief or design guide.

2.10 Unlike Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents are not subject to independent examination by a Planning Inspector. However, it is necessary when producing them to follow set procedures, undertake public consultation in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement, and subject them to a sustainability appraisal.

The Regulations and Government Guidance

2.11 The regulations which apply to the preparation of the Local Development Framework are 'The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. Further advice from the Government is contained in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks. The regulations and PPS12 can be viewed on the web site of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) at www.odpm.gov.uk (~~under/planning/policy~~).

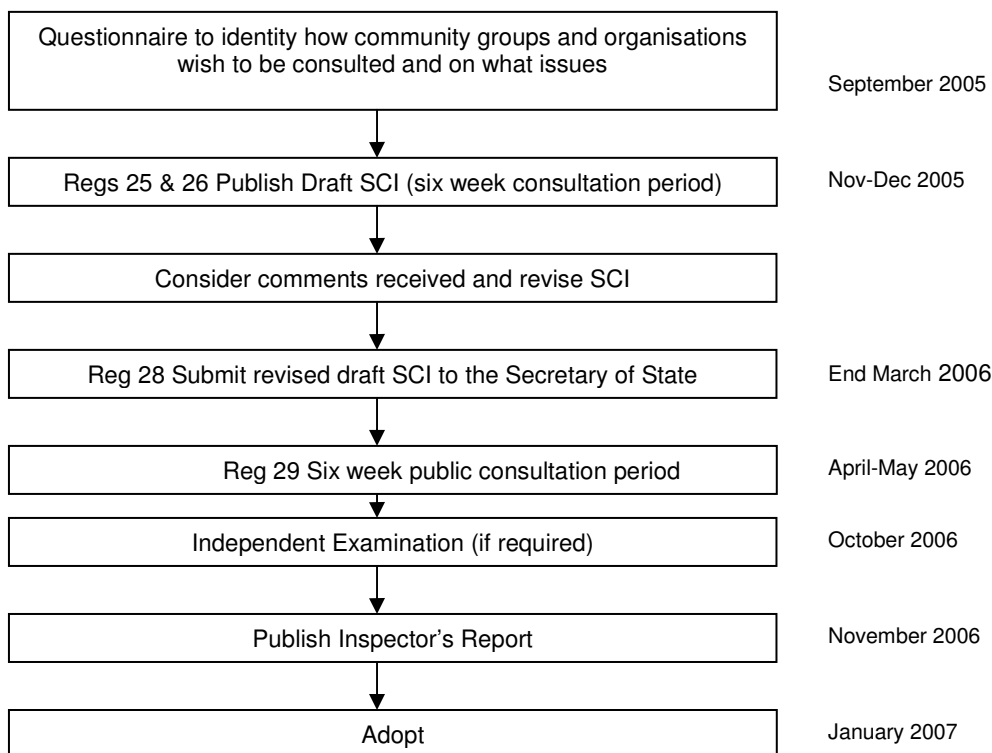
Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.12 All Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents will be subject to a sustainability appraisal. The appraisals will assess the potential social, environmental and economic effects of policies and proposals in each document. This is an on-going process as documents progress through to adoption.
- 2.13 The regulations which apply to the preparation of sustainability appraisal are the 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004' which can also be reviewed on the ODPM web site. Further guidance from the Government is contained in 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents: Guidance for Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities' (ODPM) November 2005.

3.0 CONSULTATION ON THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3.1 The Council's process and timetable for preparing and adopting its Statement of Community Involvement is set out below.

Figure 2. Process and timetable



The Council is now at the stage of consulting on the draft SCI, having already sought the views of many different groups and organisations on how they wish to be involved in the production of the Local Development Framework. There will be a further 6 week consultation when the Council submits the revised draft to the Secretary of State in 2006. This will be followed by an examination conducted by an independent Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate to consider the soundness of the SCI and the objections received during the six week period.

How the Council has already consulted local community groups

3.2 Since September 2005 the Council has been seeking views from many different organisations representing a range of concerns, interests and areas of the Vale on how they wish to be involved in the new plan making process.

3.3 The Council sent out questionnaires during September and October 2005 to over 550 organisations and stakeholders based on the consultation bodies specified in PPS12 relevant to

the Vale Appendix 1. 143 completed questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 26%. The questionnaire, which was also available on Council's website, asked for information on the main areas of interests of the recipients, the preferred methods for consulting them and providing feedback, if they had been involved in the planning process in the Vale in the past and whether the Council had kept them well informed during the process. The groups and stakeholders the Council consulted during this stage are set out in Appendix 2.

How the consultation response has been used

- 3.4 The responses from this initial ~~scoping~~ exercise have been used to compile a comprehensive consultee database. This database will be used to keep individuals and organisations informed of the progress with the Local Development Framework and provide the basis for consultation and feedback on the individual local development documents.
- 3.5 The database will be continually updated throughout the Local Development Framework process and made available to view on the Council's web site. Individuals and organisations who are not on the database but ask to be added or make representations during any of the consultation exercises will be added. There may also be groups that no longer wish to be involved. These can be removed from the list if they so request. The database will be reviewed annually to ensure that the information is correct and that its content is still relevant. If any group or individual wishes to be added ~~or removed~~ at any time, ~~or their contact details change~~ they can contact the Planning Policy team at ldf@whitehorsedc.gov.uk, by telephone on 01235 520202 or fax on 01235 540397.

How the Council is consulting on the draft Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.6 The Council's consultation on the draft SCI ~~is due to commence on~~ ~~ran from~~ 25 November ~~to 6~~ January 2006. **To comply with the regulatory requirements and government guidance:**
- **The consultation ~~will be~~ ~~was~~ for a period of six weeks**
 - **The document ~~will be~~ ~~was~~ available for inspection or purchase at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's office in Faringdon**
 - **The document ~~will be~~ ~~was~~ available on the Council's website www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/planningpolicy/LDF for viewing or downloading**
 - **Copies of the document ~~will be~~ ~~were~~ sent to the Government Office for the South East and other consultees in Appendix 2**
 - **Notices ~~will be~~ ~~were~~ placed in the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald at the start of the consultation period.**

In addition to these requirements the Council:

- Issued a local press and media release (see Media listed in Appendix 2)
- Issued standard response forms to assist consultees making responses
- Made copies of the draft SCI available at local libraries in the district and at Didcot library and the Westgate library in Oxford.

The next stages in the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement

- 3.7 The Council has produced a summary of the comments received during the consultation period and amend the draft as necessary. These were summary and the revised SCI will be made available once when the Council has agreed to be submitted the revised draft to the Secretary of State. in March 2006.
- 3.8 ~~When~~ Following the submission of the SCI is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination there will be an opportunity to make further representations during a six-week period following submission. To comply with the regulatory requirements and Government guidance the Council will follow the steps set out in paragraph 3.6 above. It is only the representations made at this stage that will be considered by an Inspector.
- 3.9 The Statement of Community Involvement ~~must will~~ be subject to an independent examination, whether or not any representations have been are received. The purpose of the examination will be to consider the soundness of the SCI. PPS12 at Annex D states that the preferred method for dealing with representations on the Statement of Community Involvement is by written representation. A hearing will only be necessary where one or more of those making representations wish to be heard. The criteria against which soundness will be judged is set out in Appendix 3. When assessing the soundness of the SCI an independent planning inspector will consider all objections received including those made in writing. A hearing before an Inspector to consider objections to the SCI will only be necessary where one or more of those making representations wish to be heard.
- 3.10 The Inspector will produce a report identifying any changes to be made to the SCI. The Inspector's findings are binding on the Council and the SCI must be amended accordingly. The Council will then formally adopt the SCI, which will become part of the Local Development Framework and Council policy. Once adopted, all other ~~Local Development Framework development plan~~ documents and supplementary planning documents prepared by the Council will have to meet the consultation standards set out in the Statement of Community Involvement.

4.0 THE COUNCIL'S VISION AND PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

4.1 The Council's vision for community involvement in the planning process is that:

The community of the Vale should be enabled to participate meaningfully in the development of planning policies and proposals contained in the local development framework and in the consideration of planning applications in the district.

4.2 To achieve this vision the Council will be guided by a number of general principles in its community consultation. These principles are set out below.

♦ **Early involvement**

- The Council will encourage the early involvement of the local community in the preparation of the local development plan documents and supplementary planning documents.

♦ **Recognising the needs of different groups in the community**

- The Council acknowledges that opportunities for involving the community should be communicated in ways that are relevant and accessible to all sections of the community who have an interest so that those groups who wish to be involved in the planning process can contribute effectively. Following this principle should help the Council to engage with 'hard to reach' groups.

♦ **Providing clear opportunities for involvement**

- The Council acknowledges that the time and resources available to local groups and organisations can be limited. It will aim to provide clear, up to date and early information on the consultation processes for the preparation of local development documents to ensure that community groups and organisations have the maximum opportunity to respond.

♦ **Ease of access to information**

- The Council will seek to maximise the use of the internet in its consultation procedures. It recognises however that many sectors of the community do not have access to the internet. All documents and communications will therefore be made widely available in a variety of traditional and electronic formats.

♦ **Effective feedback on consultation**

- The Council considers it important that the community has access to clear and timely feedback on consultation. It will therefore make publicly available information on the progress of proposals, and on how consultation responses have been taken into account.

5.0 IMPLEMENTING THE VISION COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PREPARING DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS AND SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

General Approach

Introduction

- 5.1 The new planning system places greater emphasis on 'front-loading' the preparation of development plan documents by seeking early involvement and input from the local community on the content of the plans that will shape the future of the district.
- 5.2 The Council recognises that many of the techniques required to involve the community in this process are resource intensive. A balance has to be struck between meeting statutory requirements, taking account of the views expressed by consultees (in particular those who completed the Statement of Community Involvement questionnaire) and the resources it has available to undertake such techniques. **Views expressed by the community will be considered within the overall context of national and regional guidance and other policies of the District Council.**

Involving the community

- 5.3 The Council intends to apply the same broad consultation measures to each of its Development Plan Documents. Government advice recognises that consultation should be based on a realistic assessment of resources to avoid the expectations of local communities being artificially raised. Separate meetings with all groups interested in the process will not be possible given the limited resources available to the Council and consultation at the local level will need to be tailored accordingly.
- 5.4 The Council will use a range of consultation techniques including:
- Exhibitions – staffed and un-staffed;
 - Questionnaires – to gauge the community's views in a consistent and quantifiable manner;
 - Its Citizens Panel – this consists of 1000 residents who are representative of the Vale as a whole;
 - Its Youth Forum – this meets several times a year and comprises representatives from all secondary schools in the district;
 - Focus groups or workshops – this can include 'Planning by Design' and 'Planning for Real';
 - Response forms – producing standard response form to assist people with making their representations and comments.

- 5.5 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, the Council will seek the views of a wide range of statutory and non-statutory consultees. A list of these organisations is set out at Appendix 2 and can be updated on a regular basis. In line with Government guidance contact names and addresses of organisations have not been identified as they may change over time.
- 5.6 Each organisation will be written to or e-mailed and invited to make representations at relevant stages in the preparation of the Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents as set out below. The timetable for each of these stages has been mapped out in the Council's Local Development Scheme.
- 5.7 In addition, meetings may also be arranged with key stakeholders and key organisations (including immediately adjoining local authorities, the Government Office for the South East, Oxfordshire County Council and key service providers) during the informal and formal consultation stages in order to clarify specific technical matters. Other meetings may be arranged where considered necessary and subject to resource availability.
- 5.8 The Council recognises that different groups and organisations have different levels of resources and will operate to timetables that do not necessarily coincide seamlessly with the Council's public consultation exercises. The meetings of town and parish council's for example do not always coincide with a consultation time period. The Local Development Scheme to a certain extent helps to address this problem by giving advanced notice to stakeholders of the broad timetable. However the Council would welcome comments on the further steps it could take to help address this issue.
- 5.9 The Council recognises that it needs to engage with the whole community in the LDF process. To achieve this, it will, in particular:
- Take into account the principles of the Oxfordshire Compact when engaging with the voluntary and community sectors on planning issues. As a signatory to the Compact the Council has a commitment to facilitating the development of a strong and independent voluntary and community sector, by amongst other matters improving consultation procedures;
 - Welcome advice and involvement from any group or organisation in the Vale that can help it to ensure that the methods it uses for community involvement will enable it to engage with 'hard to reach' groups. A 'hard to reach' group can be any group of people whose views are difficult to access through normal consultation methods. This can be for a number of reasons including disability, language barriers, time constraints, disillusionment and cultural barriers. The Council has already consulted a number of 'hard to reach' groups as is evidenced by Appendix 2. This statement also sets out new initiatives, including the use of its Youth Forum to obtain views from student representatives from secondary schools;

- Encourage the use of Planning Aid, an independent voluntary organisation that is entirely independent of the Council. It offers planning advice and support to people who cannot otherwise afford it. Planning aid can help the community to get involved in the Local Development Framework, comment on planning applications and apply for planning permission or appeal against a refusal of planning permission. Planning Aid can be contacted at www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk or by telephoning the Planning Aid Helpline on 08702 907 552 or by writing to PO Box 429, Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 2YJ.

Access to Information

5.10 The Council will use a variety of methods to provide information to the community. This will include providing copies of documents and details of consultation timetables and venues:

- On the Council's website for viewing and downloading
- At Local Services Points and Council offices for inspection and purchase
- At all libraries in the district, Didcot library and the Westgate library, Oxford.

In addition:

- Documents may be sent free of charge to specific consultation bodies and organisations.

Keeping the community informed

5.11 The Council will use a range of techniques to keep the community informed. These techniques will include:

- Contacting people and organisations on the Council's database by letter or e-mail at the consultation stages specified in the Local Development Scheme;
- Publishing formal notices in the Oxford Mail and Wiltshire Gazette and Herald and informal notices in other newspapers circulating in the District such as the Oxford Times and the Herald Series;
- Publishing press releases to local media (including the Oxford Mail, Oxford Times, the Herald Series, the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald, town and parish newsletters, local radio and television);
- Publishing articles in the Council's newspaper Vale Views, which is delivered periodically to each address in the district;
- Placing posters in public places such as public notice boards, shop windows and public buildings;
- Making leaflets available in public buildings and supplying town and parish councils with copies;
- Keeping people informed who have responded to earlier documents by letter, fax or e-mail;

- Keeping the Council's website fully up to date. All documentation that can be made available electronically will be put on line and made available for downloading. Subject to the requirements of the regulations, the Council will seek to maximise its use of e-mail and the internet to advise stakeholders of the availability of consultation documents and encourage consultees to make use of the Council's Website rather than send hard copies of documents. The Council will maintain an up-to-date schedule of expected consultation exercises on its web site.

Helping the community to comment

- 5.12 Consultation will last for six weeks for Development Plan Documents and four to six weeks for Supplementary Planning Documents. During the consultation period the public will be able to make comments and representations. The Council will wherever practicable produce standard forms to help members of the public make their representations and comments. Where practicable the Council will attempt to avoid public holidays and the summer vacation period when holding public consultation exercises.
- 5.13 The Council will accept written representations by post, e-mail or fax, either on a standard form produced for the purpose or by letter. Those making representations will be encouraged to use the standard forms although all written comments, however received, will be registered and taken into account. Representations made by telephone cannot be registered as formal representations. People unable to communicate in writing or English the Council may be able to make their comments by interview with officers of the Council.

How the Council will respond to representations received

- 5.14 The Council will acknowledge in writing all representations received. After each consultation stage all comments and representations will be reported to and considered by the appropriate committee of the Council. The report will summarise the comments received and how they have been taken into account.

Providing feedback to the community

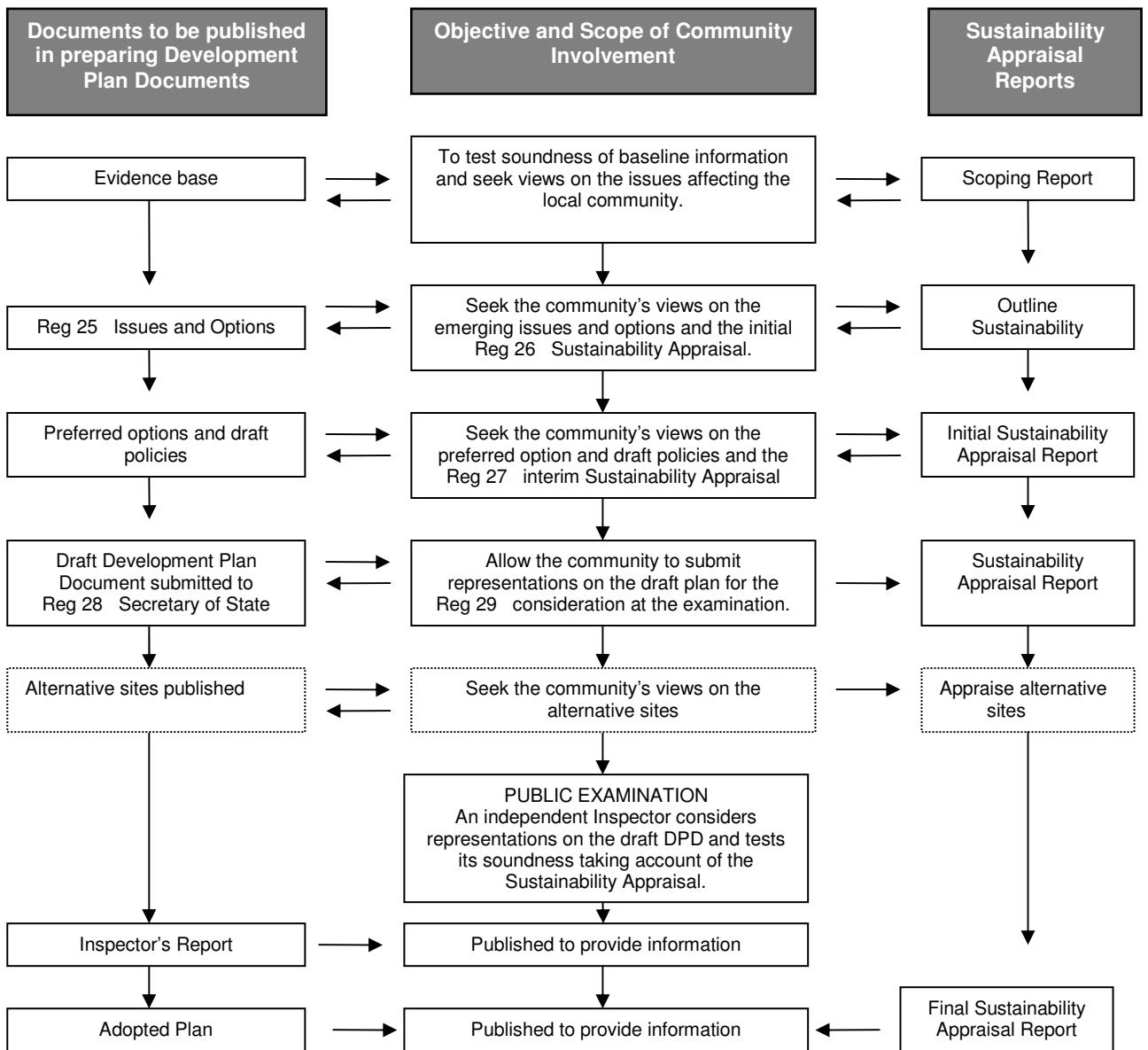
- 5.15 The Council will use a number of different methods to provide feedback to the community. These will include:
- Making all responses available for public inspection at the Council's Local Services Point at Abbey House, Abingdon;
 - At the same as acknowledging all representations received, informing those who made representations about the next steps and where to obtain information in the future about the consultation process;

- Informing in person anyone who responds to the draft documents that are submitted to the Secretary of State of the arrangements for a public examination and the pre-examination meeting;
 - The Council's summary of the comments received and how they have been taken into account will be made available for inspection or purchase during normal office hours at the LSP's at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council Office in Faringdon. They will also be made available for viewing and downloading on the Council's website.
- 5.16 The following paragraphs explain in greater detail how the Council intends to involve the community and stakeholders in the preparation of specific LDF documents, including the Core Strategy, the Development Control Policies, the Site Allocations and Supplementary Planning Documents. The regulations and government guidance that the Council has to comply with, are spelt out in bold type together with the additional consultation and participation techniques the Council may choose to employ.
- 5.17 Each of the Development Plan Document's and Supplementary Planning Document's will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. The Council will consult on the Sustainability Appraisal Reports at the same time as it consults on the main documents to which they relate.

Community Involvement in Preparing Development Plan Documents

- 5.18 The diagram below sets out the processes for and relationship between community involvement on Development Plan Documents and their associated Sustainability Appraisals. Consultation must take place at all key stages in these processes and the sections below give details of the Council's proposed consultation programme at each stage, indicating what is required by regulation and Government advice and the additional measures it may employ.

Figure 3. Process for preparing a Development Plan Document



Evidence Base and Scoping Report

5.19 All Development Plan Documents must be founded on a sound evidence base. The Council will therefore consult relevant organisations and interest groups, as set out in Appendix 2, on its draft evidence base. The Council will also ask for the community's views on the issues and options that could be considered in the preparation of the plan. This is an important informal stage because it helps to ensure that the plan is influenced right from the start by those members of the community most likely to be affected by its proposals. This takes account of Government advice that local planning authorities should seek the involvement of relevant groups and organisations

in the development of the information for Development Plan Documents helping to identify issues which those documents will need to address and the options which may be available to deal with those issues.

5.20 **For the scoping report the Government requirement is that:**

- **the Council will consult English Nature, English Heritage, Countryside Agency and the Environment Agency.**

5.21 In addition the Council will:

- make the document available to view and download on the Council's website;
- make the document available for inspection or purchase at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon;
- make the document available for inspection at local libraries in the district, Didcot library and Westgate library in Oxford;
- consult neighbouring local authorities, Oxfordshire County Council and the South East England Regional Assembly unless they request otherwise.

5.22 The Council may:

- consult other relevant organisations from Appendix 2.

Issues and Options Stage

5.23 This is a key part of the process for preparing Local development plan documents because it allows the public and stakeholders to put forward their views and ideas on the range of issues and options being considered in a particular Development Plan Document.

5.24 **At this stage to meet Government requirements the Council will carry out early informal consultation by writing to:**

- **Relevant 'specific' and general consultation bodies set out in Appendix 2, on the issues and alternative options being considered for inclusion in the Development Plan Document;**
- **The Government Office for the South East.**

5.25 In addition the Council will:

- Use the Council's website to publish the proposed Issues and Options Report, and publicise any consultation exercises and seek views and opinions on the key issues and options;
- Issue local press and media releases to provide information about the proposed Issues and Options Report and publicise the consultation exercise and seek views and opinions on the key issues and options;
- Make copies of the documentation available for inspection and purchase at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon;
- Make copies of the documentation available at local libraries in the district, Didcot library and the Westgate library in Oxford;
- Make standard forms available for people to make representations.

5.26 Where the Council considers it will add value to the consultation process and make it easier for the community to be involved, the Council may also:

- Use questionnaires to gauge wider public opinion;
- Hold meetings with key stakeholders and organisations (para 5.7) for topic based or site specific Development Plan Documents;
- Hold staffed or un-staffed public exhibitions to seek the public's views and opinions on the key issues and options;
- Advertise the Issues and Options stage by placing posters in the local area. This could be achieved by distributing posters to town and parish councils and parish meetings, local businesses (including retailers and public houses), local organisations and other public buildings including community and leisure centres;
- Use Vale Views to provide information about the proposed Development Plan Document, publicise any consultation exercises and seek views and opinions on key issues and options;
- Use the existing Citizens Panel and Youth Forum to gauge community opinion;
- Distribute leaflets containing information on where the documents can be viewed and the date(s) and venue(s) of any community involvement exercise;
- Hold a stakeholder working group and/or a public workshop for topic based or site specific supplementary planning documents.

Preferred Option and Draft Policies Stage

5.27 This is a key formal stage where the community and stakeholders have their say on the emerging document. There is a six week period specified by regulation to give the community and stakeholders the opportunity to make representations on the approach the Council is proposing to take to address the key issues.

5.28 To meet the Government's requirements the Council will invite representations by:

- Sending relevant 'specific' and 'general' consultation bodies from Appendix 2 a copy of the Preferred Option document;
- Sending four paper copies and one electronic copy of the Preferred Option documentation to the Government Office for the South East and one paper copy and one electronic copy to the Planning Inspectorate;
- Making the Preferred Option document available for inspection during normal office hours at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon;
- Publishing on the Council's website the Preferred Option documentation, any supporting information and details of when and where the documents are available for inspection;
- Publishing a statutory notice in a local newspaper (using the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald);
- Making copies of any representations received available for inspection at the Local Services Point at The Abbey House, Abingdon.

5.29 In addition the Council will:

- Continue to meet with key stakeholders and organisations (para 5.7);
- Make the Preferred Option documentation available for inspection at all local libraries in the district, Didcot library and the Westgate library, Oxford;
- Issue local press and media releases advertising the publication of the Preferred Option document and inviting public comment and involvement;
- Make standard forms available for people to make representations;
- Inform other organisations who may have an interest in the Preferred Option Supplementary Planning document and individuals who have asked to be kept informed that the document is available.

5.30 Where the Council considers that it will add value to the consultation process and make it easier for the community to be involved, the Council may also:

- Use questionnaires to gauge public opinion on the Preferred Option and Draft Policies;
- Hold staffed or un-staffed public exhibitions to seek the public's views;
- Advertise the publication of the Preferred Option document for site specific DPDs by placing posters in the local area. This could be achieved by distributing posters to town and parish councils and parish meetings, local businesses (including retailers and public houses) local organisations and other public buildings including community and leisure centres;

- Distribute leaflets containing information on where the documents can be viewed and the date(s) and venue(s) of any community involvement exercise;
- Use the existing Citizens Panel and Youth Forum to gauge opinions;
- Use Vale Views to provide information about the proposed development plan document, publicise any consultation exercises and seek views on the preferred option.

Submission to the Secretary of State

5.31 Following community involvement on the Preferred Option stage, the draft Development Plan Document will be prepared and submitted to the Secretary of State, together with a 'Statement of Compliance' indicating how the Council has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement or minimum requirements of the Regulations.

5.32 Following submission there is a further formal consultation period of six weeks to allow the community and stakeholders to submit any representations to be considered by the independent inspector at the examination stage. This is the final consultation stage in the preparation of a Development Plan Document and the public can submit representations at this stage even if they have not been involved in the earlier stages. This will follow the same process as followed in paras 5.29-5.31 above. **To meet the Government's requirements at this stage the Council will also**

- **Write to all those who requested to be notified of submission to the Secretary of State.**

Dealing with the representations received at the submission stage

5.33 **To meet the Government's requirements at this stage the Council will:**

- **Make the representations available for inspection at the Local Services Point at the Abbey House, Abingdon;**
- **Send a paper copy of all the representations to the Secretary of State together with a summary of the main issues raised in the representations in paper and electronic form;**
- **Publish a summary of the representations received on the Council's website.**

5.34 In addition the Council will:

- Make copies of the summary of representations available for inspection at the Local Services Point in Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon.

Further consultation on site allocations at the submission stage

5.35 If a Development Plan Document is making site allocations and at the end of the six week 'submission' consultation period comments are made which propose that alternative sites are considered for development, then those comments have to be made available for public inspection for a further period of six weeks to allow for submission of representations. Any comments received will be submitted to the independent examination.

5.36 **To meet the Government's requirement the Council will invite comments on the suggested alternative sites by:**

- **Sending relevant 'specific' and 'general' consultation bodies in from Appendix 2 a summary of the alternative sites suggested;**
- **Making the details of the alternative sites available for inspection at the Local Services Point at the Abbey House, Abingdon;**
- **Publishing a summary of the alternative suggested sites on the Council's website;**
- **Publishing a statutory notice in a local newspaper (using the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald).**

5.37 In addition the Council will:

- Make a summary of the suggested alternative sites available at the Council's Local Services Point at Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon;
- Send a summary of the representations to town and parish councils affected by the alternative sites and inform all others by letter that the summary is available.

5.38 Once the representation on the suggested alternative sites have been received the Council must:

- **Send a copy of all the representations to the suggested alternatives sites to the Secretary of State along with a summary of the main issues raised in the representations in paper and electronic form.**

In addition the Council will

- Put a summary of the representations on the alternative sites on its website and make it available for inspection at the Local Services Point at The Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon.

Public Examination

- 5.39 A public examination will be held and any representations received considered by an independent planning inspector. The examination will consider the soundness of the Development Plan Document and include an assessment of the evidence base for the plan and the outcomes of the Sustainability Appraisal. It will also include an assessment of whether public participation was undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement and whether the views and opinions of the community have been taken into account in the preparation of the Development Plan Document. It should be noted that whether or not representations are received, an independent Examination will be held to consider the 'soundness' of the Development Plan Document. A pre-examination meeting to clarify procedural matters will be held no later than two months in advance of the opening day of the examination.
- 5.40 **To meet the Government's requirements the Council will at least 6 weeks before the examination starts, give details of the time and place of the examination and the name of the inspector:**

- **In a statutory notice in a local newspaper (using the Oxford Mail and Wiltshire Gazette and Herald)**
- **On the Council's website**
- **To any person who has made representations on a Development Plan Document or on any alternative site proposed by third parties and not withdrawn those representations. The Council will also notify those persons who asked to be kept informed.**

Inspector's Report

- 5.41 After the examination, the planning inspector will produce a report, which identifies any changes to be made to the Development Plan Document and the reasons for them.
- 5.42 **To meet the Government's requirements the Council will:**
- **Publish a copy of the Inspector's recommendations and the reasons for the recommendations at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon and on the Council's website.**
 - **Give notice to any person who asked to be notified of the publication of the Inspector's recommendations.**

Adoption

5.43 The Inspector's report and its findings are binding on the Council, and the Development Plan Document must be amended in accordance with this. The Council then formally adopts the Development Plan Document, which will become part of the Local Development Framework and Council policy.

5.44 **To meet the Government's requirements the Council will, once the Development Plan Document is adopted:**

- **Make available the adopted Development Plan Document, an Adoption Statement, and the Inspector's recommendations for inspection at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon, and on the Council's website;**
- **Publish a statutory notice in a local newspaper (using the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald) advertising the fact that the adopted Development Plan Document and Adoption Statement are available for public inspection;**
- **Send any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the Development Plan Document a copy of the Adoption Statement;**
- **Send a paper copy and electronic copy of the Development Plan Document and the Adoption Statement to the Secretary of State.**

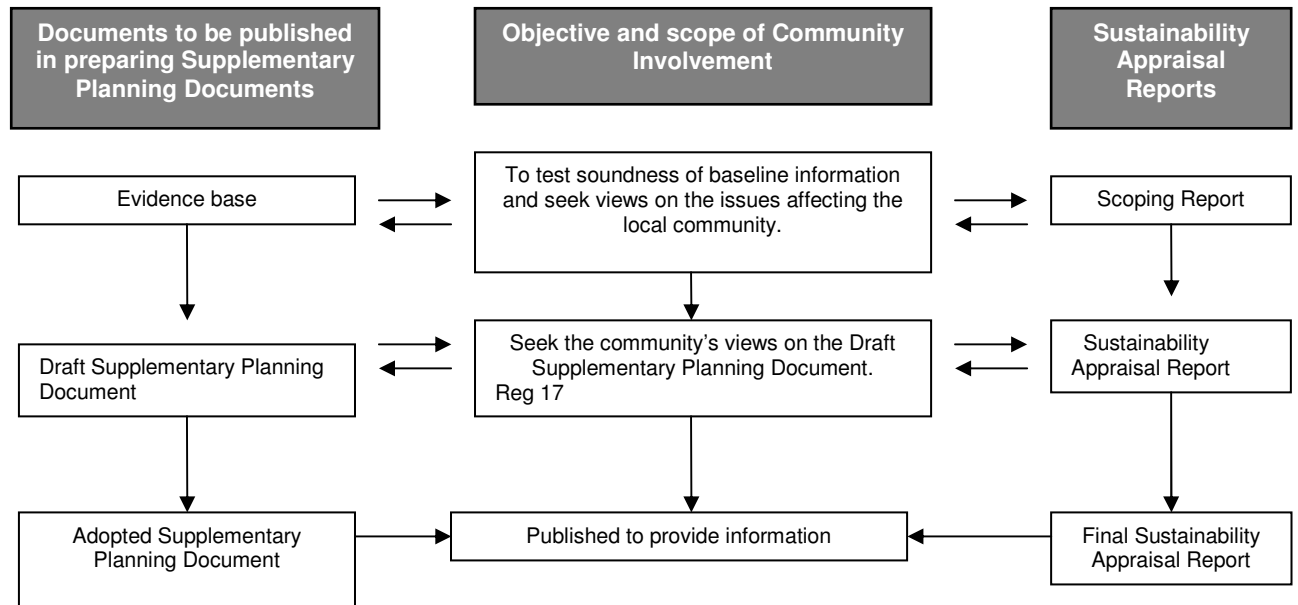
5.45 In addition the Council will:

- Issue local press and media releases publicising the adoption of the Development Plan Document;
- Make copies of the documentation available in all local libraries in the district, Didcot library and the Westgate library, Oxford;
- ~~Notify all individuals and organisations on its consultee database of the adoption of the Development Plan Document.~~

Supplementary Planning Documents

5.46 The process for preparing supplementary planning documents is not as lengthy as that for preparing Development Plan Documents. The main stages and the relationship with the relevant Sustainability Appraisal is set out in the diagram below.

Figure 4. Process for preparing a Supplementary Planning Document



Evidence Base and Scoping Report

5.47 This stage will include survey information, background evidence and the proposed scope of the Sustainability Appraisal for consultation with relevant stakeholders, groups and organisations. The Council will also seek the community’s views on the issues and options to be considered.

5.48 The Council will:

- Write to or e-mail those relevant organisations in Appendix 2 that the Council considers to be affected by the proposed Supplementary Planning Document;
- Use the Council’s website to provide information about the proposed Supplementary Planning Document, seek views and opinions on the policy issues, and publicise any public involvement exercises; and
- Meet with key stakeholders and organisations (paragraph 5.7 above).

5.49 Where the Council considers it will add value to the consultation exercise and make it easier for the community to be involved the Council may also:

- Use questionnaires to gauge public opinion on the policy issues for the Supplementary Planning Document;
- Hold a stakeholder working group and/or a public workshop for topic based or site specific Supplementary Planning Documents;

- Set up staffed public exhibitions or hold interactive workshops to help the Council understand the wider public's opinion.

Consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Document

5.50 This stage involves publication of the draft Supplementary Planning Document and a 'Statement of Conformity' statement setting out how the Council has complied with the Statement of Community Involvement during which time the community are invited to make representations. This is a key formal stage for the community to have their say and influence the final content of the Supplementary Planning Document.

5.51 **To meet the Government's requirements the Council will:**

- **Send relevant 'specific' and 'general' consultation bodies in Appendix 2 a copy of the draft Supplementary Planning Document and a statement of consultation;**
- **Make the draft Supplementary Planning Document and a statement of Consultation setting out how the Council has complied with the SCI available for inspection at the LSPs at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon, which to comply with the regulations will last from 4 to 6 weeks.**
- **Publish the draft Supplementary Planning Document and a statement of consultation setting out how the Council has complied with the SCI on the Council's website at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk**
- **Publish a notice in a local newspaper (using the Oxford Mail and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald) stating where the draft Supplementary Planning Document and the Statement of Consultation are available for inspection and the period of consultation which will last from 4 to 6 weeks to comply with the regulations and depending on the nature of the SPD.**

5.52 In addition the Council will:

- Use the Council's website to provide information about the draft Supplementary Planning Document and to seek views and opinions on the draft or to publicise any public involvement exercises;
- Make the draft Supplementary Planning Document, and the consultation statement available for inspection at all relevant local libraries, which may include Didcot library and the Westgate library, Oxford;
- Continue to meet with key stakeholders (para 5.7);
- Inform other organisations who may have an interest in the Supplementary Planning Document and individuals who have asked to be kept informed that the document is available.

5.53 Where the Council considers it will add value to the consultation process and make it easier for the community to be involved the Council may also:

- Hold public workshops and/or focus group meetings for site specific Supplementary Planning Documents;
- Use questionnaires to gauge public opinion;
- Distribute leaflets containing information on where the documents can be viewed and the date(s) and venue(s) of any community involvement exercise;
- Advertise the publication of site specific draft Supplementary Planning documents by placing posters in the local area. This could be achieved by distributing posters to town and parish councils and parish meetings, local businesses (including retailers and public houses) local organisations and community centres;
- Use the existing Citizens Panel and Youth Forum to gauge opinion.

5.54 The Council will consider and analyse the representations received and make changes it considers necessary. A final version of the Supplementary Planning Document will be prepared along with a statement that summarises the main issues raised in the representations received and how these issues have been addressed in the Supplementary Planning Document the Council intends to adopt.

Adoption

5.55 The Council will adopt the Supplementary Planning Document. Although a non-statutory document, once adopted the Supplementary Planning Document will become part of the Local Development Framework and a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

5.56 **To meet the Government's requirements the Council will:**

- **Make the adopted Supplementary Planning Document, along with the consultation statement and the adoption statement, available for inspection or purchase during normal office hours at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon and on the Council's website**
- **Send the adoption statement and consultation statement for the Supplementary Planning Document to any person who asked to be notified.**

5.57 In addition the Council will:

- Make the adopted Supplementary Planning Document, the adoption statement and consultation statement available for inspection at all relevant local libraries, which may include Didcot library and the Westgate library, Oxford.

Sustainability Appraisal

5.58 Sustainability Appraisal enables the Council to assess the effects of its policies and proposals as they evolve through the process of preparing the relevant Development Plan Document and Supplementary Planning Document. For each Development Plan Document as set out in Figure 3 the Council will:

- During the pre-production stage, consult on the Evidence Base and Sustainability Scoping Report. This will include information on the context and sustainability objectives, the baseline information and the scope of subsequent sustainability appraisals;
- At the issues and options stage, consult on the Outline Sustainability Report which will test the DPD's objectives, predict and evaluate the effects of the options and consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects of the DPD;
- At the preferred option and draft policies stage, consult on the Initial Sustainability Report of the preferred option and draft policies. The report will also propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPD;
- When the draft DPD is submitted to the Secretary of State, invite comments on the Sustainability Report prior to the independent examination;
- At adoption, publish the Final sustainability Appraisal Report

Any one proposing an alternative site at the submission stage will be required to submit a Sustainability Appraisal of that site.

A similar process will be carried out for each Supplementary Planning Document as set out in Figure 4.

5.59 When publishing the Sustainability Appraisal Reports for each of the stages set out in the diagrams 'Process of Preparing Development Plan Documents' and 'Process of Preparing Supplementary Planning Documents' **the Council will, in order to meet the Government's requirements:**

- **Send copies to the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and the Environment Agency.**

5.60 In addition the Council will:

- Make the document available to view and download on the Council's website;
- Make the documents available for inspection or purchase at the Local Services Points at The Abbey House, Abingdon, and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council's Office in Faringdon;
- Send a paper copy and an electronic copy to the Government Office for the South East and the Planning Inspectorate;
- Make the document available for inspection at relevant local libraries in the district, which may include Didcot library and Westgate library in Oxford;
- Consult relevant town and parish councils within the district and neighbouring local authorities, Oxfordshire County Council and the South East England Regional Assembly unless they request otherwise.

5.61 The Council may:

- Consult other relevant organisations from Appendix 2

6.0 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS

6.1 An important part of the Council's planning service is to consult with the community to find out what people think about planning applications. This section of the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the Council's policy for future consultation on planning applications.

How will the Council consult on planning applications?

6.2 The Council deals with about 1,800 planning applications a year. Many of the applications will only be relevant to immediate or close neighbours. Other applications, because of their scale, location or the nature of the proposal, will be of significance to the wider community. Inevitably, therefore, the level of community consultation and involvement provided for by the Council will depend on the nature of each individual application.

6.3 The Council will take the following steps to ensure community involvement in the consideration of **all** planning applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation.

- When the Council receives a planning application, those properties which adjoin the application site will be notified by letter and given 21 days to comment. For larger development proposals, letters will be sent out more widely, the extent of this depending principally upon the scale of the proposal. Where the owner or occupier of neighbouring land cannot be readily identified, the Council may put up a site notice on or near the site.
- All planning applications received will be entered in the planning register, which contains full details of current applications and the decisions reached on all applications. The register will be available for inspection at the Local Services Point at the Abbey House, Abingdon.
- Copies of planning applications received will be available for inspection at the relevant Local Services Point either at the Abbey House, Abingdon, Grove Street, Wantage or the Council's Office in Faringdon.
- Copies of all planning applications received will be sent to the relevant town/parish council or parish meeting who will be given 21 days to comment. The town or parish council will also be encouraged to make copies available for local residents to see. If an application is amended significantly the District Council will send copies of the revised application to the relevant town/parish council or parish meeting for further comment.
- Weekly lists of applications received and decisions made will be produced and published on the Council's website, and made available to see at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council office in Faringdon.

Paper copies of the weekly lists will be available to local organisations and individuals at nominal cost, sufficient to cover printing and postal costs.

- Hard copies of planning applications will be made available for viewing at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and the Council office in Faringdon.
- If an application is significantly amended the Council will send a further round of consultation letters to adjoining properties and to any additional people or organisations who have already written in with comments on that application.
- The Council will receive, handle and respond to comments forwarded by conventional post, fax and e-mail. All comments received will be taken into account and acknowledged in writing by conventional post.
- When a decision on an application is issued to the applicant or his/her agent, the Council will send letters to all those who submitted written comments on the application, advising whether the application has been approved or refused. A copy of the Decision Notice will also be sent to the relevant town/parish council or parish meeting.
- The minutes of all decisions made at the previous Development Control Committee will be included on the agenda for the next appropriate Committee.

6.4 In addition, and in accordance with current legal requirements, the Council will advertise certain submitted applications in the weekly local press (the Herald Group, the Oxford Times and the Wiltshire Gazette and Herald) and on site notices displayed on or close to the site. This applies to all applications within the following categories. (The categories may be reviewed if legal requirements change):

- Proposals which affect the character or appearance of a conservation area;
- Proposals for works to listed buildings, or which are likely to affect the setting of listed buildings;
- Proposals affecting public rights of way;
- Other proposals likely to be of wider interest to the community (such as planning applications for telecommunication masts, wind turbines);
- Proposals which are a 'departure' from the development plan;
- Major development proposals (10 or more dwellings or 1000 square metres or more of floorspace);
- Proposals which are subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment.

21 days will be allowed for comments to be made in response to the press advertisements and site notices.

6.5 The Council will seek to involve other organisations, both local and national in the planning application process. Statutory consultations will be carried out on many applications with bodies such as Oxfordshire County Council (highway, archaeology and strategic planning issues) and the regional offices of English Heritage (important listed building/conservation area/ancient monument issues), English Nature, the Environment Agency and the Highways Agency. A range of relevant local non-statutory bodies who can offer valuable advice may will also be consulted, such as local residents groups and local branches of national organisations such as the Ramblers Association. The organisations which the Council will consult will vary with the nature of the proposal and its location. Consultees will have 21 days in which to comment.

6.6 In addition the Council is working to improve the electronic accessibility of the planning service and to the planning application process in particular. This is explained in more detail at paras 6.19-6.21.

Feedback on the Planning Service

6.7 In addition to consulting on individual planning applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council will seek feedback from customers on the way the planning application process is delivered. This will be done using the following methods:

- An Agents Forum with local agents to discuss the Council's development control performance and inform agents of changes to the service.
- Occasional planning evenings for town/parish councils and parish meetings to discuss common, planning related issues.
- Use of an Architects Panel. To ensure that it has independent design advice the Council has set up a local Architects Panel for sensitive and major developments. The panel has been set up in accordance with the Royal Institute of British Architects guidance with local architects providing the advice.

6.8 In addition to the above the Council may consider using its Citizens Panel and Youth Forum to seek feedback on the way the planning application process is delivered.

How are decisions made on planning applications?

6.9 There are two main ways that planning and related applications are determined; either by the Development Control Committee or by Council Officers under delegated powers.

6.10 The Council has a Development Control Committee which meets every 2 weeks. The meetings alternate to consider applications from the north and the south of the district and meetings take place at variety of venues to enable local communities to engage with and see the process in action.

6.11 About 90% of all applications are not considered by the Development Control Committee but are delegated to the Assistant Director (Planning) or Development Control Manager to determine, either alone or following consultation with the Chair of the Development Control Committee. The scheme of delegation helps the Council to meet the Government's requirement for decisions to be made speedily and efficiently. This scheme, which was last revised in July 2005, ensures that those applications likely to be of most interest to the local community will be considered by the Development Control Committee. This includes applications where the town/parish council or parish meeting objects or where four or more written objections are received, and the Officer recommendation is to grant planning permission.

How can comments on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation be made?

6.12 Any member of the public can make a comment on a planning application. It is not necessary for them to have received a formal letter of consultation from the Council.

6.13 Comments on planning applications must be received within the specified time. This will usually be 21 days from the date either specified in the consultation letter or displayed on the site notice or in the newspaper advertisement. The comments can be made in writing, by letter, fax or electronically by email. All comments received will be acknowledged in writing.

6.14 All written comments will be taken into account by the Development Control Committee or the Assistant Director Planning or Development Control Manager and Committee Chair under delegated authority before the planning application is determined.

6.15 Anyone who has submitted written comments will have be notified of the opportunity to speak at the Development Control Committee in the event of the application being determined by Committee. This includes applicants, objectors, supporters and their representatives. In addition representatives of the relevant town council, parish council or parish meeting and any other person who registers a wish to speak may address the Committee. Petitions may also be handed in to the Chair at the time of the Committee meeting.

6.16 The applicant, agent or anyone who has written either objecting to, or supporting an application which is to be determined by the Development Control Committee will be informed in writing of the date, time and venue of the meeting approximately ten days in advance.

6.17 Development Control Committee agendas, including the Planning Officer's reports will be available to see on the Council's website normally from the Monday of the week before the meeting and at the Local Services Points at the Abbey House, Abingdon and Grove Street, Wantage and at the Council's Office in Faringdon.

6.18 Full details of the Speaking at Committee procedure are contained in the Council's free leaflet 'Getting your voice heard on planning applications', which will be sent in the post to everyone who has submitted written comments on those applications due to be determined by the Development Control Committee. The leaflet is available on the Council's website.

6.19 **The Council's website:**

Currently the Council's website contains the following information relating to the Development Control process and service:

- dates of future Development Control Committee meetings;
- copies of the Development Control Committee agendas and minutes of previous meetings;
- details of how to speak at Development Control Committee meetings and how to make representations on planning applications by letter, fax or email;
- copies of the weekly lists of planning applications received and planning decisions made;
- details of submitted appeals and decision on appeals and the status of current appeals;
- details of the Council's local plan policies;
- links to the Planning Portal.

6.20 The Council can now also receive planning applications electronically via the Planning Portal www.planningportal.gov.uk the Government's on-line planning information service.

6.21 A further significant initiative to improve the electronic accessibility of the Planning Service ~~will be~~ **is the recent** inclusion on the Council's website of the full details of all new ~~planning~~ **planning** applications ~~under the Town and Country Planning Acts~~. All of the information submitted with new applications, including plans, drawings and background documents ~~will be~~ **are** shown on the website. ~~It is intended that this facility will be available from December 2005.~~ As part of the facility, comments on the applications displayed on the website ~~will be able to~~ **can** be submitted electronically by means of a direct link to the Council's development control mailbox.

Pre-submission consultation on planning applications

6.22 The Council will continue to welcome and provide opportunities for applicants and/or their agents to discuss any development proposals with Planning Officers before they submit an application for planning permission.

There are a number of benefits to this approach:

- It can help to determine if the development is likely to be acceptable in principle;

- It can help to improve the quality of the proposals and ensure the relevant level of detail accompanies the application to enable the Council to consider and determine the application without unnecessary delay;
- It can help reduce objections being lodged against the proposal and so ensure a speedier decision.

6.23 The Council will encourage all applicants and their agents to consult with their neighbours before they submit a planning application.

6.24 Where appropriate for major applications, the Council will advise developers to consult more widely by letter, leaflet or newsletter or hold a public exhibition of their proposal. They could consider involving not just individual residents but town and parish councils, local amenity groups and residents organisations. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for applicants to consult with national organisations and statutory consultees such as English Heritage, the Environment Agency, or the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment prior to the submission of their application.

6.25 For major or sensitive proposals, the Council has developed a proactive 'development team' approach which has been successful in adding value to the quality of the outcome of major developments. This involves planning officers agreeing a project plan with developers and landowners setting out a timetable for the processing and determination of an application. The 'agreement' requires that where possible the developers and landowners undertake technical discussions with planning officers and major consultees before the submission of an application on the understanding that, when submitted, their application will be considered by Committee on a pre-determined date. The development team approach will continue to be employed where major development proposals are submitted for determination.

Advice on whether planning permission is required

6.26 The Council will provide a form free of charge for householders to complete and return so that Planning Officers can advise them in writing whether or not planning permission is required for works proposed to be carried out to their property.

Community involvement in very major applications

6.27 For some very major planning applications of more than local significance the Council will ~~consider~~ make special arrangements to secure community involvement. Depending on the scale and type of application this could involve for example, special meetings of the Development Control committee meetings with town or parish councils, or use of its website to publicise the application and seek comments as it progresses through the system.

Community involvement in major proposals not involving planning applications

- 6.28 Thames Water has secured the necessary funding from OFWAT to fund studies and make the necessary application for an Upper Thames Major Resource Development (the Reservoir). Thames Water has indicated that the decision to proceed with the proposal will be made in 2006 and if it decides to proceed it will be submitting proposals at some time during 2007. The application will not be made under the Town and Country Acts and so no planning application will be submitted. Instead an application for a Compulsory Works Order Procedure under the provisions of S167 of the Water Industry Act 1991 will be submitted directly to the Secretary of State and if granted the Secretary of State will grant deemed planning permission for the proposed works. The Council will be developing specific consultation arrangements to deal with this application.

7.0 MONITORING THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 7.1 The Council is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report for the Local Development Framework, which will be published and submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of December each year. This will report on the preparation and implementation of the Local Development Documents.
- 7.2 The Statement of Community Involvement will be reviewed and revised only if significant changes have occurred in the types of groups which the Council wishes to engage, or different techniques for consultation are to be employed.
- 7.3 In addition to this, the Council will monitor the Local Development Framework process and evaluate individually the main community involvement exercises. In particular, it will assess the methods of consultation used and their appropriateness and effectiveness. To enable this, the Council will produce evaluation forms, and make them available on the Council's website, to obtain feedback from consultees.

8.0 RESOURCES

- 8.1 Involving the community fully and effectively in developing the Local Development Framework and in the consideration of planning applications will require considerable resource investment. The Council will endeavour to ensure that resources are in place to meet the cost of recruiting and retaining the necessary skilled and qualified staff, essential publicity, the production of leaflets, documents and exhibitions, the hire of premises and, where necessary, engaging consultants and facilitators. Nevertheless, the cost of providing these services will need to be balanced against those of other essential Council services and priorities.

Local Development Framework: Staffing

- 8.2 The bulk of the community involvement work on Local Development Document's will be carried out by staff from the Planning Policy Team. This team consists of 5 full time qualified town planners, two trainee planners, a planning technician, a transport engineer and a part time administrative assistant. Project management will be the responsibility of the Section Head (Strategic Planning). There will also be some limited input from the Development Control Manager, the Section Head (Transportation), the Council's Environmental Health Team, the Social and Cultural Services Directorate and Legal Services. In some circumstances the Council will consider the use of outside consultants if it can be demonstrated that this will enable consultation to be carried out more effectively and efficiently, or for specific projects if there is a lack of capacity or expertise in house. In the past this has included such matters as advice on retail capacity and affordable housing and use of external facilitators to assist with public consultation workshops.

Local Development Framework: Financial resources

- 8.3 Sufficient budget has been allocated to meet the costs of the consultation proposed in this financial year 2005/2006 and bids have been made for the next financial year. In addition budget provision has been made to complete the adoption of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011, including the substantial printing and web site costs that will be incurred post adoption. As in previous years the Council intends to continue to invest annually in its Local Plan Inquiry Fund (renamed the Local Development Framework Fund) to ensure there will be adequate budget provision to meet the costs of the various future stages in Development Plan Document preparation, including the independent examinations. In addition the Council may consider using some of its Planning Delivery Grant award for community involvement should its current budget provision and forecasts prove inadequate.

Development Control: Staffing

- 8.4 The Development Control function is carried out by staff from the Development Control Service. This consists of a north and south team, an enforcement team and administrative back up, all managed by the Development Control Manager. In some circumstances the Council may use

outside consultants to provide additional capacity in support of its in-house service or where there is a lack of expertise in-house. In the past this has included such matters as advice on retail capacity, agricultural use and highway matters.

Development Control: Financial resources

- 8.5 Sufficient budget has been allocated to meet the costs of community involvement in this financial year and bids made for the next financial year.
- 8.6 The Council has established a reservoir fund which will be used to cover public consultation costs assuming the Council wishes to seek views from the local community on the Upper Thames reservoir proposal prior to making its own representations to the Secretary of State. This fund is also available to cover legal and consultants costs.

Making efficient use of resources

- 8.7 Wherever possible the Council will seek to use resources efficiently and effectively by:
- linking consultation on different Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents with other strategies, including the Community Strategy, This will minimise consultation time and help to reduce consultation fatigue within the local community
 - choosing the most appropriate and efficient methods of participation by targeting consultation at a level appropriate to the document being produced or the planning application being considered. This will also be dependent on the resources available at the time.
 - ensuring that the public have access to information on how, when and where they can respond to planning applications and participate in the different stages of developing the Local Development Framework through the Council's website and the local press.

9.0 OTHER COUNCIL STRATEGIES

- 9.1 The production of the Local Development Documents and the community involvement in their preparation should link with other Council strategies and community involvement processes.
- 9.2 The Vale Strategic Partnership consists of large organisations in the Vale which came together to develop the Vale Community Strategy 2004-2008 based on widespread local involvement. The aim of the Vale Community Strategy is to identify priorities across nine strands relating to Transport, Access to Services, Recreation, Culture and Leisure, Safe and Supportive Communities, Town and Village Vitality, Environment, Housing, Education and Lifelong Learning and Health and Wellbeing and to detail how the Vale Strategic Partnership will work with the local community to address them.
- 9.3 The Local Development Documents prepared as part of the Vale of White Horse Local Development Framework will have regard to the Community Strategy and wherever appropriate will seek to reflect those aspects of the Community Strategy that have a land use perspective. Community involvement in the preparation of these documents will, where appropriate, be linked with community involvement initiatives for the Community Strategy.
- 9.4 It is anticipated that the Council's Senior Management restructuring, by bringing the Local Development Framework and the Community Strategy under a single Assistant Directorship, will foster greater links between the Local Development Framework and the Community Strategy.
- 9.5 The Council has a number of other strategies which have spatial implications or relate to consultation procedures. These include
- The Vale Arts Development Strategies 2001-2005 and the Policy Statement on Flood Defence 2001. Account will need to be taken of strategies that are in the course of preparation such as the Vale's Housing Strategy which is reviewed annually.
 - Those prepared in partnership with other organisations such as the integrated transport strategies for Abingdon and Didcot and the Wantage and Grove Area Strategic Transport Study and the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.
 - Those which are principally the responsibility of other organisations but which may have implications for the District, including the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan, the Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire 2001-6 and the Second Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire.
- 9.6 The Council works jointly with other authorities to devise strategies for, for example, the North Wessex Downs AONB and integrated transport strategies. These working arrangements will continue and consultation on any documents will where practicable run concurrently.

Appendix 1

Consultation Bodies Specified in PPS12

Relevant to the Vale

An extract from Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks listing the consultation bodies referred to in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004. (Consultation bodies not relevant to Vale of White Horse have been omitted).

This is not the definitive list of all our consultees. We have many local organisations and individuals on our database.

Specific consultation bodies

E1 The following bodies are specific consultation bodies and must be consulted in accordance with the Act and Regulations:

- (a) The regional planning body if the local planning authority's area is in a region other than London;
- (b) A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority;
- (c) The Countryside Agency;
- (d) The Environment Agency;
- (e) Highways Agency;
- (f) The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England;
- (g) English Nature;
- (h) The Strategic Rail Authority;
- (i) A Regional Development Agency whose area is in or adjoins the area of the local planning authority;
- (j) Any person to whom the electronic communications code applies by virtue of a direction given under Section 106 (3)(a) of the Communications Act 2003;
- (k) Any person who owns or controls electronic communications apparatus situated in any part of the area of the local planning authority; and
- (l) Any of the bodies from the following list who are exercising functions in any part of the area of the local planning authority;
 - i. Strategic Health Authority
 - ii. Person to whom a licence has been granted under Section 7(2) of the Gas Act 1986
 - iii. Sewerage undertaker; and
 - iv. Water undertaker.

Government Departments

E2 The appropriate Government Office for the region should also be consulted and will often be the first point of contact for consultation with central Government Departments. In addition, local planning

authorities are strongly advised to consult any Government Departments or agencies where those departments or agencies have large land holdings in the area covered by a local development document. This will ensure that local planning authorities are fully aware of the possible need for expansion of existing facilities or, more importantly, the likelihood of large-scale land disposals taking place within the period of time covered by the local development document.

- (a) Home Office;
- (b) Department for Education and Skills (through Government Offices);
- (c) Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
- (d) Department of Transport (through Government Offices);
- (e) Department of Health (through relevant Regional Public Health Group);
- (f) Department of Trade and Industry (through Government Offices);
- (g) Ministry of Defence;
- (h) Department of Work and Pensions;
- (i) Department of Constitutional Affairs;
- (j) Department for Culture, Media and Sport;
- (k) Office of Government Commerce (Property Advisors to the Civil Estate).

General consultation bodies

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

Other consultees

E3 Local planning authorities should also consider the need to consult, where appropriate the following agencies and organisations in the preparation of local development documents.

Appendix 1

- (a) Age Concern;
- (b) Airport Operators
- (c) British Chemical Distributors and Trade Association;
- (d) British Geological Survey;
- (e) British Waterways, canal owners and navigation authorities
- (f) Centre for Ecology and Hydrology;

- (g) Chambers of Commerce, local CBI and local branches of Institute of Directors;
- (h) Church Commissioners;
- (i) Civil Aviation Authority;
- (j) Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment;
- (k) Commission for New Towns and English Partnerships;
- (l) Commission for Racial Equality;
- (m) Crown Estate Office;
- (n) Diocesan Board of Finance;
- (o) Disability Rights Commission;
- (p) Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee;
- (q) Electricity, Gas and Telecommunications Undertakers, and the National Grid Company;
- (r) Environmental groups at national, regional and local level, including:
 - i. Council for the Protection of Rural England;
 - ii. Friends of the Earth;
 - iii. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds;
 - iv. Wildlife Trusts;

- (s) Equal Opportunities Commission;
- (t) Fire and Rescue Services;
- (u) Forestry Commission
- (v) Freight Transport Association;
- (w) Gypsy Council;
- (x) Health and Safety Executive;
- (y) Help the Aged;
- (z) Housing Corporation;
- (aa) Learning and Skills Councils;
- (bb) Local Agenda 21 including;
 - i. Civic Societies
 - ii. Community Groups

Appendix 1

- iii. Local Transport Authorities;
 - iv. Local Transport Operators; and
 - v. Local Race Equality Councils and other local equality groups;
-
- (cc) National Playing Fields Association;
 - (dd) Network Rail;
 - (ee) Police Architectural Liaison Officers/Crime Prevention Design Advisors;
 - (ff) Post Office Property Holdings;
 - (gg) Rail Companies and the Rail Freight Group;
-
- (hh) Regional Development Agencies;
 - (ii) Regional Housing Boards;
 - (jj) Regional Sports Boards;
 - (kk) Sport England;
 - (ll) The Home Builders Federation;
 - (mm) Traveller Law Reform Coalition;
 - (nn) Water Companies; (Thames Water)
 - (oo) Women's National Commission.

List of bodies and Organisations Consulted on the Statement of Community Involvement and who will be consulted on local development documents

Since initial consultation on the preparation of all Local Development Documents and Statement of Community Involvement a number of bodies and organisations have been included in the list. This is not a definitive list. There are many individuals and organisations also included on the consultation database.

Specific Consultation Bodies

South East England Regional Assembly
South West Regional Assembly

Local Councils within District

- Oxfordshire County Council
- Town Councils
 - Abingdon
 - Wantage
 - Faringdon

• Parish Councils

Appleford-on-Thames
Appleton with Eaton
Ardington and Lockinge
Ashbury
Baulking
Besselsleigh
Blewbury
Bourton
Buckland
Buscot
Charney Bassett
Childrey
Chilton
Coleshill
Compton Beauchamp
Cumnor
Denchworth
Drayton
East Challow
East Hanney
East Hendred
Eaton Hastings
Fernham
Frilford
Fyfield and Tubney
Garford
Goosey
Great Coxwell
Grove
Harwell
Hatford

Kingston Lisle
Letcombe Bassett
Letcombe Regis
Little Coxwell
Littleworth
Longcot
Longworth
Lyford
Marcham
Milton
North Hinksey
Pusey
Radley
St Helen Without
Shellingford
Shrivenham
South Hinksey
Sparsholt
Stanford-in-the-Vale
Steventon
Sunningwell
Sutton Courtenay
Uffington
Upton
Watchfield
West Challow
West Hanney
West Hendred

Woolstone
Wootton
Wytham

Hinton Waldrist
Kennington
Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor

Appendix 2

- Neighbouring Authorities

West Oxfordshire District Council
South Oxfordshire District Council
Cherwell District Council
Oxford City Council
Gloucestershire County Council

Cotswold District Council
Wiltshire County Council
Kennet District Council
Swindon Borough Council
West Berkshire Council

- Neighbouring Parishes and Towns

West Oxfordshire

Aston, Cote, Shifford and Chimney
Bampton
Cassington
Clanfield
Eynsham

Stanton Harcourt
Northmoor
Standlake
Grafton and Radcot
Kelmscott

South Oxfordshire

Aston Upthorpe
South Moreton
East Hagbourne
West Hagbourne
Didcot Town

Long Wittenham
Clifton Hampden
Culham
Nuneham Courtenay
Sandford-on-Thames

Cherwell

Yarnton

Cotswold

Lechlade-on-Thames Town

Swindon

Inglesham
Highworth Town

Kennet

Baydon

South Marston

Bishopstone and Hinton Parva

West Berks

Lambourn
East Garston
Fawley
Chaddleworth
Brightwalton

Farnborough
West Ilsley
East Ilsley
Compton

- British Gas
- British Telecom
- English Nature
- Highways Agency
- Mobile Operators Association
- Oxford Health Authority
- Regional Development Agencies
SEEDA

South West of England regional
Development Agency

Appendix 2

- Southern Electric
- Thames Valley Health Authority

- Thames Water
- The Countryside Agency
- The Environment Agency
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- The Strategic Rail Authority
- Transco

Government Departments

- Government Office for the South East
- Home Office
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Ministry of Defence
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Office for the Deputy Prime Minister
- Department for Education and Skills
- Department for Transport
- Department for Health
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department for Constitutional Affairs
- Office of Government Commerce

General Consultation Bodies

Business and Commerce

Abingdon and District Chamber of Trade
 British Chemical Distributors and Traders
 Association
 Business Link Solutions
 CABI
 CEH Wallingford
 CEH Oxford
 Culham Science Centre
 Defence Academy of the United Kingdom
 Experian
 Faringdon Chamber of Commerce
 Grove 2000
 Harwell International Business Centre
 HR Wallingford
 Henley Business School

Innogy
 Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management
 Jones Day
 MEPC Milton Park
 National Power
 National Wind Power
 Oxford Innovation
 Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce
 Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
 Peacocks and Smith
 RMCS
 Rutherford Appleton laboratory
 UKAEA
 University of Oxford
 Wantage and District Chamber of Trade

Developers/agents/landowners

Carter Jonas LLP
 Consensus Planning
 Country Land Owners Association

Development Plan UK
 Dialogue Communicating Planning
 Green Issues Communications

Hives Planning
 PMP
 Tetlow King Planning
 White, Young and Green

Home Builders Federation
 J A Pye
 Banner Homes
 Barratt Homes
 Bellway Homes

Appendix 2

Berkeley Homes
Bewlay Homes
Bovis Homes
Holburn Homes
Cranbourne Homes
Croudace Homes
Davis Wilson Homes

Elmore Homes
Fairview Homes
Transport

Abingdon Bus Company
Barnes Coaches
Chiltern Railways
Coachman Travel
Faringdon Community Bus
First Great Western Link
First Great Western
Freight Transport Association
Heyfordian Travel
National Express
Network Rail
Newbury Buses
Oxford Airport
Rail Freight Group

Health

NHS Estates Inventures
NHS Exec Anglia and Oxford
Oxford City PCT

Religious

Abingdon Churches
Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque
Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
Christadelphian Church
Church of England Church Commissioners (Diocese of Oxford)
Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints
Churches Together in Oxfordshire
First Church of Christian Scientist
Grove Free Evangelical Church
Jehovah's Witnesses
Jewish Synagogue
Lime Walk Gospel Hall Trust
Oxfordshire Community Churches

Housing Associations/ Housing Interests

Fisherman Properties
Gallaghers
Gazeley Properties
George Wimpey
Gleeson Homes
Kemp & Kemp
Kimberley Development
Martin Grant Homes
McCarthy and Stone
Persimmon Homes
Pinecrest Limited
Westbury Homes
West Waddy - ADP
Rob White Consulting

Rail Passengers Committee
Railfuture:Thames Valley Branch
Road Haulage Association
Stagecoach in Oxfordshire
Stagecoach in Swindon
Stanford in the Vale Community Minibus Committee
Thames Travel
Tappins Coaches
Thamesdown Transport
The Oxford Bus Company
Virgin Trains
Weavaway Travel
Whites Coaches
Windrush Transport

Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust
South East/South West Oxfordshire PCT's

The Church in Abingdon
The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

The Methodist Church
United Reformed Church

Appendix 2

Advance Housing and Support
Anchor Stay Put
Beacon Housing Association
Cherwell Housing Trust
Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association
Housing Corporation

Paramount Housing Association
Rural Housing Trust
South East Regional Housing Board

Sovereign Housing Association

Thames Valley Housing Association
The Guinness Trust
The Vale Housing Association
Vale of White Horse District Council

Oxford Citizens Housing Association

Educational Establishments

Radley College

Local Residents Associations

Albert Park Area Residents Association
Cumnor Rise Road Residents Association
Faringdon Association of Residents
Fitzharry's Manor Estate Residents' Association
Harcourt Hill Resident's Association
Long Furlong Community Association
North East Abingdon Community Association
Old Botley Resident's Association
Stockham Park and Local Area Residents Association

General Interest Groups

20th Century Society
Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society
Age Concern
Air Training Corps
Ancient Monuments Society
Arts Council
British Red Cross Society
British Waterways
Campaign for a Sustainable Didcot
Campaign for Real Ale
Cancer Research UK
Civil Aviation Authority
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
Commission for New Towns and English Partnerships
Commission for Racial Equality
Cyclist and Pedestrian Safety in Abingdon (CAPSIA)
Disability Rights Commission
Disability Sport England
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
English Golf Union
Equal Opportunities Commission
Fire and Rescue services
Friends of Abingdon

Friends of North Hinksey
Friends of the Ridgeway
Friends of Vale and Downland Museum
Garden History Society
Georgian Group
Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition
Gypsy Council
Health and Safety Executive
Help the Aged
Keep Harwell Rural
Land Access and recreation Association
Learning Skills Council
National Playing Field Association
National Trust
North Wessex Downs AONB
Open Spaces Society
Oxford Architectural and Historical Society
Oxford Brookes University
Oxford Field Paths Society
Oxford Preservation Trust
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes
Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust
Oxfordshire Play Association
Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Oxfordshire Women's Institute
Planning Aid

Royal British Legion
Royal Mail
Royal Town Planning Institute
RSPCA
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings
Sport England South East
St John Ambulance
Sustrans
Thames Valley Police
The British Wind Energy Association

The Crown Estate
The Friends of Grove Library
The Theatres Trust
Tourism South East
UK Rainwater Harvesting Association
Victorian Society
VWH Sports Association for the Disabled
Wantage Open Access
Wantage, Grove and District 'Healthcheck'
Programme
Women's National Commission
Wootton and Dry Sandford Youth Club

Environmental Interest Groups

Abingdon Naturalists Trust
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon Wildlife Trust
(BBOWT)
British Geological Survey
Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Forestry Commission
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace
Great Western Community Forest
Inland Waterways Association
Letcombe Brook Officer
National Farmers Union
National Power
National Wind Power

Nature Conservancy
Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum
Oxfordshire RIGS Group
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
River Thames Alliance
River Thames Society
RSPB
South Abingdon Flood Plain Action Group
SPADE
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
The Oxford Green Belt Network
The Ramblers' Association
The Woodland Trust
Wilts and Berks Canal Partnership
Wilts and Berks Canal Trust
World Wide Fund for Nature

Local Community Agencies/Groups

Abingdon Alzheimer's Club
Abingdon and District Volunteer Centre
Access Officers Oxfordshire County Council
Advisory Service for the Education of Travellers
Alzheimer's Society: Wantage/Faringdon/Didcot
Association of Retired Persons over 50, Wantage
Group
Citizens Advice Bureau
Independent Advice Centre, Wantage
Community Legal Services Partnership
Crime Prevention Design Advisor
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind
Oxfordshire Association for Young People
Oxfordshire Carers Forum
Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice
Centre
Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People
Oxfordshire MIND
Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council
Oxfordshire Supporting People Team
South Abingdon Voluntary Action Group
South West Oxfordshire Mentally Handicapped
Thames Business Advice Centre
The Abingdon Bridge
The Asylum Seeker Service
The Disabled Drivers Association (Oxford)
Vale of White Horse Community Mental Health
Team
Vale Open Access Group
Vale Youth Minibus Scheme
Watchfield Shopperbus

Political

Oxford West and Abingdon Conservative
Association
Wantage Conservative Constituency Association
Liberal Democrats (Oxford West and Abingdon
Constituency)
Liberal Democrats (Wantage Constituency)
Abingdon Green Party
Oxford West and Abingdon Labour Party
UK Independence Party

MPs for the Vale

MEPs for the Vale

District Councillors for the Vale
County Councillors for the Vale

Media

Radio Oxford
Central Television
Faringdon Newspapers
GWR
Two Ten FM
South Oxfordshire Chronicle
Swindon Star
BBC Wiltshire Sound
Courier Newspapers
Fox FM
Meridian Broadcasting
Oxford and County Newspapers
Swindon Evening Advertiser
Wiltshire Gazette
BBC Radio Berkshire

Appendix 3

The Government's Tests of Soundness for Statements of Community Involvement

This is an extract from paragraph 3.10 of Planning Policy Statement¹² Local Development Frameworks, ODPM, 2004 and sets out how the Statement of Community Involvement will be assessed at an examination.

In assessing 'soundness' the inspector will determine whether the:

1. Local planning authority has complied with the minimum requirements for consultation as set out in regulations;
2. Local planning authority's strategy for community involvement links with other community involvement initiatives e.g. community strategy;
3. Statement identifies in general terms which local community groups and other bodies will be consulted;
4. Statement identifies how the community and other bodies can be involved in a timely and accessible manner;
5. Methods of consultation to be employed are suitable for the intended audience and for different stages in the preparation of local development documents;
6. Resources are available to manage community involvement effectively;
7. Statement shows show the results of community involvement will be fed into the preparation of development plan documents and Supplementary Planning Documents;
8. Authority has mechanisms for reviewing the statement of community involvement;
9. Statement clearly describes the planning authority's policy for consultation on planning applications.

Glossary

Annual monitoring report: part of the *Local Development Framework*, the annual monitoring report will assess the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which policies in *Local Development Documents* are being successfully implemented.

Area action plan: used to provide a planning framework for areas of change and areas of conservation. Area Action Plans will have the status of *Development Plan Documents*.

Community strategy: local authorities are required by the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare these, with aim of improving the social, environmental and economic well being of their areas. Through the Community Strategy, authorities are expected to co-ordinate the actions of local public, private, voluntary and community sectors. Responsibility for producing Community Strategies may be passed to *Local Strategic Partnerships*, which include local authority representatives.

Core strategy: set out the long-term spatial vision for the local planning authority area, the spatial objectives and strategic policies to deliver that vision. The Core Strategy will have the status of a *Development Plan Document*.

Development plan: as set out in Section 38(6) of the Act, an authority's development plan consists of the relevant *Regional Spatial Strategy* (or the Spatial Development Strategy in London) and the *Development Plan Documents* contained within its *Local Development Framework*.

Development plan documents: spatial planning documents that are subject to independent examination, and together with the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, will form the *development plan* for a local authority area for the purposes of the Act. They can include a *Core Strategy*, *Site Specific Allocations of land*, and *Area Action Plans* (where needed). Other Development Plan Documents, including generic Development Control Policies, can be produced. They will all be shown geographically on an *adopted proposals map*. Individual Development Plan Documents or parts of a document can be reviewed independently from other Development Plan Documents. Each authority must set out the programme for preparing its *Development Plan Documents* in the *Local Development Scheme*.

Development control policies: these will be a suite of criteria-based policies which are required to ensure that all development within the areas meets the spatial vision and spatial objectives set out in the *Core Strategy*. They may be included in any *Development Plan Document* or may form a standalone document.

Evidence Base: The information and data gathered by local authorities to justify the "soundness" of the policy approach set out in Local Development Documents, including physical, economic, and social characteristics of an area.

Hard to Reach Groups: can be any group of people whose views are difficult to access through regular consultation. They can include people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and young people.

Issues and Options: produced during the early production stage of the preparation of *Development Plan Documents* and may be issued for consultation to meet the requirements of Regulation 25.

Local development document: the collective term in the Act for *Development Plan Documents*, *Supplementary Planning Documents* and the *Statement of Community Involvement*.

Local development framework: the name for the portfolio of *Local Development Documents*. It consists of *Development Plan Documents*, *Supplementary Planning Documents*, a *Statement of Community Involvement*, the *Local Development Scheme* and *Annual Monitoring Reports*. Together these documents will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for a local authority area and may also include local development orders and simplified planning zones.

Local development scheme: sets out the programme for preparing *Local Development Documents*. All authorities must submit a Scheme to the Secretary of State for approval within six months of commencement of the Act.

Local strategic partnership: partnerships of stakeholders who develop ways of involving local people in shaping the future of their neighbourhood in how services are provided. They are often single non-statutory, multi-agency bodies which aim to bring together locally the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

Local transport plan: 5-year strategy prepared by Oxfordshire County Council for the development of local, integrated transport, supported by a programme of transport improvements. It is used to bid to Government for funding transport improvements.

Preferred options document: produced as part of the preparation of *Development Plan Documents*, and is issued for formal public participation as required by Regulation 26.

Proposals map: the adopted proposals map illustrates on a base map (reproduced from, or based upon a map base to a registered scale) all the policies contained in *Development Plan Documents*, together with any saved policies. It must be revised as each new *Plan Document* is adopted, and it should always reflect the up-to-date planning strategy for the area. Proposals for changes to the adopted proposals map accompany submitted *development plan documents* in the form of a submission proposals map.

Regional planning body: one of the nine regional bodies in England (including the Greater London Authority) responsible for preparing *Regional Spatial Strategies (in London the Spatial Development Strategy)*.

Regional spatial strategy: sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land and forms part of the *development plan* for local planning authorities. Planning Policy Statement 11 'Regional Spatial Strategies' provides detailed guidance on the function and preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies.

The Regulations: Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, and the Town and Country Planning (Transitional Arrangements) Regulations 2004.

Site specific allocations: allocations of sites for specific or mixed uses or development to be contained in *Development Plan Documents*. Policies will identify any specific requirements for individual proposals.

Statement of community involvement: sets out the standards which authorities will achieve with regard to involving local communities in the preparation of *local development documents* and development control decisions. The statement of community Involvement is not a *development plan document* but is subject to independent examination.

Supplementary planning documents: provide supplementary information in respect of the policies in *Development Plan Documents*. They do not form part of the Development Plan and are not subject to independent examination.

Sustainability appraisal: tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (i.e. social, environmental and economic factors) and required in the Act to be undertaken for all local development documents.

Some of the key organisations concerned with planning in England and Wales.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

www.odpm.gov.uk

ODPM is responsible for policy on housing, planning, devolution, regional and local government and the fire service. It also takes responsibility for the Social Exclusion Unit, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and the Government Offices for the Regions.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)

www.hmsso.gov.uk

As Queen's Printer, all legislation, Command Papers and the official Gazettes are published by HMSO. All Statutory Instruments are issued and processed by HMSO.

The Planning Portal

www.planningportal.gov.uk

The Planning Portal offers a wide range of services and guidance on the planning system including how the planning system works, links to other boroughs' development plans and submitting planning applications.

Government Office for the South East (GOSE)

www.gose.gov.uk

The Government Office for the South East acts on behalf of the First Secretary of State on land use planning matters in the South East.

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)

www.rtpi.org.uk

in the UK the Royal Town Planning Institute is the professional body responsible for town and country planning.

Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

The Environment Agency work in diverse areas such as flood defence, pollution control, town planning, farming and waste. Their area of responsibility covers all of England and Wales and they work closely with local communities to achieve results.

Planning Aid

www.planningaid.rtpl.org.uk

They provide free and independent town planning related advice to individuals and groups unable to afford professional consultants. This can include queries that are to do with housing, employment, transport, community issues, or improvements to your area. Planning Aid can assist people with their own planning application or can help them to comment on other peoples'. They can also advise groups on fundraising strategies, community development and consultation methods.

Planning Inspectorate (PINS)

www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk

Their work is the processing of planning applications and enforcement appeals and holding inquiries into local development plans. Also deals with other planning related casework including listed building consent appeals, advertisement appeals, and reporting on planning applications.

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR
TO THE STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP
23 JANUARY 2006

**The Strategic Housing Site West of Grove: the Role and Composition of the Grove
Development Forum**

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 In March 2004 the Council agreed to investigate setting up a group of local council representatives and other stakeholders, including local employers, as a vehicle for discussing and helping the delivery of the proposals for the development of the strategic housing site west of Grove. At the meeting of this Advisory Group in August 2005, members agreed that officers should give further consideration to this during the autumn so the forum would be ready to begin its work when the inspector's report on the local plan was received and the future of the strategic housing site was clearer. This report sets out draft principles for establishing a process of information dissemination, discussion and consultation with local people to involve them in the future planning of the strategic housing site west of Grove in accordance with the Council's decision.

1.2 The contact officers for this report are Grant Audley-Miller, Section Head (Environmental Planning and Conservation) 01235 540343 and Katie Barrett, Section Head (Planning Strategy) 01235 540339.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 *That the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group recommend the Executive to:*
- i) agree to establishing the Grove Development Forum as set out in paragraphs 5.1 – 5.9 of this report*
 - ii) delegate to the Chief Executive the appointment of an external facilitator to lead the forum, and to confirm the source of funding for this*
 - iii) agree the number of elected representatives from this and other Councils to be on the core group of the forum, and the representation from this authority.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

3.1 This report complies with the Council's vision statement and aims. It will be an important element in delivering a major proposal in the draft local plan 2011.

4.0 Key Tasks for 2006

- 4.1 The key tasks associated with the delivery of the strategic housing site west of Grove during 2006, assuming the inspector does not recommend its removal as an allocation from the Local Plan, are as follows:
- Council to consider the inspector's report and publish proposed modifications to the local plan for public consultation 23 March – 4 May
 - Members to consider the draft supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for the housing site west of Grove in the context of the Inspector's report, new information since the draft SPG was published in June 2004 and the comments received in response to publication of the June 2004 draft. Under the new regulations the SPG will be adopted as a supplementary planning document (SPD). Public consultation on a revised version of the SPD is currently planned for 23 March – 4 May (ie to coincide with the publication of the proposed local plan 2011 modifications)

- Officer involvement in pre-application discussions with the developers and service providers through a development team in accordance with the Council's protocol on the development team approach (see Appendix 1). The development team promotes a proactive rather than a reactive approach to assembling the information needed to determine major applications within the best value performance target date. The approach has been successfully used to smooth the processing and add value and quality to the outcome of major development sites, most notably at the Morland's Brewery, Penlon, Maltings and British Gas sites in Abingdon and Smith's yard in Wantage. The approach is particularly relevant now the Council has been named as a standard authority for determining major applications
- Development Control Committee to formally consider the planning applications. The developers have indicated they are likely to submit two applications in the first instance: an outline application for the whole site accompanied by strategies and statements covering such detailed matters as environmental impact, drainage and open space, education and community facilities, movement and design with which all detailed permissions must comply; and a detailed application for the link road from the airfield site to the A338 north of Grove. Officers have requested that the applications be submitted no earlier than 1 September 2006.

4.2 To avoid misunderstandings and misconceptions it will be important to ensure that the role of the Grove Development Forum is clearly defined in relation to both the programme of work and the structures and responsibilities of the organisations involved.

5.0 **The Role and Membership of the Grove Development Forum**

5.1 The principal role of the Grove Development Forum should be as an informal advisory group

- to keep representatives of the local community informed in a timely and transparent manner of developments relating to the proposals for the strategic housing site
- to help facilitate and guide the delivery of the strategic housing site west of Grove so that the needs, concerns and aspirations of the local community can be taken into account in the preparation of
 - any draft proposed modifications to the local plan as they relate to Grove (principally policy H5)
 - the revised draft SPD for the strategic housing site
 - the evolving documents required to support the first and subsequent planning applications
- to monitor and discuss the implementation of the development.

5.2 If the forum is an informal advisory group it will sit alongside the established structures of governance eg town, parish, district and county councils, but will not and should not replace them. This is consistent with the dictionary definition of 'forum' which is 'an assembly or meeting to discuss topics of public concern'. The aims of the forum should be to

- have discussion and debate and, where possible, reach consensus on the key features underpinning the form, nature and implementation of the development
- advise on approaches for involving the community.

All views should be recorded and a note made of strong dissenting views. Subsequently the views of the forum would be taken into account by each council, the development team and the developers, but each organisation would retain responsibility for making its own decisions through its normal processes.

5.3 Within this framework it is considered that it would not be necessary for the forum to have formal voting arrangements as this has the potential to lead to confrontation and also to misunderstandings that the forum is a formal decision making body. The absence of voting would allow all views to be taken forward including minority views which may be important for the technical consideration of the proposals.

- 5.4 It is considered that the forum should consist of a core group of elected councillors from the District and County Councils, Grove Parish Council, Wantage Town Council and East Challow and East Hanney Parish Councils. To ensure a manageable and constructive group this should not be too large and a group of no more than 12 members is suggested. The core group of the forum could then call in representatives from local community groups to discuss particular topics, such as open space and the use and location of community buildings for example. Officers from the County and District Council and representatives of the developers would also attend to give technical information and support as required. A key task of the forum would also be to consider, early in the process, when and how the wider public would also be consulted. **Members are asked to consider how many elected members from each council should be represented on the core group of the forum, and how many and who from this authority.** When becoming involved in the forum Members from this Council will need to have regard to the probity guidance set out by the LGA and contained in Appendix 3 to this report.
- 5.5 If the forum is to be seen as an advisory group independent of the formal functions of the councils involved, there would be significant merit in the meetings being chaired by external facilitators. Their role would be to lead the meetings, encourage open discussion and seek understanding and consensus. They would not have an opinion on the merits of the issues being discussed. Experienced facilitators are able to defuse conflict and achieve positive results. Indeed this was the case when the Council used Proteus to lead workshops on the strategic housing site at Grove in October 2003.
- 5.6 Officers suggest the scope and content of the first meetings could be as follows
- First meeting, mid to late February to discuss
- i) the purpose, role, terms of reference and general matters about the functioning of the forum and its relationship to existing structures of the councils involved, local community groups and the public
 - ii) the inspector's report and the District Council's draft proposed modifications related to the strategic housing site at Grove. (These would have first been considered by the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group but not published or approved by the Executive or Council)
 - iii) Key issues being considered in the review of the draft SPD.
- Second meeting, early April to
- i) report on the proposed modifications and discuss the draft SPD both of which will have been published for consultation
 - ii) discuss any technical issues arising from the work of the Grove development team
 - iii) note the issues arising on the evolving planning applications which will require discussion at subsequent meetings of the forum, and discuss which other groups and stakeholders should be invited to attend to inform those discussions.
- 5.7 It is important for the first meeting of the forum to be run effectively and to make clear the roles and responsibilities of the core member group. Officers consider that the best way to achieve this is to use an external facilitator at the outset. The District Council would administer the forum in terms of sending out notification of the meetings and distributing the notes of the meetings.
- 5.8 In terms of funding the external facilitator, officers consider that the first two meetings of the forum should be paid for by the Council. For subsequent meetings on the evolving applications, the facilitator should be paid for by the developers, however, this will need to be discussed and agreed with the developers. Ideally the same facilitator should be used for all meetings of the forum. Preliminary estimates indicate that the cost of a facilitator for the first two meetings would be around £3000. Three estimates are being obtained in writing. Funding for this would need to

be confirmed by the Executive but a possible option would be to use Planning Delivery Grant money.

Grove Parish Council

- 5.9 Grove Parish Council has been asked for their views on establishing the forum and a letter from them is attached as Appendix 2. Some of the matters raised will be decided by the forum itself – such as the time of the meetings, whether the forum will be open to the public and the local groups to be involved. However, it is considered that the first meeting of the forum should be held in the evening and as it is principally to discuss the functioning of the forum it should not be open to the public. In terms of serving the forum it is considered that the administration of the meetings would be the responsibility of the District Council, but it would be helpful if the Parish Council could arrange suitable venues. Officers accept there will need to be a clear audit trail as to how the views of the forum have been taken into account in subsequent decisions.

RODGER HOOD
Assistant Director (Planning)

TIM SADLER
Strategic Director

Background Papers:

Protocol on Use of the Development Team Approach (DTA) in Dealing with Development Proposals

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In 1996 the National Planning Forum produced a guide to the Development Team Approach (DTA) to help local authorities provide a more co-ordinated and customer-orientated approach to development projects. The Government built on this initiative by launching a number of One-Stop-Shop pilot projects.
- 1.2 In relation to major developments in particular, the past carving-up of the environment between the professions has not worked in terms of the quality of the outcome. Neither has a standards-led approach to design. These deficiencies need resolving if we are to take advantage of increasing Government emphasis on the value of urban design in making better places. This is not just about the art of design, its aesthetics, but also about making places work. It is as much about securing economic viability and social benefits as it is about environmental support. This is where the DTA comes in.
- 1.3 The Development Team Approach is a new pro-active, rather than the traditionally reactive, way of working. In its widest sense the DTA is a co-ordinated service offered by a Local Authority delivering a One-Stop-Shop style of working. Given a narrower meaning, it has been used to describe a project team established for dealing with a particular development. In the Vale's case a project team approach has been adopted and considered to have been successful in adding value to the quality of the outcome on sites such as Penlon, Morlands, The Maltings, Yoplait and Ben Smith's. It is a formal but temporary arrangement and distinct from the one-off meetings which may be called by the Case Officer.
- 1.4 The DETR Planning Research Programme found that, by increasing the input at the pre-application stage of a project, Local Authorities found that submitted applications were more likely to be complete, with fewer issues to be resolved during the processing of the application, and making it easier to reach a decision within Government targets. However, this benefit is only realised if there is adequate staffing for processing applications. Diverting too many resources to the pre-application stage can limit or reverse the potential benefit. There is therefore a need to be particularly rigorous in deciding which projects ought to be the subject of a DTA. Whilst the DTA may speed up the application process, this is not its primary purpose which is to raise the environmental, economic and social qualities of those developments which matter most, ie. major and sensitive development proposals. The new system will allow time for informal discussion on all aspects of a proposal. It also gives the applicant greater certainty when the formal application is submitted as a programmed timetable for a decision will have been set out and many of the issues will have been addressed.
- 1.5 Good design may not always be considered as an "incentive" by developers who may regard it as an added cost. Furthermore, the Council's ability to deliver on its DTA commitments does depend on the applicant's co-operation by:

- discussing the proposals with the Council before submitting the application;
- building time into project programmes both to complete these initial discussions and for resolving potential conflicts with external agencies within the determination timescale indicated by the Council; and
- submitting design rationales based on contextual analyses, Environmental Statements, EIAs, Traffic Impact Assessments, employee travel plans, historic building analyses if required, and any other supporting documentation at the same time as the application.

In return the DTA will define an approach and timescale to the development that will have the best chance of achieving a successful outcome. In the Vale, of the five major sites which have been the subject of a DTA to date, all have been approved. It involves potential cost savings by identifying issues and problems early. Perhaps more importantly, at least to a housing developer for example, whilst higher densities may be looked for and may require greater attention to design detail, it may also be attractive as a means of increasing their returns. Making more efficient use of land though is not just about housing proposals.

2.0 Terms of Reference of the DTA

2.1 The DTA commits the Council to being active participants in the development process. It provides for a pro-active, rather than the traditionally reactive, approach to dealing with information requirements, and delivering the service within timescales acceptable to customer expectations (and incidentally a more positive image for the Council). Its terms of reference would be to:

- clarify the Council's policies on a site;
- identify and seek to resolve any potential conflicts between different statutory consultees at an early stage;
- co-ordinate the work of different parts of the Council and external agencies; and
- ensure a unified and consistent approach, including informing relevant Councillors, about a planned development and its implications for the area.

2.2 Clarifying the Council's policy on a planned development may require an "early warning" meeting for complex applications which will involve all the relevant officers in order to pass on an agreed message to the developer.

2.3 The development team would have one point of contact, and this would be the Case Officer, to co-ordinate all aspects of the application and keep the applicant briefed on progress in relation to the agreed timescale.

3.0 Which projects should have a Development Team?

3.1 As a rule of thumb the DTA should be used infrequently and should be reserved for major or sensitive projects which:

- (i) are likely to require discussion and co-ordination of the inputs from a number of disciplines over a significant period; and
- (ii) have the potential for significant "added value" from use of the approach.

Examples of major or sensitive projects could include:

- those which form a significant part of, or significantly contribute to, the Council's Local Plan, economic development strategy or social agenda;
- those which have significant environmental or traffic impacts (requiring an EIA or Traffic Impact Assessment);
- Departure applications;
- developments of greater than 10 dwellings or 1000sq metres of floor space for commercial developments (automatic Committee items); and
- sensitive sites (those involving the setting of major Listed Buildings, prominent Conservation Area or AONB sites).

4.0 Who decides whether a Development Team Approach should be used?

4.1 Whether a DTA should be set up will be a matter for discussion at Planning Management Team (PMT) with the final decision resting with the Assistant Director (Planning) as it does commit resources, both Officer time and budgetary (e.g. Consultant Architect). It is at this stage that consideration should be given to whether an "early warning" meeting needs to be arranged. Wherever possible, these decisions should be made at the pre-application stage so that as many of the policy issues can be settled and possible conflicts between consent regimes addressed before an application is submitted.

5.0 Identifying Members of the Development Team

- 5.1 The initial membership, and the Case Officer will be agreed at PMT, with the help of a briefing from the relevant Area or Principal Planning Officer. The team may be expanded as discussions progress if new issues arise. The Assistant Director (Planning) will make the final decision on these issues where agreement is not reached at PMT.
- 5.2 Teams may involve external agencies invited to particular meetings, rather than being full members of the team, although in some circumstances they may need to be full members.
- 5.3 The core of the Development Team will consist of the Case Officer, an urban designer, Conservation Officer, highway and transportation engineer(s), and the Consultant Architect as appropriate. Other interested parties would be invited to particular meetings on a case by case basis. These may include representatives from Legal Services (where a Section 106 is likely), the County Council (where Section 106 contributions to County Council services and /or facilities are likely), a Housing Services Representative or the Registered Social Landlord (where affordable housing is required and the RSL is known), Environmental Health

(waste management, energy team, noise, contamination etc), Leisure/Landscape, Arts Officer (where a Per Cent for Art is likely) Building Control (e.g. for fire regulations and to alert developers to BC services), external agencies (eg. the Environment Agency, County Archaeologist/Ecologist, English Heritage), and the Community Safety Officer. In some cases representatives may also need to be full members of the Development Team. A non-exhaustive list of potential core team members and representatives at particular team meetings is attached as Appendix 1.

5.4 If the DTA is formed in response to a pre-application enquiry, as ought generally to be the case, then the Case Officer should inform the local member(s) of such an enquiry, confirming that the proposal is the subject of a DTA and that the local member(s) will be updated on the progress of the pre-application discussions at critical stages. This was a specific request from the Executive following its consideration of the Best Value Service Improvement Plan.

6.0 **Guidance on how the DTA will work in practice**

6.1 The following guidelines are suggested in operating a DTA:

- Pre-application enquiry/cold application received and, if potentially a DTA proposal, taking into account the criteria in para 3.1, then it is referred to PMT;
- Proposal considered by PMT (preferably with any initial information the applicant/agent is able to provide in the case of a pre-application enquiry, to have as wide an understanding as possible in order to make the decision);
- PMT decides whether the proposal merits a DTA and whether an internal "early warning" meeting is needed (for example with Policy to clarify the Council's policies on the site). These decisions should be noted on the PMT Meeting agenda to keep track of the number of DTA's and the outcome of any "early warning" meeting;
- PMT agrees the Case Officer and core members of the DT in consultation with Assistant Director (Planning) and the relevant Area Planning Officer. This ought to be the eventual Case Officer dealing with the application who needs to be sufficiently senior to make the decisions that will be required in dealing with the enquiry/application. Normally this would be the Area or Principal Planning Officers. However, a Lead Officer may be appointed who does not have to be the Case Officer, but in such instances the eventual Case Officer must be a full member of the Development Team;
- Case/Lead Officer arranges "early warning" meeting if appropriate. If major issues of policy or resourcing are involved this ought to include the AD(P);
- Case/Lead Officer contacts applicant/agent to advise of suitable DTA proposal and the core DTA members to attend an initial inclusive meeting with applicant/agent. Pre-meetings are often invaluable in exploring DT members positions so that the applicant/agent is given an agreed response at the meeting proper;
- At the initial meeting:
 - (i) The Case/Lead Officer will advise applicant/agent of the requirements and merits of a DTA approach (an explanatory leaflet,

including what is in it for them would be useful), of the core DT members, and of the other likely interested parties;

- (ii) The important issues that will need to be resolved will be identified, including the information that will be required to inform the design process in developing a solution for the site (e.g. type of contextual analysis, the need for a pre-determination archaeological evaluation, noise and contamination assessments);
 - (iii) A timescale for undertaking a series of pre-application meetings to develop the scheme, making time for other interested parties at particular meetings, will be set-out (usually arranged every two/three weeks following the initial meeting and prior to the submission of an application); and
 - (iv) A notional submission date for the application will be agreed, if desired by the applicant/agent (and this may depend on how responsive the applicant/agent is to supplying information), and a likely determination date(s) given;
- Case/Lead Officer ensures PMT kept up-to-date at critical stages in the project under the "Major Projects Update" slot on the agenda or at least on a monthly basis; and
 - Case/Lead Officer ensures relevant Councillor(s) (Chair/Vice Chair and local member(s)) are kept up-to-date at critical stages and after PMT have reviewed the progress;
 - Once an application has been submitted the Case/Lead Officer will advise the applicant/agent of the timetable for consideration of the application, including the target determination date(s). A provisional meeting should be arranged with the applicant/agent immediately after the consultation period has expired so that any new issues arising can be addressed within the timetable, or if not, to agree a revised timetable.

6.2 An explanatory leaflet that can be given to applicants/agents on the aims and objectives of the DTA, and how it will work in practice, is attached at Appendix 2.

Our ref GMM/CJP/FC15

22nd December 2005

Mr G Audley-Miller
Section Head (Environmental Planning & Conservation)
Vale of White Horse District Council
The Abbey House
Abingdon
OX14 3JE

Dear Mr Audley-Miller

GROVE DEVELOPMENT FORUM

I refer to your recent e-mail regarding the above matter, which was discussed at a recent meeting.

Please find below, for your consideration, the council's comments and questions regarding the establishment of the forum.

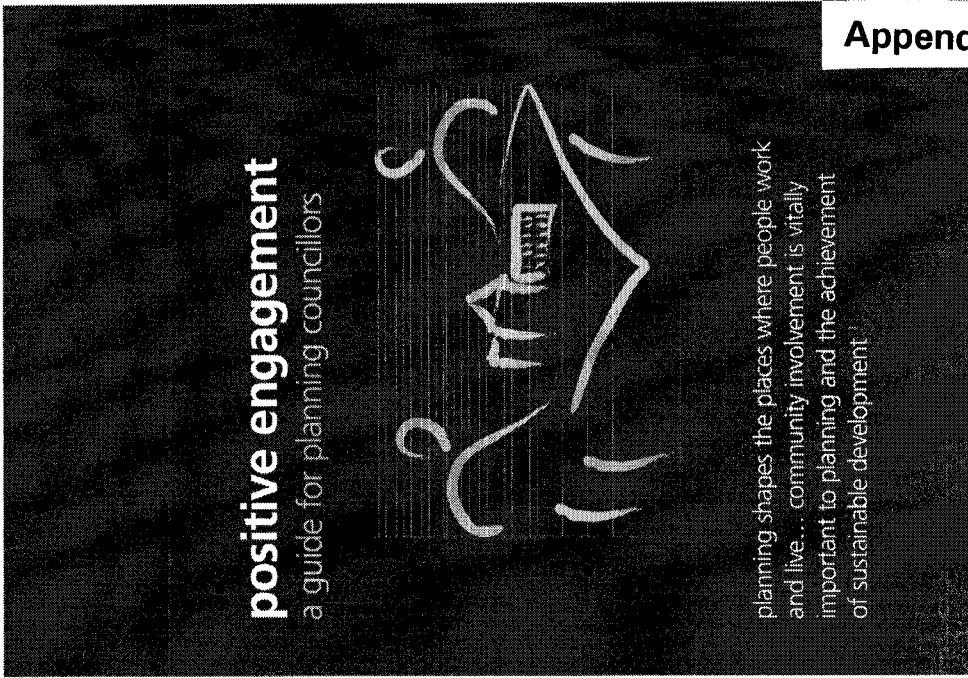
- *How much input would the forum have and how much would its views influence the district council?*
- *The parish council would require sight of the revised Supplementary Guidance Document before the first meeting of the forum.*
- *Evening meetings would be essential.*
- *Meetings should be open to the public.*
- *How many local groups would be involved, how would they be selected and how many from each group could sit on the forum?*
- *The forum should be a working forum.*
- *We do not believe that the meetings should be resource intensive.*
- *The views and recommendations of the forum should be seriously considered and not overlooked by the Vale or the developers simply because they do not suit them and if the forum's recommendations are dismissed then reasons should be given as to why.*
- *Clarification was needed as to what type of service provision was required although we will comment on this in January.*

The council has also asked that as a matter of courtesy we see a copy of the Inspector's report on the Local Plan prior to it being advertised in the press.

Thanking you in anticipation of your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

G M Mundy



planning shapes the places where people work and live... community involvement is vitally important to planning and the achievement of sustainable development



weblinks

ACSES - The Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors
www.acses.org.uk

The Standards Board for England
www.standardsboard.co.uk
enquiries@standardsboard.co.uk

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
www.odpm.gov.uk

Local Government Association
www.lga.gov.uk

Member Engagement in Planning Matters
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/publication.asp?section=08&cat=288&id=SYCD5F-A782ABF7>
this guide is produced by the LGA in association with Quarry Products Association and the Association of Council Secretaries and Solicitors (Jan 2005)

Probity in Planning (Update): The Role of Councillors and Officers
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/publication.asp?section=08&cat=288&id=SYXAB8F-A7807EC5>
an LGA update to the highly successful original guidance (published in 1997) on preparing a local code of good practice for those dealing with planning matters (February 2002) ISBN 1 84049 280 5

National Planning Forum
Pre-application advice for town and county planning:
National Planning Forum good practice note 2
one of a series of 'inspiring planning' good practice notes
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/publication.asp?section=08&cat=288&id=SYXD08B-A782E214>

Planning and Advisory Service
www.idea.gov.uk/pas

- 1 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- 2 The objectives for the reformed planning system are set out in PPS1



do not

- X meet developers alone or put yourself in a position where you appear to favour a person, company or group – even a 'friendly' private discussion with a developer could cause others to mistrust your impartiality
- X accept gifts or hospitality
- X expect to lobby and actively support or resist an application and still vote at committee (or even stay in the room during discussions)
- X seek to influence officers or put pressure on them to support a particular course of action in relation to a planning application
- X invent local guides on probity in planning which are incompatible with current guidance – look for commonly held and common sense parallels in other authorities or the principles set out in the national LGA guidance

This simple guide has been produced by a number of organisations who have shared interest in maximising the effectiveness of councillor involvement in planning. They include: LGA, ACSES, Standards Board for England, RTPI, PAS and ODPM.

positive engagement

a guide for planning councillors

A message from **Baroness Andrews OBE, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the ODPM** and **Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, Chair of the Local Government Association:**

The 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act marks a fundamental change to the current town and country planning system. Whilst there are important changes to the processes and procedures, of greater importance is the need for change in the way that we 'do' planning. The act will require all involved in planning to move away from an often adversarial, reactive and conflict based system to a more pro-active, inclusive and creative approach.

As a local councillor involved in planning matters, whether as a member of your authority's executive helping to draw up the spatial plan for your area, as a member of the planning committee deciding planning applications, or as a ward member, you have a crucial role to play in both making the new planning system work and ensuring the best possible outcomes for your community.

However, concerns are sometimes expressed about the compatibility of councillors meeting developers and interest groups and then taking decisions on an impartial basis. This leaflet is intended to summarise the principles that should be observed to enable you to both participate in and lead the system.



Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockart



Baroness Andrews

In broad terms, the success of the new system will depend on:

- establishing and taking forward a clear spatial vision for the area based on the community strategy
- effective dialogue between applicants, local authority, local people and other interests to help define and realise the vision
- ensuring that the spatial plan for an area embodies the aspirations of the community
- effective communication of policy between cabinet and planning committee
- focus on outcomes
- early and effective community engagement in discussions on plans and development proposals, in accordance with the authority's Statement of Community Involvement.

As a community leader and local representative you will want to be involved in public meetings and pre-application discussions. However, this may create some risks for councillors, particularly those who are members of the planning committee, and for the integrity of the decision making process. Guidance is set out in the LGA guides **Probity in Planning (update)** – **The Role of Councillors and Officers, and Members Engagement in Planning Matters** and from the Standards Board for England (see the weblinks at the end of this leaflet).

Councillors should involve themselves in discussions with developers, their constituents and others about planning matters. However, difficulties can be avoided if you follow these useful general hints:

do

- ✓ read the LGA guidance
- ✓ hold discussions before a planning application is made, not after it has been submitted to the authority
- ✓ preface any discussion with disclaimers; keep a note of meetings, and calls; and make clear at the outset that discussions are not binding
- ✓ recognise the distinction between giving advice and engaging in negotiation
- ✓ structure discussions and involve officers
- ✓ stick to policies included in adopted plans, but also pay heed to any other considerations relevant to planning
- ✓ use meetings to show leadership and vision
- ✓ encourage positive outcomes
- ✓ ask for training from your council in probity matters

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)
TO THE STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLANNING ADVISORY GROUP
23 JANUARY 2006

Draft Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has published a consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing. This and the good practice guides to be published alongside it (not all of which are currently available in draft form) will replace PPG3 and its updates, C6/98, Keith Hills parliamentary statement and the practice guides for housing need assessments, tapping the potential, managed release of housing sites and monitoring housing provision. The closing date for comments is the 27 February. Members will recall they considered an earlier consultation paper 'Planning for Housing' in August (SLAG) and September (Executive) last year.

1.2 The key sections of draft PPS3 are attached at Appendix 1 to this report for information. The full document and the draft practice guides can be viewed on the ODPM web site www.odpm.gov.uk. This report highlights the key areas which the Council could support and where objections and concerns should be raised. As the draft PPS is attached, no summary is contained in this report. The appendices to this report also contain comments on the draft practice guidance notes that were available when this report was written.

1.3 In summary officers consider the proposed PPS3

- moves from a plan-led system to one of responding to market demand;
- is contrary to the Government's objectives of ensuring sustainable development, community involvement in the planning process, prioritising the development of brownfield sites; the efficient and timely provision of infrastructure and securing the maximum amount of affordable housing through the planning system;
- lacks clarity and will significantly increase the complexity of the processes for preparing development plans with major resource implications.

1.4 The contact officer for this report is Katie Barrett Section Head (Planning Strategy) 01235 540339.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 *That the Advisory Group recommends the Executive to agree that the comments contained in paragraph 1.3 above, section 4 and Appendices 2 and 3 to this report be sent to the ODPM as the basis of this Council's comments on draft PPS3 and its associated draft guidance.*

3.0 Relationship to the Council's Vision, Aims and Policies

3.1 This report does not conflict with the Council's vision or aims. PPS3 will be important to the Council's policies, proposals and procedures for delivering affordable and market housing through the LDF and the development control process.

4.0 Comments on draft PPS3

Support for part of the draft PPS3

4.1 Officers consider that the following sections of the draft PPS should be supported:

- the ability to set targets for social-rented and intermediate housing (paragraphs 12j and 25) and the size and type of affordable housing required (paragraph 12k);
- the ability to allocate housing in villages solely for affordable housing together with a general policy enabling affordable housing in perpetuity on rural exception sites (paragraphs 32 and 33);
- the ability to set the size of site above which affordable housing will be sought below the indicative national minimum threshold of 15 dwellings (paragraph 26);
- the increased emphasis on the importance of design, particularly that a key consideration should be whether the development positively improves the character and environmental quality of an area and the way it functions (paragraphs 34-37). The introduction of design codes will help achieve a better quality of design on new developments but will have resource implications for local authorities;
- the definition of affordable housing which no longer includes low cost market housing.

Objections to the draft PPS3

4.2 **Objective:** Whilst the Council should accept the key objective that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home which they can afford, there is concern that this has been extended beyond the objective in PPG3 to include a reference to people having the opportunity of a home in a community where they want to live (paragraph 1). If carried to its logical conclusion this could involve significant development in Green Belts, AONBs or in small rural communities which are not sustainable locations for development in terms of minimising the need to travel by car. This would harm the very areas that people cherish most. The Government should not set objectives which conflict with its other planning guidance and statements.

4.3 **Additional areas of work:** Paragraph 4 refers to regional planning bodies coordinating a programme of sub-regional housing market assessments and sub-regional housing land availability assessments to be carried out by local planning authorities. When combined with the requirement for a brownfield strategy (paragraph 17), the other complex procedures for preparing development plans and the requirements of the SA/SEA regulations, this will have significant resource implications for the workload of local authorities and should be adequately funded from central government. The sub-regional housing market assessments, for example, which will be led by local stakeholders will be more time consuming on an individual authority's staff than the existing housing need assessments. (Members may be aware that a bid has been made to contribute £5,000 towards the Oxford sub regional housing market assessment which is being run as a pilot project partly funded by the Government.) The Vale is within three housing market areas defined in the Regional Housing Strategy (Oxford, Swindon and the M4 corridor) which will increase the workload on staff significantly. These areas do not co-incide with the Central Oxfordshire sub-regional policy area in the draft South East Plan: it is considered that a single set of sub-regions should apply for both planning and housing purposes if confusion and a multiplication of tasks are not to result. Due to timing it is difficult to see how housing market assessments will inform the regional planning body in the South East, where the draft Plan with housing figures to 2026 is due to be published for consultation this spring. Further comments on the practice guidance for housing market assessments are in Appendix 2 to this report.

4.4 **Meeting demand:** There are major concerns with paragraph 8(a) which states that regional planning bodies should plan to distribute housing provision so that demand and need are met within the sub-regional housing market area in which they are generated.

- i) Whilst the planning system should be informed by the housing market, draft PPS3 puts demand as the central consideration to be satisfied. This gives too much weight to the market led approach and too little weight to other considerations. It is not returning to the previous 'predict and provide' approach to housing land supply, but is introducing a 'demand and provide' approach to planning which is entirely at odds with a plan-led system delivering sustainable development.

- ii) Unless the Government injects significant additional funding for the provision of infrastructure and affordable housing for those on the lowest incomes, housing need and demand will not be met. The Government should not set requirements which local authorities, however well intentioned, will not be able to fulfil.
- iii) There are real concerns that theoretical predictions of demand over a 10 or 15 year period will not be robust and will not translate into actual demand in the future. This could lead to a significant over-provision of housing land which would depress the delivery of difficult but sustainable brownfield sites and would make it difficult to provide expensive infrastructure and services in a co-ordinated and planned manner.
- iv) The PPS should recognise that sub-regions may not be able to accommodate the needs and demands for new housing placed on them (eg London, towns in the Metropolitan Green Belt and areas with a limited environmental capacity) or that people choose to satisfy their housing requirements beyond their ideal location because of lower house prices (as recognised in the housing assessment practice guide – page 37)

4.5 **Areas of low demand:** The last sentence of paragraph 9, which refers to identifying the need for the renewal or replacement of the housing stock in low demand areas, is also applicable to high demand areas. The statement appears to accept that in areas of low demand nothing can be done to change that. Low demand can be a result of poor environment and infrastructure which could be improved by investment and steering development to areas in need of regeneration.

4.6 **Level of housing provision re-opened:** Major objection should be made to the last sentence of paragraph 10 which states that where there has been a significant long term change in the housing market since regional spatial strategies were prepared, local authorities may need to re-open the consideration of the level of housing provision for their area. The Government should ensure that regional spatial strategies are reviewed sufficiently regularly for long term changes not to have occurred. This sentence, if included in the final PPS, will be used by developers at many public examinations to justify the allocation of their specific sites. This will unnecessarily lengthen the preparation of local development frameworks, contrary to the Government's intention to speed up the planning process and will result in more cost to the public.

4.7 **Brownfield land:** The Council should support the statement in paragraph 15 that the priority for development is developable brownfield land. However, there are four major concerns with the way the draft PPS takes this forward.

- i) Paragraphs 12 (c+d) and 14 (which indicate that an allowance can only be made for brownfield windfall sites where it is not possible to identify a five year supply of housing land at the date of adoption and where sustainability appraisal indicates that allocating sufficient land would have unacceptable impacts) are not acceptable. Most of the provision of housing on brownfield sites occurs where the previous use ceases and redevelopment is achieved relatively rapidly. It is not possible or appropriate to identify them five or more years in advance. The draft proposals could lead to the unnecessary provision of greenfield sites which is likely to deter the redevelopment of brownfield sites, contrary to the Government's stated priority. The final sentence of paragraph 14 gives sufficient safeguards to ensure that any brownfield estimates are realistic.
- ii) The Council should object to the definition of brownfield land in Annex A because it omits the caveat that the guidance does not mean that the whole of the curtilage should be redeveloped. This has significant implications for sites on the edges of settlements and in rural areas. Although the second sentence of paragraph 36 refers to residential gardens as not necessarily being suitable for development, the same applies to commercial, community or military land. The caveat in the current PPG3 should therefore be carried forward into PPS3.

- iii) Paragraph 18 lays great emphasis on contributing to the Government's brownfield target (60% of housing development on brownfield land) but only passing reference is made to sustainability appraisals. Particularly with the omission of the sequential approach, which started with brownfield sites in urban areas, the PPS must make it clear that to be acceptable for development brownfield sites should be in sustainable locations and consistent with the development plan for the area.
 - iv) The proposed housing land availability assessments will give too much focus to greenfield sites and are likely to be judged more available, viable and developable than brownfield sites (see Appendix 3 to this report).
 - v) It is not clear what the brownfield strategies referred to in paragraph 17 are, what their status will be and whether further guidance will be published.
- 4.8 **Density:** Paragraph 12(h) and Annex C, which require local development frameworks to apply different densities across the plan area, should be clarified. It is not clear whether these are to be applied to new development sites or whether they will be used to promote infilling within established residential areas. The latter would not be acceptable as it would lead to intensification that cumulatively would harm the character of villages and low density areas on the edges of towns. The Council should object to definition of 'rural' in Annex C, footnote 4. Most of the Vale comprises villages and open countryside, it should not be excluded from the definition of rural simply because there are towns within 10km that cover more than 2km². For the purposes of the Annex the term rural should apply to villages and other small settlements.
- 4.9 **Car parking:** Paragraph 20, which requires local planning authorities to develop parking policies having regard to expected car ownership, conflicts with PPG13 paragraphs 49 and 52 which seek to restrict levels of car parking.
- 4.10 **Finance for affordable housing:** Paragraphs 24 and 27 refer to affordable housing targets being set according to informed assumptions about levels of finance available. It is impossible to do this in the short to medium term, let alone for 15 years ahead, because public sector finance changes rapidly. The overall target set in the LDF should take account of the need assessed in the housing market assessment, issues of housing mix and balanced communities, and other strategies referred to in paragraph 24 of the draft PPS. It is at the stage of negotiation on individual sites, not before, that account should be taken of the anticipated levels of public subsidy and developer contributions. If a low overall target is set on the assumption there will be no public sector subsidy available, there will be no incentive for developers to seek public subsidy and opportunities to achieve a higher proportion of affordable housing on those sites which are able to fund it will be lost. This will not achieve the Government's objective of securing the maximum amount of affordable housing through the planning system. A companion guide is to be published on the provision of affordable housing including an approach if the assumed level of finance is not available: as this has not been published yet no further comment can be made at this stage. Continued public investment will be needed to house those who are precluded from meeting their housing requirements because of low incomes and high property prices.
- 4.11 **Rural Communities:** Paragraphs 30 and 31 require local authorities to make sufficient land available to sustain rural communities. This is an ill defined and open ended requirement: if villages have the levels of development to bring a wide range of services and facilities, ie to make them sustainable communities, there would be no villages left and the face of rural areas would change out of recognition (for example sites totalling some 20 hectares at Kingston Bagpuize were proposed for inclusion in the local plan as they would 'sustain' the village community). This requirement should be deleted or the Government should clarify what it means.
- 4.12 **Considering planning applications:** The Council should object to paragraph 41 of the draft guidance which states that in advance of the relevant development plan documents being reviewed, local authorities should give favourable consideration to applications for housing development where there is an imbalance between demand and supply, subject to a limited

number of criteria. The criteria listed make no reference to general sustainability considerations or meeting the spatial strategies contained in the RSS, saved policies in Structure Plans or core strategy DPDs. This is a major shift away from the plan led system as evidence of demand can circumvent saved policies which are themselves based on a complex set of information including extensive public consultation and participation.

- 4.13 **Prematurity:** The Council should object to paragraph 42 as it proposes that Councils would no longer be able to refuse applications on the grounds that they would prejudice the review of site allocation development plan documents. This will encourage ad hoc applications and make it impossible to ensure that the most sustainable sites are developed. The proposal seems perverse as the Government has just set up a new system to deliver development plans more quickly, with public participation and sustainability at the heart of the process.
- 4.14 **Five year supply:** The third sentence of paragraph 48 should state that the five year supply of housing land should be maintained in accordance with the regional spatial strategy. As worded it appears as though the supply should be maintained in high demand areas to meet the strategy for the sub-regional housing market area irrespective of the provision being sought through the regional spatial strategy.
- 4.15 **Sequential approach:** The removal of the sequential approach to development, introduced by PPG3 as recently as March 2000, is regrettable as it set a clear approach to identifying land for housing in sustainable locations. It has worked well and should not be abandoned.

RODGER HOOD
Assistant Director (Planning)

TIM SADLER
Strategic Director

PART 2: Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

INTRODUCTION

Planning Policy Statements set out the Government's national policies on different aspects of planning in England. PPS3 sets out the national planning policy framework for delivering the Government's housing objectives. These complement, and should be read in conjunction with, other relevant statements of national planning policy (in particular Planning Policy Statement 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development*). This statement is accompanied by practice guidance and a companion guide².

The policies set out in this PPS and the accompanying guidance should be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of revisions to Regional Spatial Strategies, by the Mayor of London in relation to the Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development documents and may also be material to decisions on individual planning applications.

THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES

1. The Government's key objective for planning for housing is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live. To achieve this objective, the Government is seeking to:
 - (a) ensure that a wide choice of housing types is available, for both affordable and market housing, to meet the needs of all members of the community;
 - (b) deliver a better balance between housing demand and supply in every housing market and to improve affordability where necessary; and
 - (c) create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas. Developments should be attractive, safe and designed and built to a high quality. They should be located in areas with good access to jobs, key services and infrastructure.
2. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should aim to meet the Government's objectives in regional spatial strategies and local development documents, and through individual planning decisions. Sustainability appraisal³ should inform plan policies in order to ensure that housing is distributed and located in a way which contributes to sustainable development.

² PPS3 Practice Guidance and Companion Guide (forthcoming).

³ Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, sustainability appraisal is mandatory for regional spatial strategies and local development documents. Further details are set out in paragraphs 24-26 of PPS1.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES

3. Regional spatial strategies⁴ should set out the region's level of housing provision to reflect the national policy context and the region's circumstances, and should provide the framework for planning at the sub-regional housing market area and local levels. In preparing revisions to regional spatial strategies, regional planning bodies must have regard to the Government's objectives (see paragraph 1), and should have regard to the region's other strategies, in particular housing, economic and transport strategies. They should prepare the regional spatial strategy working collaboratively with regional stakeholders, local planning authorities and local communities.
4. Regional planning bodies should also work in collaboration with regional stakeholders, local planning authorities and local communities to develop consistent evidence bases to underpin all of the region's strategies. In particular, they should co-ordinate a programme of sub-regional housing market and housing land availability assessments to be carried out by local planning authorities (see Annex B), to ensure that the assessments make timely inputs into the revision of regional spatial strategies, as well as achieving consistency of approach.
5. Regional spatial strategies should set out:
 - (a) the level of housing provision for the region for 15 to 20 years, expressed as net additional dwellings (and gross if appropriate);
 - (b) the sub-regional housing market areas and identify which local planning authorities these include;
 - (c) for each sub-regional housing market area and each local planning authority within the market area, the level of housing provision, expressed as net additional dwellings (and gross if appropriate) for the plan period;
 - (d) the approach for each sub-regional housing market area, which reflects the particular market circumstances of the sub-region, including any arrangements for managing release of land between local planning authorities within the market area;
 - (e) the region's brownfield target (see Annex A);
 - (f) the region's density target and/or the region's density range/s;
 - (g) where appropriate, the region's approach to meeting affordable housing needs, including the affordable housing target for the region and for each sub-regional housing market area. Such targets should be consistent with delivering the region's level of housing provision;

⁴ The regional spatial strategy is prepared by the regional planning body and is approved by the First Secretary of State. In London, the spatial development strategy prepared by the Mayor is the equivalent of the regional spatial strategy.

- (h) the region's approach to achieving an appropriate mix of household types to meet need and demand; and
 - (i) the region's approach to meeting rural housing and rural affordable housing needs.
6. Regional spatial strategies should also set out the region's approach to provision for Gypsies and Travellers. Guidance on planning for Gypsy and Traveller provision will be set out in the forthcoming Planning Circular *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*.

DETERMINING THE REGIONAL LEVEL OF HOUSING PROVISION AND ITS DISTRIBUTION

7. In determining the region's level of housing provision and its distribution, regional planning bodies should undertake a sustainability appraisal and take into account:
- (a) the Government's overall ambition for affordability;
 - (b) the Government's latest published household projections and the needs of the regional economy, having regard to economic growth forecasts;
 - (c) advice from the proposed National Advice Unit on the impact of the proposals for affordability in the region;
 - (d) the sub-regional housing market assessments (see Annex B);
 - (e) the sub-regional housing land availability assessments (see Annex B);
 - (f) the environmental, social and economic implications of development; and
 - (g) the impact of development upon existing or planned infrastructure.
8. In arriving at the proposed distribution of housing provision, regional planning bodies should:
- (a) plan to distribute housing provision so that housing need and demand are met within the sub-regional housing market area in which they are generated, unless there is very clear evidence that this is not possible, having regard to criteria 7e), 7f) and 7g) above; and
 - (b) having tested various options using sustainability appraisal, make decisions about the level and distribution of housing provision in both urban and rural areas, and between sub-regional housing markets areas.

9. Regional spatial strategies should address the nature and characteristics of the sub-regional housing market areas, in terms of demand and affordability, and particular circumstances within the market area that would influence the distribution of housing, the development of plan policies and planning decisions. In sub-regional housing market areas where demand is high, regional planning bodies should aim to increase housing supply by exploring and identifying growth areas⁵, growth points⁶, new freestanding settlements and major urban extensions as necessary and appropriate. In sub-regional housing market areas where demand is low, regional planning bodies should identify the need for the renewal or replacement of the housing stock.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

10. Local development frameworks should set out a strategy for housing provision within the context of the relevant sub-regional housing market area. This strategy must be in general conformity with, and aim to meet the objectives of, the regional spatial strategy. Where there has been a significant long-term change in housing market circumstances since the preparation of the regional spatial strategy, local planning authorities will need to re-open the consideration of the level of housing provision for their area.
11. When preparing development plan documents relating to housing, local planning authorities should:
- (a) have regard to local strategies, in particular local housing strategies, local homelessness strategies, community strategies, local economic strategies, the local transport plan, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and any local greening or design strategy;
 - (b) develop an evidence base that underpins all local strategies, and sub-regional strategies where relevant; and
 - (c) work in partnership with local stakeholders and local communities.
12. Local development frameworks should:
- (a) set out the level of housing provision for the plan period in accordance with the Regional Spatial Strategy;
 - (b) set out the housing trajectory (see Planning Policy Statement 12) to meet the level of housing provision over the plan period;
 - (c) allocate sufficient land and buildings for housing or mixed use development to deliver the first five years of the housing trajectory, taking into account a windfall allowance only where it is not possible to allocate sufficient land;
 - (d) for the following 10 years of the housing trajectory, allocate land wherever possible. Where it is not possible to allocate specific land, broad areas of land for future growth should be indicated in the core strategy;

⁵ 'Sustainable communities: building for the future' ODPM, 2003.

⁶ 'The Government's response to Kate Barker's Review of Housing Supply' ODPM, 2005.

- (e) set out any arrangements for managing the release of land within the relevant sub-regional housing market area in accordance with the regional spatial strategy;
- (f) set out the level of housing provision expected on sites allocated for housing, or as part of mixed-use developments;
- (g) set out the local strategy for bringing forward and developing brownfield sites, including a target for brownfield development over the plan period;
- (h) set out the density ranges that will apply across the plan area;
- (i) set out the balance between different household types to be provided for across the plan area, and, where necessary to achieve mixed communities, the circumstances or broad locations in which this balance may be different;
- (j) where there is a need for affordable housing, set out the affordable housing provision target as a number or proportion of the overall level of housing provision, and, where appropriate, targets for social-rented and intermediate housing;
- (k) where there is a need for affordable housing, set out the amount of affordable housing that will be sought on sites above the relevant site-size threshold and the size and type of affordable housing required;
- (l) set out the approach to meeting rural housing and rural affordable housing needs; and
- (m) set out policies to address the particular accommodation needs and demands of specific groups. Guidance on planning for Gypsy and Traveller provision will be set out in the forthcoming Planning Circular *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites*.

ALLOCATING AND RELEASING LAND FOR HOUSING

13. Site allocation development plan documents should always include at least five years supply of land for development from the date they are adopted. The five year supply should be allocated land that is developable, taking account of a windfall allowance where this is appropriate (see paragraph 14). To be considered developable, a site should meet the following criteria:
- (a) available – the site is available now or is likely to become available for housing development and be capable of being developed within five years. This means five years from the date of adoption of the site allocation development plan document;
 - (b) suitable – the site offers a sustainable option for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable urban and rural communities; and
 - (c) viable – housing development is economically viable on the site.

14. Where it is not possible to allocate sufficient land, local planning authorities should make an allowance for brownfield windfalls only where the particular local circumstances justify it and where sustainability appraisal indicates that allocating sufficient land would have unacceptable impacts. Any such brownfield windfall allowance should be realistic and determined having regard to the sub-regional housing land availability assessment, and evidence of past trends in windfall coming forward for development and to the likely future rate of implementation.
15. In determining which sites to include in the five year land supply, local planning authorities should have regard to the sustainability appraisal of the site allocation development plan document. The priority for development is developable brownfield land. Local planning authorities should review all their non-housing allocations when preparing or reviewing their site allocation development plan document and consider whether some of this land might be more appropriately used for housing or mixed use development.
16. In general, local planning authorities should not phase land within the five year land supply, except where local circumstances require it for example in sub-regional housing market areas where demand is weak or the market failing and market pressures need to be managed in order to ensure that market failure is not exacerbated, or in sub-regional housing market areas where demand is high, where sustainability appraisal suggests that growth above planned levels would have unacceptable impacts. They may however set out the anticipated phasing of land beyond the five year land supply. If they choose to do this, the priority for development should be brownfield land. Annex D provides examples, solely for illustrative purposes, of the approach that local planning authorities could take to allocations and phasing in a variety of housing market circumstances and the companion guide provides further advice.

EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

17. Local planning authorities, working with development partners, should seek to ensure the redevelopment of brownfield land, by developing a brownfield strategy aimed at identifying and removing constraints to its development. Local planning authorities should make full use of their compulsory purchase powers and work with key stakeholders, such as relevant public sector agencies and private sector partners, to bring forward brownfield sites for development.
18. The national target is that by 2008, at least 60% of additional housing should be provided on brownfield land (see Annex A). Regional planning bodies should set brownfield targets to be met over the plan period, that contribute to meeting the national target and local planning authorities should set brownfield targets to be met over the plan period, that contributes to meeting the regional target. In determining the regional brownfield targets and in developing local brownfield strategies, including targets which reflect local circumstances, regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should have regard to sub-regional housing land availability assessments and relevant sustainability appraisals.

19. Local planning authorities should develop density policies for their plan area with local stakeholders and local communities, having regard to: the approach set out in Annex C; the need for additional housing; the need to use land efficiently; the impact on service provision and public spaces; the importance of promoting good design; the importance of resource efficiency; the minimisation of environmental impacts; and the desirability of maintaining the character of particular residential areas or environments. The presumption is that in developing density policies, the minimum density should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare.
20. Local planning authorities should develop parking policies for their plan area with local stakeholders and local communities having regard to expected car ownership for planned housing in different locations, the efficient use of land and the importance of promoting good design.

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

21. Local planning authorities should have regard to the relevant sub-regional housing market assessment and the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Local Housing Strategy in determining the overall balance between different household types to be provided for across the plan area, to ensure that housing provision is made for example for family, single person and multi-person households. In planning at site level, it is important that a broad mix of housing suitable for different household types is provided for on larger sites. For smaller sites, the mix of housing should contribute to the creation of mixed communities.
22. It is for local planning authorities to set out their definition of a large site reflecting local circumstances. This should take into account evidence from the sub-regional housing land availability assessment on the size of sites expected to be available for housing, the mix of existing housing across the plan area, the density of housing expected, and evidence from the sub-regional housing market assessment on the mix of households anticipated.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

23. The Government defines affordable housing as including social-rented and intermediate housing (see Annex A). Sub-regional housing market assessments should help determine whether affordable housing is needed and guide the level, size, type and location of affordable housing provision, either through new provision or as replacement provision.

24. In determining the overall target for affordable housing provision, local planning authorities should have regard to the relevant sub-regional housing market assessments, the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy, Regional Homelessness Strategy (where one exists), Local Housing Strategy and Community Strategy. The target should take account of the anticipated levels of finance available for affordable housing, including public subsidy (based on priorities set out in the Regional Housing Strategy and discussions with the Housing Corporation), and the level of developer contribution that can realistically be sought on relevant sites (see paragraph 27).
25. Separate targets should be set for social-rented and intermediate housing where appropriate. A sufficient supply of intermediate housing can help meet the needs of key workers and those seeking to gain a first step on the housing ladder, reduce the call on social-rented housing, free up existing social-rented homes, provide wider choice for households and ensure that sites have a balanced mix of tenures. Local planning authorities should aim to ensure that the provision of affordable housing meets the needs of both current and future occupiers.
26. Local planning authorities should set a minimum site-size threshold, expressed as numbers of homes or area, above which affordable housing will be sought. The indicative national minimum threshold is 15 dwellings, but local planning authorities may set a different threshold or series of thresholds where this can be justified. In determining the minimum site-size threshold (and any higher thresholds), local planning authorities will need to take into account the level of affordable housing to be sought, site viability, the impact on the delivery of housing provision, and the objective of creating mixed and sustainable communities.
27. Local planning authorities should balance the need for affordable housing against the viability of sites in their area. This will involve having regard to the implications of competing land uses and making informed assumptions about the levels of finance available for affordable housing. Local planning authorities should aim to manage the risks in terms of delivery to ensure they achieve their affordable housing targets. The companion guide sets out an approach that local planning authorities may use if the assumed level of finance available for affordable housing is not forthcoming and provides examples of innovative ways of delivering affordable housing where this is the case or to supplement the delivery of affordable housing.
28. The presumption is that affordable housing should be provided on the application site so that it contributes towards achieving the objective of creating more mixed communities and avoids creating concentrations of deprivation. However, local development documents may set out the circumstances in which provision would not be required on an application site or in which a financial contribution would be acceptable in lieu. In such instances, any off-site provision of affordable housing, or a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision, must be of a broadly equivalent value and should contribute towards the plan objectives for mixed communities.

29. Advice on setting affordable housing targets, setting thresholds, the use of planning conditions and planning obligations, and ensuring affordable housing provided meets the needs of both current and future occupiers, is set out in the companion guide.

RURAL HOUSING

30. Local planning authorities should make sufficient land available either within or adjoining market towns or villages, for both affordable and market housing, in order to sustain rural communities. In determining the approach to planning for housing and affordable housing in rural communities, local planning authorities should have regard to the relevant sub-regional housing market and land availability assessments, the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and Local Housing Strategy.
31. The focus for significant development should be market towns or local service centres that are well served by public transport and other facilities. Development may be provided for in villages and other small rural communities where needed to contribute to their sustainability. The priority for development is developable brownfield land, but where this is either insufficient or not available developable greenfield may need to be used.
32. Local development documents should set out the approach to planning for affordable housing in rural communities that contributes to the creation of mixed and sustainable rural communities. This could include, for example, a lower site-size threshold or a higher proportion of affordable housing than that which applies for the rest of the plan area, or the allocation of small sites solely for affordable housing in larger villages or market towns (other than those provided for by the rural exception site policy – see paragraph 33).
33. In addition, all local planning authorities that have small rural communities⁷ should include a rural exception site policy in relevant development plan documents that applies to all these communities within their area. This policy enables local planning authorities to allocate or release small sites within and adjoining existing small rural communities, which may be subject to policies of restraint (such as Green Belt), and would not be released for market housing. Development plan documents should set out the criteria against which sites not allocated in the development plan will be considered. Rural exception sites should only be released for affordable housing in perpetuity. Local planning authorities should consider, in applying the rural exception policy, the need to meet the needs of the rural economy, and in particular the needs of households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection, in order that rural communities remain sustainable, mixed, inclusive and cohesive.

⁷ Small rural settlements have been designated for enfranchisement and right to acquire purposes (under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1996) by S.I. 1997/620 – 25 inclusive and 1999/1307.

DESIGNING FOR QUALITY

34. Local planning authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type of residential environments they wish to see and develop plans and policies aimed at:
- (a) creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity, and positively improve local character; and
 - (b) which promote designs and layouts that are inclusive, safe, take account of public health, crime prevention⁸ and community safety, ensure adequate natural surveillance and make space for water where there is flood risk.
35. Detailed design guidance such as urban design guidelines, design codes⁹, detailed masterplans or site briefs can help to improve the quality and value of residential development and, once in place, can accelerate the development control process. A design code may be developed for specific allocated sites or areas indicated for development in the core strategy. Local planning authorities should set out in policies in their plan where design codes would apply and should justify their decision to apply codes. Forthcoming practice guidance will provide advice on the preparation and use of design codes, including the circumstances in which particular approaches might be suitable.
36. The approach to smaller developments, such as the conversion and redevelopment of existing housing and gardens should be developed as part of the wider strategy/policies for individual neighbourhoods and contribute to achieving the goals set out in paragraph 34. Although residential gardens are defined as brownfield land, this does not necessarily mean that they are suitable for development. However, in determining the policy approach, local planning authorities will need to have regard to the positive contribution that intensification can make, for example, in terms of minimising the pressure on greenfield sites.
37. New development should be of high quality inclusive design and layout (consistent with Planning Policy Statement 1), and be informed by its wider context, having regard not just to neighbouring buildings but to the townscape and landscape of the wider locality. This does not mean that new development should replicate its surroundings. The key consideration should be whether a development positively improves the character and environmental quality of an area and the way it functions.

⁸ See 'Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention' ODPM, 2004.

⁹ See 'The Future for Design Coding' ODPM, 2005.

GREENING THE RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT

38. Housing development should be based on thorough landscape and ecological survey and appraisal. Dominant landscape or ecological features should lead the design of the layout and care should be taken to allow scope for retention or re-establishment of the biodiversity within residential environments¹⁰. The residents of new dwellings should have easy access to sufficient open space (including play space) of good quality, either through additions to or improvements of the local open space network¹¹.
39. Local planning authorities should encourage applicants to apply principles of sustainable and environmentally-friendly design and construction to new developments¹². Local planning authorities should in particular encourage applicants to apply the *Code for Sustainable Homes*¹³ for strategic sites that deliver a large number of new homes to improve resource efficiency and give purchasers and tenants information on the running costs and sustainability of their new home.

MANAGING DELIVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

40. Local planning authorities and applicants should positively engage in pre-application discussions. This will help to ensure that housing proposals, particularly on larger sites, are well-designed and provide an appropriate mix of housing.
41. When considering planning applications for housing which are received in advance of the relevant development plan document being reviewed (particularly the first development plan document), local planning authorities should take into account the policies in this statement as material considerations, as they may carry greater weight than the relevant policies in the development plan. In these circumstances or for sites not allocated in the development plan, local planning authorities should consider favourably planning applications for housing development:
 - (a) where there is evidence of an imbalance between housing demand and supply, having regard to affordability issues and housing market conditions;
 - (b) if the site is suitable for housing development (including land allocated or previously used for industrial or commercial use, which is no longer needed for that use¹⁴); and
 - (c) the planning proposal makes an efficient use of land, offers a good housing mix, is of high quality design and does not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.

¹⁰ See 'Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' ODPM, 2004.

¹¹ See 'Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation' ODPM, 2002.

¹² For further advice see 'The Planning response to Climate Change' ODPM, 2004, 'Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy' ODPM, 2004, and 'Planning for Renewable Energy: A Companion Guide to PPS22' ODPM, 2004.

¹³ See 'Code for Sustainable Homes' ODPM, 2005.

¹⁴ As demonstrated by an up-to-date review of employment land. See 'Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note' ODPM, 2004.

42. Local planning authorities should not refuse applications for planning permission simply on the grounds that the preparation or review of site allocation development plan documents would be prejudiced. However, local planning authorities should not grant applications for planning permission where it can be shown that to do so would clearly discourage the development of allocated developable brownfield sites.
43. Regional planning bodies and local planning authorities must provide information on housing policy and performance¹⁵ and should produce housing trajectories demonstrating how policies will deliver housing in their areas. Housing trajectories should then be annually updated as part of the annual monitoring report¹⁶ to demonstrate progress compared with the targeted level of housing provision.
44. As part of the preparation of annual monitoring reports, local planning authorities should monitor housing permissions, starts and completions on land allocated for housing and windfalls against changes in their local circumstances, including the housing market. Further guidance on the need for monitoring, particularly in respect to housing markets, is set out in the companion guide.
45. As part of preparing annual monitoring reports, local planning authorities should work collaboratively within sub-regional housing market areas to consider whether they are collectively delivering compared to the level of housing provision for the housing market area. This will help ensure local planning authorities develop a joined up approach where actions are required to ensure delivery.
46. Where policies are not delivering the housing trajectory, the annual monitoring report should set out what actions are required to ensure the delivery of the level of housing provision, including affordable housing targets.
47. For local planning authorities, these actions could include:
 - (a) identifying and removing barriers to the delivery of sites allocated for release in the five year land supply;
 - (b) review any evidence to determine whether there has been a long term change in housing market circumstances in the local planning authority area and in the sub-regional housing market area;
 - (c) working in sub-regional housing market areas, in line with any arrangements set out in the regional spatial strategy, release land in the market area;
 - (d) review the phasing of existing housing allocations, for example by proposing a new or amendments to an existing supplementary planning document; and/or
 - (e) allocate new developable land for housing, including the allocation of specific sites within the broad areas indicated for development in the core strategy, through an update to the site allocation development plan document.

¹⁵ Regulation 48 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires local development documents to include information on housing policy and performance, particularly in terms of net additional dwellings.

¹⁶ Further details regarding the production of annual monitoring reports and housing trajectories are set out in PPS11, PPS12, 'Creating LDFs' and the 'LDF monitoring good practice guide'.

48. It will be necessary to review plans well in advance of allocations being developed in order to ensure that future development reflects good planning and assessment of options against sustainability criteria. Where there is continued market pressure for development, local planning authorities will need to regularly roll forward (review and update) allocations, the priority being to bring forward brownfield development. The aim should be to maintain a five year land supply, taking account of the strategy for the sub-regional housing market area, relevant local circumstances and the evidence of interdependencies between different areas within the sub-regional housing market. Annex D provides examples, solely for illustrative purposes, of when it is appropriate to update the five year land supply in different housing market circumstances.

CANCELLATION OF POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE

49. The following is hereby cancelled (**only when final PPS3 is published**):
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: *Housing* (2000)
 - Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing Update *Supporting the Delivery of New Housing* (2005)
 - Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing Update *Planning for Sustainable Communities in Rural Areas* (2005)
 - Circular 6/98: *Planning and Affordable Housing* (1998)
 - Keith Hill's Parliamentary Statement *Planning for Housing* (2003)
 - *Local Housing Needs Assessment: A Guide to Good Practice* (2000)
 - *Tapping the Potential: Assessing Urban Housing Capacity: Towards Better Practice* (2000)
 - *Planning to Deliver: The Managed Release of Housing Sites: Towards Better Practice* (2001)
 - *Monitoring Provision of Housing through the Planning System: Towards Better Practice* (2000)

Annex A: Definitions

Brownfield land, also known as previously-developed land

1. Previously-developed land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings), and associated fixed surface infrastructure^a. The definition covers the curtilage of the developed land^b. Previously-developed land may occur in both built-up and rural settings. The definition includes defence buildings and land used for mineral extraction and waste disposal^c where provision for restoration has not been made through development control procedures^d.
2. The definition excludes land and buildings either actively or previously used for agricultural or forestry purposes, and land in built-up areas which has not been developed previously (e.g. parks, recreation grounds, and allotments – even though these areas may contain certain urban features such as paths, pavilions and other buildings). Also excluded is land that was previously-developed but where either the remains of any structure or activity have blended into the landscape in the process of time (to the extent that it can reasonably be considered as part of the natural surroundings) or there is a clear reason that could outweigh the re-use of the site – such as its contribution to nature conservation – or it has subsequently been put to an amenity use and cannot be regarded as requiring redevelopment^e.

Footnotes

- (a) Urban land uses as defined within the ODPM's Land-Use Change Statistics Guidance (excluding 'urban land not previously developed'). This Guidance is available at www.odpm.gov.uk.
- (b) The definition of curtilage is subject to the interpretation of the Courts and regard should be had to case law. All of the land within the curtilage of the developed land will also be defined as previously-developed.
- (c) These land uses are in addition to the Land-Use Change Statistics 'urban' groups.
- (d) This relates to former minerals and waste sites where:
 - an extant planning permission included a valid restoration condition, the intention of which was to restore the site for the purposes of a 'hard' after use. In such cases the site will be considered to be previously-developed land; or
 - an extant planning permission included a valid restoration condition, the intention of which was to restore the site for the purposes of a 'soft' after use, the site will be considered to be 'greenfield'.
- (e) The definition does not supersede or in any way change the policy in respect of the redevelopment of major developed sites in the Green Belt set out in Annex C to Planning Policy Guidance note 2: *Green Belts*.

Net site area

3. Net site area includes only those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses, including:
 - access roads within the site;
 - private garden space;
 - car parking areas;
 - incidental open space and landscaping; and
 - local children’s play areas where these are to be provided.
4. Gross site area includes those areas which will be developed for housing and directly associated uses and:
 - major distributor roads;
 - primary schools;
 - open spaces (including children’s play areas) that serve a wider area; and
 - significant landscape features such as buffer strips.

Housing Demand

5. The quantity of housing that households are willing and able to buy or rent.

Housing Need

6. Households who are unable to access suitable housing without some financial assistance.

Market housing

7. Private housing for rent or for sale, where price is set in the open market.

Affordable housing

8. Non-market housing, provided to those whose needs are not met by the market for example homeless persons and key workers. It can include social-rented housing and intermediate housing. Affordable housing should:
 - meet the needs of eligible households, including availability at low enough cost for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices; and
 - include provision for the home to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or if a home ceases to be affordable, any subsidy should generally be recycled for additional affordable housing provision.
9. Further information is available in the companion guide.

Social-rented housing

10. Rented housing owned by local authorities and registered social landlords for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime, set out in the '*Guide to Social Rent Reforms*' published in March 2001.
11. Also rented housing owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or funded with grant from the Housing Corporation, as provided for in the Housing Act 2004.

Intermediate housing

12. Housing at prices or rents above those of social-rent but below market prices or rents. This can include shared equity products (for example HomeBuy) and intermediate rent (i.e. rents above social-rented level but below market rents). Intermediate housing differs from low cost market housing (which Government does not consider to be affordable housing – see definition of affordable housing above).

Key worker

13. The Government's definition of key workers only includes those groups eligible for the Housing Corporation funded Key Worker Living programme and others employed within the public sector (i.e. outside of this programme) identified by the Regional Housing Board for assistance. Further details are provided on the ODPM website at www.odpm.gov.uk.

Sub-regional housing market areas

14. Geographical areas within which there are clear links between where people live and work. These areas can be defined by the patterns of household movement. These patterns are influenced by factors such as proximity to family, friends, employment, education and other facilities, and are likely to operate across local planning authority boundaries.

Annex B: Sub-Regional Housing Market and Housing Land Availability Assessments

1. Housing market and land availability assessments are an important part of the policy process. They provide information on the level of need and demand for housing and the opportunities that exist to meet it. They are therefore critical for local planning authorities and regional planning bodies in their role to balance the demand and supply of housing.
2. It is important that assessments are prepared in collaboration with stakeholders. Where two or more local planning authorities form a sub-regional housing market area, local planning authorities should work together either by preparing joint assessments or by ensuring consistency in methodology.
3. The practice guidance accompanying this statement provides a detailed methodology for carrying out these assessments. The key outputs are set out below.
4. A sub-regional housing market assessment should:
 - estimate housing need and demand in terms of affordable and market housing;
 - determine how the distribution of need and demand varies across the plan area, for example between the urban and rural areas; and
 - identify the particular accommodation needs and demands of specific groups, such as key workers, homeless households, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, first time buyers, students, disabled people, older people and Gypsies and Travellers.¹⁷
5. A sub-regional housing land availability assessment should:
 - assess the level of unimplemented permissions and their likelihood of being brought forward to completion in the plan period, net change to the housing stock for proposals for the redevelopment of existing housing estates, and the outstanding level of housing provision on sites currently under-construction;
 - assess land availability by identifying buildings or areas of land (including brownfield and greenfield) that have development potential for housing or mixed use development (with a housing component);
 - assess the level of housing provision of identified land;
 - evaluate past trends in windfall brownfield land coming forward for development and estimate the likely future implementation rate, including for greenfield windfall in the case of rural exception sites only;

¹⁷ Required by s225 of the Housing Act 2004.

- assess developability by identifying constraints that might make the site **unavailable** and/or **unviable** for development;
- identify sustainability issues and physical constraints that might make the site **unsuitable** for development; and
- identify interventions that could be made to overcome constraints on particular sites.

Annex C: Density

1. In determining appropriate approaches to density at the regional and local level, regional planning bodies and local planning authorities should have regard to the indicative density ranges for specific types of location set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicative density ranges

	Location			
	City Centre ¹	Urban ²	Suburban ³	Rural ⁴
Density range (dwellings per hectare)	Above 70	40-75	35-55	30-40

Footnotes to Table 1:

¹ Where the predominant area lies within the central area of a city, as defined by the 2001 Census, or is part of the central area of a regional centre which serves a wide catchment. In London, parts of the whole of the Boroughs of Camden, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham, Greenwich, Haringey, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster form part of areas which are considered to have the characteristics of a city centre.

² Areas which are generally denser than more suburban areas and comprise a mix of residential and employment areas.

³ Areas of medium housing density which are predominantly residential in character.

⁴ Areas where there are no 'towns' and which are generally more than 10 km from an 'urban centre'. For purposes of this Annex, 'urban centre' means a settlement which exceeds 2 km² in geographical extent and 'town' means a settlement which exceeds 1 km² in geographical extent.

2. Local planning authorities should work with local stakeholders and local communities to set appropriate density ranges for specific types of location having regard to the indicative density matrix and to the approach to density set out in the regional spatial strategy.
3. The choice of appropriate levels of density for an area should be informed by:
 - an assessment of the characteristics of an area, including the mix of uses;
 - location and level of public transport accessibility;
 - the need to use land efficiently;
 - the importance of promoting high quality design;
 - the broader spatial strategy and vision for the future development of their area, in particular the need for housing and the housing plans and policies;
 - the level of service provision and public spaces; and
 - resource efficiency and the minimisation of environmental impacts.

4. Densities should be expressed as net residential density in dwellings per hectare (dph) and should be expressed as a range. The bottom of the range should act as a minima. Local planning authorities may set ranges below those set out in Table 1, and where they wish to do so this should be clearly justified. The presumption is that the minimum density should be no less than 30 dwellings per hectare. It will not generally be appropriate for local planning authorities to have one broad density range covering the whole of their plan area.

Annex D: Illustrative approaches to managing delivery in different types of sub-regional housing market area

Level of demand	Constraints (limiting factors)	Level of growth (set out in RSS)	Policy on delivery of the level of housing provision over the plan period for the sub-regional housing market area and local planning authorities within each area – to be set out in RSS and LDF	When should the five year supply be updated, for example if the five year land supply is developed much quicker than expected?	How might the local planning authority consider planning applications on an unallocated site, before an update has been published (subject to all other material considerations)?
A High, affordability poor	Limited	High	Expected to deliver at a flexible rate over the plan period Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase in years 6 – 15	Monitored at least annually. In practice updated: – every 2-3 years if this requires a new site allocation development plan document; or – every 1-2 years if proposing or making amendments to an existing supplementary planning document.	Normally consider favourably
B High, affordability poor	Infrastructure constraints e.g. dependent on delivery of strategic infrastructure	High	Expected to deliver at a flexible rate, but rate will depend on infrastructure constraints Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase in years 6 – 15	As A	Decision should take into account impact on infrastructure
C High, affordability poor	Environmental constraints e.g. environmental designations	Medium – High	Expected to deliver at a flexible rate, but rate will depend on environmental constraints Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase provision for the plan period (years 1 – 15) Option for arrangements managing the release of land between local planning authorities within the sub-regional housing market area	Option as A Option in accordance with phasing policy	Decision should take into account impact on the environment
D Medium	Mix	Medium	Expected to deliver at a flexible rate, but rate will depend on environmental constraints Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase provision for the plan period (years 1 – 15) Option for arrangements managing the release of land between local planning authorities within the sub-regional housing market area	Option as A Option in accordance with phasing policy Option in response to long term changes in the housing market	Decision should take into account any constraints

Annex D: Illustrative approaches to managing delivery in different types of sub-regional housing market area (continued)

Level of demand	Constraints (limiting factors)	Level of growth (set out in RSS)	Policy on delivery of the level of housing provision over the plan period for the sub-regional housing market area and local planning authorities within each area – to be set out in RSS and LDF	When should the five year supply be updated, for example if the five year land supply is developed much quicker than expected?	How might the local planning authority consider planning applications on an unallocated site, before an update has been published (subject to all other material considerations)?
E Mixed, high and low	Combination of high and low demand within market area	Medium- Low	Expected to deliver a managed rate over the plan period Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase provision for the plan period (years 1 – 15) Option for arrangements managing the release of land between local planning authorities within the sub-regional housing market area Option to adjust the rate of development for individual local planning authorities, if evidence suggests that there has been a long term change in housing market circumstances and a higher or lower rate would not impact adversely on other local planning authorities within the housing market area	Option in accordance with phasing policy Option in response to long term changes in the housing market	Decision should take into account impact on regeneration initiatives
F Low, but improving	Level of housing provision currently low	Low	Expected to deliver a managed rate over the plan period Expected to allocate for 5 – 15 years Option to phase provision for the plan period (years 1 – 15) Option for arrangements managing the release of land between local planning authorities within the sub-regional housing market area Option to adjust the rate of development for individual local planning authorities, if evidence suggests that housing market circumstances have changed	As E	Decision should take into account housing market circumstances
G Low	Market failure	Renewal	As E	As E	As F

Comments on the Draft Practice Guidance on Housing Market Assessments

It is considered that the approaches contained in the Guide will not produce a statistically valid market assessment for the reasons set out below:

- The guidance does not contain any information on how housing markets will be defined in terms of their size;
- The housing markets are to be defined within the Regional Spatial Strategy at the sub-regional level but there is no justification for the sub regional level being the correct level;
- There is no mention of any overlap between markets which was expected in the research referred to in the earlier consultation on housing markets;
- Information is to be sought on a wide variety of matters but much of the information sources cannot be disaggregated below the District/Borough level. To match housing market boundaries such disaggregation will be essential so a large amount of estimation will be needed which will mean the figures are not statistically valid;
- The process will depend on a partnership being established for each market area to develop the assessments. Such an approach is unlikely to produce agreement on such matters as levels of expected affordable housing between the involved parties which will involve housebuilders, local authorities, registered social landlords, the housing corporation and regional housing board/planning bodies;
- Much of the statistical information will need to be handled by specialised staff which may not be currently available within the organisations involved and would need to be recruited/funded;
- The guidance refers to a series of assessments on matters such as future household numbers, economic performance, affordability related to predicted incomes and house prices. Some of these will require sophisticated data handling including econometric computer modelling which will be costly and time consuming;
- Local surveys are frequently mentioned which will be a further resource demand;
- Predictions are expected to be up to ten years into the future which is extreme in relation to forecasts on such matters as economic activity and house prices so accuracy will be very suspect;
- This will not relate to RSS time horizons which are 15 years into the future;
- The guide indicates that there will be a plan, monitor and manage approach to the information which will mean constant revision of figures and potentially development plan documents;
- Figures will need to be updated annually to feed into Annual Monitoring Reports. This will be a huge burden on Councils;
- Many of the figures referred to relate to the Census which is already five years out of date and will be increasingly out of date;

- Specific guidance on estimating future house prices, which is important for assessing future affordability, is very minimal amounting to just five lines of text on page 33; and
- Important guidance which will amplify the broad statements made in the guidance is not available so it is not possible to comment properly on the practicality of the approach.

Comments on the Draft Practice Guidance on Housing Land Availability Assessments

It is considered that the draft practice guidance will significantly extend the work of councils above that required to undertake the current urban capacity studies and will duplicate work, particularly on greenfield sites, that will be undertaken through the development plan process.

- Partnerships will need to be established for each housing market area (the Vale is covered by three areas) and will involve a wide range of partners, potentially with conflicting interests.
- The study will not be restricted to urban areas but will cover all settlements where housing could be provided. This will significantly extend the scope of the studies and involve defining settlement boundaries for villages. This will be contentious as people will assume they can be used for defining whether a site is within a village when planning permission is sought.
- It is not clear from paragraph 14 of the guidance whether all previously developed land should be included: it is assumed that it is brownfield land within the settlements defined above, but it should be clarified.
- The assessments will also be required to identify greenfield sites adjacent to or within existing settlements (including rural settlements). This is not included in the current guidance and is part of the preparation of development plan documents.
- The developability of all sites is to be assessed according to a long list of criteria. Sites are then to be ranked and categorised as to whether they are suitable for inclusion as allocations in the first five years of the plan. This will not only be time consuming but particularly for greenfield sites is the function of site allocation development plan documents which will also take account of sustainability issues and public consultation. There will be significant confusion as to the role and weight to be attached to the different but similar documents.
- It is likely that the ranking of sites will, because of the criteria to be assessed, show that greenfield sites score more highly than brownfield sites in terms of availability and viability. This will detract from the Government's objective of prioritising brownfield sites for development. **It is considered that the requirement to include greenfield sites in the housing land availability assessments should be deleted.**

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (PLANNING)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 FEBRUARY 2006

The Vale Green Travel Plan

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 The Council is committed to the development of a Green Travel Plan (GTP) for its staff and elected Members which embraces travelling thoughtfully to, from and whilst at work. In doing so, the Council acknowledges the frequently held view that the success of a Green Travel Plan depends on its ownership by staff.
- 1.2 The first Vale GTP, developed in 2004/05, received only limited support from staff and unions. Accordingly, in listening to the comments made on the original Plan, the Council now aims to take forward a new GTP which contains a range of more moderate measures which would be easier to implement; and to proceed at a more measured pace whilst continuing to signal the Council's commitment to green travel.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to up-date Members on the development of the revised GTP and seek the endorsement of the Executive on the measures proposed in phase 1 of the plan, which will allow this phase to be developed through to implementation.
- 1.4 The Contact Officer for this report is Gordon Willcox, Section Head (Transportation) telephone 01235 540390

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive :

- 2.1 *Endorse the measures for phase 1 of the Vale's Green Travel Plan as set out in appendix C of this report, whilst noting that this project is not a Council Priority, and requests that the Assistant Director (Planning) commence the detailed planning of the individual measures within phase 1 of the Plan, subject to budgetary constraints and the availability of staff resources.*
- 2.2 *Agree that the Assistant Director (Planning) in consultation with the Executive Member responsible for the Vale's new Green Travel Plan, at the appropriate time, determine the launch date for the Plan, and advise the Executive accordingly.*
- 2.3 *Expressly for the purpose of Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, agree that the necessary deemed consent be sought for the provision of new cycle parking adjacent to The Abbey House, Abingdon.*
- 2.4 *Request that the Chief Executive undertake a review of the Council's existing Flexible Working Arrangements Policy*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report supports the Council's Vision Strands A, D and G.
- 3.2 This report supports the Council's sustainable transport strategy and policies.

4.0 **Background**

- 4.1 In September 2003 work started on researching and developing a Vale Green Travel Plan for staff and Members. A Travel Survey was conducted which was supported by 82% of staff. The main headlines of the survey showed that 76% of staff travel to work by car, whilst 20% either walk or cycle; only 2% travel by public transport.
- 4.2 The Council has a Local performance Indicator (LPI/TR1) measuring the percentage of staff, working at Abbey House, commuting alone by car. The target for this LPI is a reduction of 5% by 2006/07.
- 4.3 The Aims and Objectives of the GTP were agreed in February 2004 by the Staff Consultative Advisory Group, and it will be important to ensure that any proposed measures in a new GTP contributes towards the agreed Aims and Objectives. Members may wish to remind themselves of the Aims and Objectives of the GTP and they are therefore attached to this report as Appendix A.
- 4.4 In 2004 a draft GTP was developed which proposed a range of measures, over four implementation phases. In February 2005 staff were consulted on the draft Plan. Whilst there was support in principle for a GTP, staff reaction to the measures in the proposed GTP was largely negative, indeed only 25% of staff responded. The principal reason for its rejection was founded in the GTP's references to staff car parking and many comments expressing strong feelings were returned with the questionnaires.
- 4.5 In response to the question "Are there any measures not currently in the Plan, which we may have forgotten, which if introduced would encourage you to change your travel habits", the most popular measure was to increase the ability for home working, with the Council providing good IT links between home and office. The Council has an existing Flexible Working Arrangements Policy (October 2001), which includes the issue of home working, however, in the light of this report, the Executive may wish to request that a review of the policy be undertaken.
- 4.6 Progress with the introduction of a GTP and its acceptance was also likely to have been affected by a number of other issues which have been of concern to staff, such as:
- Review of pay and grading
 - Senior management restructuring
 - Moving staff parking from Abbey House to the Charter multi-storey
 - Withdrawing car leasing.
 - Review of essential and mileage allowances

and against this background, Vale staff have not enthusiastically embraced the concept of green travel which will impact on their choice of travel mode. As a result

progress with the GTP faltered to some extent. A summary of the consultation feed back is attached as Appendix B.

5.0 **The Way Forward**

- 5.1 Officers understand that Members wish to press on with implementing a GTP for the Vale but acknowledge some of the concerns raised by staff and Unions following the consultation on the draft GTP in February 2005. However, now would seem to be an appropriate time to move forward with the Plan given the Council's new corporate aim to create a cleaner, greener, safer and healthier community and environment.
- 5.2 Officers would suggest that the way forward is to proceed with a new revised GTP at a moderate pace, bringing forward, in a new phase 1, those measures which are less contentious to staff and which are relatively easy to implement. In doing so, the Council is

signalling its commitment to green travel, and providing a platform for implementation of more difficult measures in future phases.

5.3 Accordingly a new GTP phase 1 needs to be developed and implemented, which meets the following criteria:

- a) The individual measures must contribute to meeting the agreed Aims and Objectives of the GTP.
- b) The implementation and future management of the GTP must not adversely impact on current service commitments.
- c) The cost of implementation of the GTP must not exceed the revenue budget of £10,000.
- d) The overall revenue effect of the GTP measures should be aimed at being cost neutral.
- e) The cost of Phase 1 measures must not exceed the capital budget of £30,000.
- f) Account should be taken of the staff consultation feedback, particularly where strong opposition has been shown.

6.0 **Developing a New GTP**

6.1 Appendix C provides an assessment of the measures which could be taken forward as phase 1 of the new GTP. The assessment considers why and how the measures could be developed, the staff and financial resources required, and the draft GTP consultation feedback.

6.2 Revenue Costs:

Start-up: There is a revenue budget of £10,000 for the implementation of the GTP. The assessment shows that this will be sufficient for all of the measures in phase 1. This does not include the cost of staff time (internal recharges). Officers have prepared a Service and Budget Change Form, for Members consideration, to carry £9,000 of this budget forward into 2006/07.

On-going: The assessments show that the measures in a new phase 1 will require annual expenditure in the order of £2,000. This does not include staff time (internal recharges). The main contributors to these on-going costs are: the subsidy to bus travel and the need to guarantee staff who participate in car sharing, free travel home in the event of an emergency. There is currently no on-going revenue budget to support a GTP and accordingly officers have prepared a 2006/07 Service and Budget Change Form, for Members' consideration. Clearly it will be with the introduction of the measures in later phases (less popular), when the overall GTP will become cost neutral.

6.3 Capital Costs:

Two of the proposed measures, new cycle racks and staff lockers, will require capital expenditure. No detailed costings have yet been prepared, but it is envisaged that both schemes can be delivered within the current budget provision of £30,000. Officers have prepared a budget Capital Appraisal Form for Members consideration, to carry this budget forward into 2006/07.

7.0 **Implementation Programme**

7.1 Appendix D gives an indication of an implementation programme for the new phase 1 measures.

7.2 The programme suggests that the GTP commences with the launch of the web site and that the following measures are in place for this launch:

- Bus timetable information.
- Walking and cycling maps.

- New cycle mileage allowance.
- Free cycle loans.
- Subsidised bus passes.
- Abingdon/Oxford business travel by bus.

A range of other measures need to be progressed, and implemented as soon as possible to ensure the timely completion of phase 1:

- Provision of staff lockers.
- Provision of secure cycle parking.
- Promoting the use of the Council cycles.
- Producing a good practice guide for managing business journeys.

7.3 The promotion of a car share club was well supported during the draft GTP consultation. It is a measure which is always high on the list in any GTP guidance, and with the inclusion of preferential parking, it might well be seen by staff as being a very positive initiative. Setting up the club, using an IT website based system, may take a little time; it is therefore proposed that work on developing a car share club start immediately, with implementation as soon as possible, probably towards the end of phase 1.

7.4 Discussions have taken place with the Council's Head of Communications to consider how to best advertise and launch the new GTP. Whilst the Council will wish to widely publicise its commitment to green travel to demonstrate that it will lead by example, it is felt that initially, promotion should be focused only on staff and Members. An up-date newsletter has already been provided and this will be supported by additional information leading up to the formal launch.

7.5 The actual form of the launch will need to be carefully considered but clearly it will be centred around the access of the travel plan site on the Council's Intranet, and clearly, a number of key measures will need to be in place at that time. It will be important for Members to provide a presence during the launch to raise the profile of and demonstrate their commitment to the project.

7.6 Subject to the Executive's endorsement of these proposals, having regard for the amount of preparation work which needs to be undertaken, and the competing priorities of the Council's Service Plan; realistically, the launch date the Vale's Green Travel Plan appears to be early in the new financial year (2006/07). A specific date will become clearer once detailed discussions are held with key sections such as ICT and the Executive will be informed once a date is known.

8.0 **Consultation with Unions**

8.1 A meeting chaired by Councillor Tessa Ward was held on the 12 December 2005 with UNISON and GMB to discuss the proposed GTP. Both unions have reaffirmed their commitment to green travel and confirmed "in principle" their support for the measures contained in phase 1 of the proposed new Plan.

8.2 Furthermore, the unions put forward the following additional ideas, requesting that they be considered as the Plan, as a whole, develops:

- Relocation subsidy for all members of staff, not just new staff.
- Road Safety Awareness, and training for cyclists.
- Loan of bicycles for a trial period, prior to considering a purchase.

8.3 Further detailed discussions will be held with both unions to ensure that they are engaged in the development of the individual measures and the Council supports the frequently held view that *"the success of a Green Travel Plan depends on its ownership by staff"*.

9.0 **Future Measures**

9.1 The Council will need to consider a range of more difficult, and potentially less palatable measures in future phases, bearing in mind that it will be these particular measures which will produce the most significant impact on staff and member travel habits. These measures will include:

- Reviewing staff and member parking.
- Introducing member parking fees.
- Introducing staff parking fees.
- Removing free parking.

9.2 Clearly, some of these measures will have a wider impact for the Council than just for green travel, eg. they are likely to also contribute to raising general income. Members will need to consider how far they wish to go with these measures, and much may depend on the success or otherwise of phase 1 of the Plan.

RODGER HOOD
Assistant Director (Planning)

TIM SADLER
Strategic Director

Background Papers:

- Results from the Vale (staff and Member) travel survey.
- GTP Consultation Document (giving details of original Plan)
- Letter dated 20 December 2005 from UNISON, supporting the new Plan.

VALE GREEN TRAVEL PLAN

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Aims and Objectives of the Green Travel Plan were agreed in February 2004 by the Staff Consultative Advisory Group, and are as follows:

Aims

1. To encourage staff and members of the Council to:
 - a) travel in a more sustainable way; and
 - b) reduce the number of journeys they make to, from and at work,and, therefore help protect the environment and the quality of life in the Vale, and provide an example to others.

Objectives

1. In seeking to encourage staff and members to, *“travel in a more sustainable way”*
 - a) to increase walking and cycling by, for example, providing better cycle parking facilities, giving interest free loans to assist the purchase of cycles, providing shower facilities, etc;
 - b) to increase the use of public transport by, for example, giving subsidised bus passes, providing better route and timetable information, etc;
 - c) to reduce unnecessary journeys made by private car, in particular single occupancy journeys by, for example, promoting car sharing, extending control over staff and member parking, etc.
2. In seeking to *“reduce the number of journeys they make to, from and at work”*
 - a) to increase the opportunity for home working by, for example, developing electronic home/work links, etc;
 - b) to encourage linked trips by, for example, better planning of out-of-office business appointments, etc;
 - c) to reduce the need to travel by, for example, developing video conferencing, etc.

DRAFT VALE GREEN TRAVEL PLAN
CONSULTATION FEED BACK

- 1) Consultation on the Draft Green Travel Plan has been completed. The draft plan was sent, electronically, to all staff working at Abbey house (approx 300) and to elected members (51) on the 9 February 2005. In addition each elected member was sent a hard copy of the consultation document. The closing date for comments was 28 February 2005. Responses were:

- Staff 76 (25%)
- Members 5 (10%)

From a total of approx 350 consultees, 81 responses were received = 23%

Given the importance of this scheme and the possible impact that some of the measures may have on travel habits; the overall level of response was disappointing

The consultation questionnaire asked six specific questions. The results are set out below, and can be summarised as follows:

- 2) 64 from 81 agree that the Vale should have a Green Travel Plan, with 31 considering the need to *reducing unnecessary journeys made by private car*, as the most important objective. The need to *increase cycling and walking*, and the need to *increase the use of public transport*, were also well supported (18 and 16 respectively).
- 3) Asked which of the proposed measures would encourage people to change their travel habits, 47 from 81 answered "none" or gave no answer. This could lead the Project Board to conclude that there is no strong support for any of the individual measures. The measures which received the most support were *car sharing*, *subsidised bus passes* and *better cycle parking*.
- 4) Asked which of the proposed measures people most disagreed with, not surprisingly the overwhelming response relates to the issue of car parking. 45 staff complained at the prospect of having to pay for their parking, particularly at the higher commercial rate, with a large number using the argument that they are designated essential users. 15 staff complained about the relocation of parking with a further 9 staff concerned about the proposal to review car allowances (which was also one of the 2005/06 budget proposals).
- 5) Consultees were invited to identify other measures not in the draft plan which could form part of the proposals. There was only a small response to this question with extending/formalising the practice of home working, been the most popular comment.
- 6) Results from the questionnaire:

Q1 Do you agree that there is a need for the Council to introduce a Green Travel Plan?

Yes = 64
No = 17

Q2 Do you support the Council's Aims and Objectives of the proposed Green Travel Plan?

Yes = 55
No = 26

Q3 Which of the objectives do you consider to be most important?

- to reduce unnecessary journeys made by private car 31
- to increase walking and cycling 18
- to increase the use of public transport 16
- to increase the opportunity for home working 11
- to encourage linked trips 8
- to reduce the need to travel 8

- none or no answer 18
- protect our environment and reduce air pollution 6

Q4 From those proposed in this Green Travel Plan, which are the three measures that are most likely to encourage you to change the way you travel to, from and at work?

<u>Measure</u>	<u>1st choice</u>	<u>2nd choice</u>	<u>3rd choice</u>
Car share club	9	2	1
Subsidised bus passes	8	3	2
Improved cycle parking	7	3	1
Charging for parking	4	1	1
Web site/maps	3	1	-
Reviewing travel and subsistence	1	3	-
Free cycle loans	1	-	2
Increase cycle allowance	1	-	-
Provide lockers	-	2	1
Use of Council cycle	-	1	-
Relocate staff parking	-	-	1
Abingdon/Oxford bus travel	-	-	1
None or no answer	47		

Q5 Are there any measures proposed which you strongly disagree with, and if so, why?

Paying for car parking, when essential user, etc	45
Relocation of staff parking	15
Changing car allowances	9
No account take of insurance issues re equip in cars	3
Cost of member parking being lower than staff parking	3
Public transport adds time to day/poor service	3
Requiring use of public transport to go to Oxford	3
Home working	2
Car sharing	1
Allowing staff to park at Abbey House	1
Intruding into peoples lives re travelling	1
Walk and cycle should get equality with car sharing	1
Cycling is unsafe	1
Showers and cycle parking is a waste of money	1
Provision of locker	1
All measures	4
No carrots	3
No/support	4
No answer	6

Q6 Are there any measures not currently in the Plan, which we may have forgotten, which introduced would encourage you to change your travel habits?

Home working with good IT links		9
Improved bus services		7
Pool cars		5
Cash incentives		4
Free home/work bus passes		3
Council meetings – no evening/frequency/location	3	
Free cycle helmets and protective clothing		2
Repair footpaths		2
9 day working fortnight		1
Have area offices		1
Subsidised motor cycle purchase		1
Pay overtime for extra time taken to get to work		1
Change mileage claim to encourage home to site journeys	1	
Support purchase of greener cars		1
Stop parking permits for staff living < ½ mile from office	1	
Introduce Vale mini bus service		1
Improve flexi time scheme		1
Provide hair dryers		1
Build train station in Abingdon		1
Subsidise house purchase in Abingdon		1
Provide stable for horse		1
7) The Draft Plan was sent to UNISON and GMB on 9 February 2005 asking for comments by 7 March 2005.		

A letter dated 23 March 2005 was received from UNISON, in which they raised a number of questions. Many of their points relate to operational issues which will only be resolved when individual measures are considered in more detail, pre implementation. There are however some points of principle that will need to be addressed.

GRW
16/03/05

VALE GREEN TRAVEL PLAN
PHASE ONE

The proposed content of Phase 1 of the Vale's new Green Travel Plan is as follows:

- Travel Plan web site
- Subsidised bus travel
- Oxford/Abingdon business travel by bus
- Free cycle loans
- Increase cycle mileage allowance
- Provision of secure cycle parking
- Provision of lockers
- Promote use of Council bicycle
- Managing business journeys
- Car share club

In order to determine those measures which would be relatively easy to implement, each measure has been considered in relation to:

- Implementation issues
- Staff set-up resource requirements
- Capital costs
- Revenue costs
- Consultation feed back
- Links to the Aims and Objectives

VALE TRAVEL PLAN WEB SITE

Linking from the Vale's Intranet, a travel plan page will provide staff with a "home base" for all GTP information. Included on the site will be details of each of the various measures, together with such things as bus timetables and local walking/cycling maps.

- Issues**
- a) The site will require a commitment for on-going maintenance
 - b) The Oxfordshire County Council and local bus operators have web sites which fully detail bus timetables. It is proposed to provide links to these sites. This will alleviate the need for the Vale to maintain and up-date the timetables.
 - c) There are a number of existing base maps which show walking and cycling routes. Using this information a new Vale map can be prepared which shows routes in Abingdon together with links to local villages. This information could be made available via the Council's web site to a wider public audience

Set-Up Resources Planning and IT staff

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Nil

This measure require staff time only, for both setting-up the web site and for its on-going maintenance

Consultation Feed Back Limited support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aims 1a), 1b). Objectives 1a), 1b), 1c), 2b).

Comments It will be important to install this web site at the out-set to be both the “launch” focus point, as well as providing detailed information on each of the various measures being implemented.

This measure is therefore required at the out-set of phase 1

SUBSIDISED BUS TRAVEL

Providing staff with subsidised home/work bus passes

- Issues**
- a) The travel survey undertaken in the spring 2004 showed that only 4 staff regularly travel to work by public transport.
 - b) As a guide, the current cost of an annual all zone bus pass which would cover the journey between Abingdon and Oxford is £500. The Council will offer a 20% discount to encourage staff to use public transport.
 - c) Discussions with local bus operators regarding discounts on bulk purchase of bus passes were inconclusive. They have no standard bulk discount rate, and both companies commented that bus passes by their very nature, are discounted. Both companies did however confirm that they would consider the matter further once actual numbers are known. It is likely that a fairly low take-up by Vale staff would not attract a bulk discount rate.
 - d) In order to make this measure as attractive as possible, staff could be given the options of, either purchasing their own bus pass and reclaiming the subsidy from the Council; or, for the Council to purchase the bus pass and recover the cost, less the subsidy, monthly over a year through the employee’s salary.
 - e) This measure is seen as a very green initiative

Set-Up Resources Nil

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Assuming a take-up of 10 staff (which is probably optimistic), given a subsidy of 20% on a bus pass valued at £500, the annual revenue cost would be £1000

Consultation Feed Back This measure was well supported

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objective 1b)

Comments This measure is one of the major incentives in the GTP package. It is a quick fix measure requiring limited effort to implement. It does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives and should therefore be implemented at the out-set of Phase 1. Revenue funds will need to be provided.

ABINGDON - OXFORD BUSINESS TRAVEL

Staff and Members will be required to use public transport when attending meetings and other business appointments in central Oxford.

- Issues**
- a) If staff choose to use their car for this journey, then no mileage/car parking allowance will be paid. The only exception to this is where the officer returns home following the meeting (where the officer does not live in Abingdon)

- b) Consideration has been given to holding bus passes at Abbey House for use by staff and members. Neither Stagecoach nor Oxford Bus Company will offer a discount on the purchase, by the Council, of a limited number of passes. The cost of an annual pass is £500. Whilst there may be some limited convenience in the Council providing passes, it will be more cost effective for staff and members to claim the cost of their bus journey via their monthly expenses claim
- c) At a review stage, depending on the success of this measure, the Council may consider purchasing and holding bus passes for use by staff.

Set-Up Resources Nil

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Nil

Consultation Feed Back Very limited support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a). Objective 1b)

Comments This is a quick fix measure requiring limited effort to implement. It does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives and should therefore be implemented at the outset of Phase 1

FREE LOANS FOR CYCLE PURCHASE

Providing staff with an interest free loan for the purchase of new bicycles. The loan would be over a twelve month period with monthly repayments taken direct from salaries

- Issues**
- a) No guarantee that a member of staff will use the cycle, purchased through the scheme, for travelling to work.
 - b) A standard “small” loan agreement will need to be drawn up
 - c) The scheme could take advantage of the Government’s “Cyclescheme” initiative, which allows employees to lease a bicycle from their employer, exempt of Income Tax, National Insurance and VAT

Set-Up Resources Legal staff

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Deminimus

Scheme could be administered by Finance Section, as with the current car loan scheme.

Consultation Feed Back Very limited support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objective 1a)

Comments This is a quick fix measure requiring limited effort to implement. It does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives and should therefore be implemented at the outset of Phase 1

INCREASE CYCLE MILEAGE ALLOWANCE

The Council currently pays 12p per mile to staff that use a bicycle for business journeys. This allowance has not been reviewed since 1999 and there are currently no staff making claims for using a bicycle. The initial draft plan proposal was to increase this allowance to 20p per mile

- Issues**
- a) It is hoped that this will be an added encouragement for staff to cycle to work, and accordingly use their cycles for local business journeys. It is however unlikely that 20p per mile will be of sufficient incentive to change peoples' habits, a higher rate in the range of 40-50p per mile would be comparable with a car mileage rate, which retains the measure as cost neutral. However, a rate of £1.00 per mile should be agreed, to provide a real incentive
 - b) A 20p per mile rate is the maximum allowed by the Inland Revenue. Any rate above this is therefore deemed to be taxable (i.e. At £1.00 per mile, 80p will be taxable)
 - c) It has to be acknowledged that cycling to an appointment may take longer than travelling by car and is only feasible up to say 3-4 miles.

Set-Up Resources Nil

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Deminimus

Consultation Feed Back Very limited support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objective 1a)

Comments This is a quick fix measure requiring limited effort to implement. It does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives and should therefore be implemented at the outset of Phase 1

PROVISION OF SECURE CYCLE PARKING

The provision of additional secure, covered cycle parking at Abbey House.

- Issues**
- a) The current cycle parking between Old and New Abbey Houses is well used by staff and the public and is very often full.
 - b) Additional cycle parking is available in the Cattle Market car park. However, this parking is not well used and is seen by staff as remote, unsecured and uncovered.
 - c) Secure, covered cycle parking, dedicated to staff, can be provided by either: establishing new staff cycle parking adjacent to the rear entrance of Abbey House, or providing new public racks, thus enabling the existing cycle parking to be up-graded for staff use only.

Set-Up Resources Property and Estates have advised that they will not be able to assist in this project during this financial year. The project set up would therefore need to be resourced using Planning staff.

Capital Costs Not currently known, but a scheme within the overall GTP project budget of £30,000 will be achievable.

Revenue Costs Nil

Minor maintenance from time to time. There will be the need for a person to be responsible for the issuing and monitoring of keys.

Consultation Feed Back A well supported measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objective 1a)

Comments This measure is one of the major “carrots in the GTP package and does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives. The scheme will require detailed design and planning consent (being within the conservation area) which will need to be progressed by Planning staff. The scheme should therefore be implemented as part of Phase 1, subject to staff resources being available, and subject to it being within budget.

PROVIDE STAFF LOCKERS

The provision of lockers in the existing staff room to complement the new staff shower facility.

Issues a) It is difficult to assess the value of having staff lockers. However, most GTP guidance says that in order to promote cycling, an employer should provide good quality staff showers and lockers.

b) It is suggested that a bank of say 15 lockers is initially be provided. Their use would be monitored with a bid to extend the provision if necessary.

Set-Up Resources Property and Estates have advised that they will not be able to assist in this project during this financial year. The project would therefore need to be resourced using Planning staff.

Capital Costs Not currently known, but a scheme within the overall GTP project budget of £30,000 will be achievable.

Revenue Costs Nil

Minor maintenance from time to time and there will be the need for keys to be issued and monitored.

Consultation Feed Back Very little support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objective 1a)

Comments This measure does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives. The scheme will need to be progressed by Planning staff. The scheme should therefore be implemented as part of Phase 1, subject to being within budget limits.

PROMOTE USE OF COUNCIL BICYCLE

To encourage the use of the Council's bicycle for local business journeys

- Issues**
- a) The Council currently has a bicycle, kept at the Guildhall, which was originally purchased as part of a "healthier staff" promotion. It is understood that the bicycle is very rarely used
 - b) To make this attractive the bicycle needs to be easily accessible, and its use probably needs to be controlled by a booking system.
 - c) The frequent maintenance of the bicycle needs to be arranged including issues such as ensuring the tyres are pumped up, ready for use.

Set-Up Resources Planning staff

Capital Costs The intention would be to purchase two further bicycles, giving a total of three. The cost of the new bicycles will be met from the overall project budget

Revenue (on-going) Costs £250 per annum for cycle maintenance and mileage costs

Consultation Feed Back Very limited support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aim 1a) Objectives 1a), 1c).

Comments Whilst this appears to be an easy measure to implement, it is likely to prove cumbersome to manage. The measure does contribute to the GTP Aims and Objectives and should be implemented as part of phase 1, but not as a priority measure. It should perhaps be linked to the provision of the secure cycle parking measure. The issue of cycle maintenance, eg insuring that the tyres are correctly inflated so that the cycle is ready for use, will need to be addressed.

MANAGING BUSINESS JOURNEYS

A Good Practice Document to be produced for staff, managers and members, giving advice on planning and managing business journeys

- Issues**
- a) The Council will need to encourage its managers to embrace "managing business journeys" so that managers can promote and monitor better planning of excursions, eg. car sharing where staff are travelling to the same destination, linking a number of visits into one journey. To aid this it is proposed to produce a simple guide giving examples of good practice.
 - b) Targets should be set at Service Area level to encourage and reward changes to greener/smarter travel, and a process for sharing good practice can be developed.
 - c) Under this heading the Council might wish to review its policy of holding meetings at various locations throughout the district.

Set-Up Resources Planning Staff

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs Nil

This will involve the production of a simple “good practice guide” to enable service managers to engage their staff

Consultation Feed Back No support for this measure

Links to Aims and Objectives Aims 1a), 1b). Objectives 2b)

Comments Whilst the production of a good practice guide may take some time and may not significantly change the habits of most staff, it will raise awareness of the GTP and show a commitment from the Council to enlist the assistance of its managers and Members, in promoting the Aims and Objectives of the GTP. The measure should be implemented as part of phase 1.

CAR SHARE CLUB

Staff formally participate in car sharing for their home to work journeys

Issues a) This measure is always seen as high on the list in any GTP guidance, and there are many examples of Car Share Clubs, the details of which the Council could draw upon.

- b) Fundamentally, clubs need to be web site based, allowing participants to advertise and communicate directly with each other.
- c) The site/scheme needs to be designed to ensure that on-going maintenance is kept to a minimum, but realistically, it is this measure which will require the most on-going maintenance.
- d) Participants would need to formally “sign-up” to the club and undertake to car share for a minimum number of days each month. In return for staff committing to the club, participants are given preferential parking, eg a space in the Cattle Market car park.
- e) The Council would need to guarantee a free lift home for staff for circumstances such as, a home emergency, a request to work late, etc.
- f) There will be issues to consider such as staff giving a lift to a colleague who doesn't drive
- g) IT will require reasonable time to set up the site.

Set-Up Resources Planning and IT staff

Capital Costs Nil

Revenue Costs £750 per annum for taxi fares etc; see e) above.

Preferential staff parking at the Cattle Market may result in other customers being displaced to other town centre car parks. However, this is unlikely to have a significant effect on car park revenue income

Consultation Feed Back Well supported measure

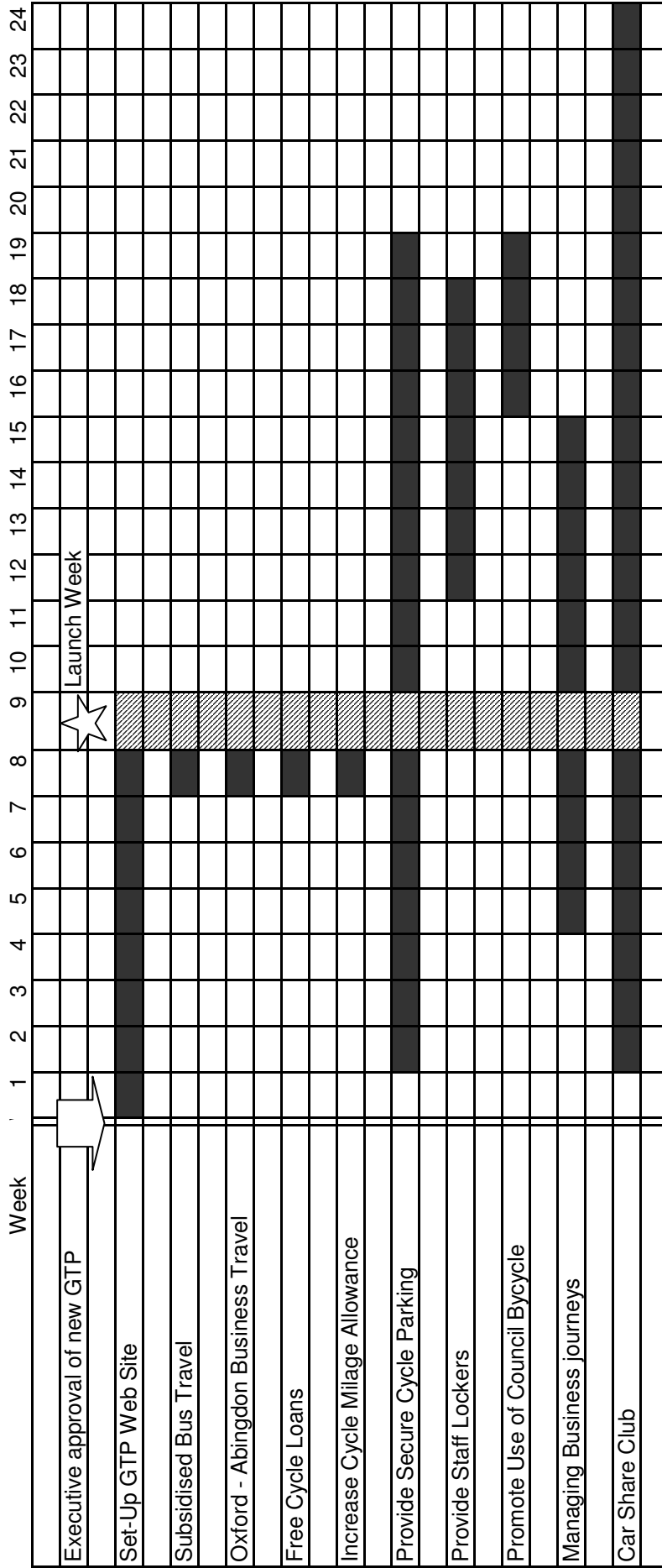
Links to Aims and Objectives Aims 1a), 1b). Objective 1c)

Comments This measure does contribute towards the GTP Aims and Objectives and should be introduced as soon as possible. However, setting up the scheme will take some time. There will also be resource implications in relation to the scheme's on-going management.

As a result, it is suggested that work on preparing this measure commences immediately, but implemented in the early part of phase 2.

APPENDIX D

GREEN TRAVEL PLAN - PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMME



REPORT OF RESERVOIR ADVISORY GROUP
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 FEBRUARY 2006

Reservoir

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 At its meeting on 6 January 2006, the Executive noted that a Reservoir Advisory Group had been set up to advise the Executive on matters relating to Thames Water's provisional proposal for a reservoir to the south-west of Abingdon. The Advisory Group met on 17 January to consider the latest position and has made recommendations below.

1.2 The contact officer for this report is Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer, telephone 01235 540307.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 *that the Advisory Group's business remains confidential until the Advisory Group has indicated otherwise and recommends so to the Executive; and*

2.2 *that this Council should act as if it were the determining authority in any application for a reservoir proposal.*

3.0 **Probity**

3.1 The Advisory Group discussed the status of its papers and deliberations with regard to probity. At the Executive meeting held on 6 January 2006 it was reported that the Advisory Group had been set up under delegated authority and that its meetings would be private to this Council, although there was an open invitation for other Members of the Council to attend as observers.

3.2 In conclusion, the Advisory Group considers that its business must remain confidential until the Advisory Group has indicated otherwise and recommends so to the Executive.

4.0 **Reservoir Proposal: Current Position**

4.1 The Advisory Group noted details of Thames Water's project. There are two planned phases of consultation. The first is consultation on the needs case and site selection for an 'Upper Thames Major Resource Development'. The second is consultation on Thames Water's preferred scheme and the construction design options. Further consultation will also be carried out on the scoping of the Environmental Impact Assessment. If the result of the consultation process is Thames Water's confirmation that the construction of a reservoir is its preferred option, it will progress towards the formal submission of an application, provisionally programmed for September 2007. A public inquiry will hear objections to the proposal, which is likely to be held some time in 2008.

4.2 Thames Water has confirmed that the proposal for a single large reservoir to the south-west of Abingdon is its "provisional preferred option" to meet the need for an additional water resource. Thames Water is updating its earlier work on the need for a major new water resource in the

Upper Thames area, the analysis of options, and the analysis of alternative sites. On-site ecological and geological surveys are also taking place.

- 4.3 General information is known about Thames Water's proposal as follows:
- The surface area covered by water will be about 7.5 km² (i.e. more than three times the size of Farmoor Reservoir)
 - The volume of stored water will be about 150 million cubic metres (150,000 million litres), which will cover the future estimated need for water over an 18-month drought
 - The reservoir embankments may be up to 25 metres (82 feet) high
 - An intake/outfall pipe will link the reservoir to the River Thames
 - A pipeline will need to link the reservoir to Farmoor Reservoir, unless a water treatment plant is built on site as part of the development of the new reservoir
 - Most of the length of the Steventon to Hanney road will need to be diverted
 - About 4 million tonnes of construction material will need to be imported, most of which could be delivered to the site by rail via new railway sidings
 - Thames Water estimates the total cost at £900 million
 - Thames Water is building a detailed needs case based on projected supply and demand

- 4.4 Thames Water's current proposal is to submit an application for a Compulsory Works Order under Section 167 of the Water Industry Act 1991. This will bring together all of the consents and authorisations required for the construction of the reservoir, including deemed planning permission. If given the go-ahead, construction of the reservoir could start around 2010-2011 and is likely to take around 10 years to complete and fill. The alternative route is for a planning application to be submitted. Any such application is highly likely to be called in by the Secretary of State for determination.

- 4.5 The Advisory Group considers that as the above information has been made public by Thames Water, it could be made available to the public through the Council's website. However, Thames Water should confirm that it is happy for this information to be released. The Advisory Group has asked that all Members of the Council are sent a copy of the published information. Members also discussed the possibility of a periodic briefing note to update Members on the Reservoir. It was suggested that this should coincide with reports from the Advisory Group to the Executive.

5.0 **Implications for the Council if a Compulsory Works Order is Used**

- 5.1 If Thames Water uses the Compulsory Works Order route, this will bring together all consents and authorisations required for the construction of the reservoir, including deemed planning permission and section 106 obligations. A public inquiry will still be held to hear objections to the proposal, before the decision is made by the Secretary of State.

- 5.2 This Council will be a statutory consultee but the County Council will not. This Council should therefore be the lead local authority. The Advisory Group believes that this Council should act as if it is the determining authority in any application for a reservoir proposal.

6.0 **Engaging Other Organisations**

- 6.1 The Advisory Group considered how the Council should engage with other organisations on the reservoir proposal. Firstly, in the interest of probity, it was considered important for Members to remain distant from any discussions with Thames Water. The officers will liaise with the Environment Agency, OFWAT, Oxfordshire County Council, local Town and Parish Councils and South Oxfordshire District Council. The County Council's interests are:

- strategic planning authority
- transport and highways issues
- any mineral extraction and importation of waste

- archaeology
- ecology

6.2 Members are aware that the County Council's Scrutiny Committee undertook a two-day evidence gathering exercise about the reservoir and is due to produce a report. The Advisory Group considers that a copy of the County Scrutiny Committee's report should be sought, together with clarification from the County Council of how it intends to proceed with this issue.

7.0 **Resource Implications**

The Advisory Group considers that officer resources required for work on the reservoir will be dependent on the content of Thames Water's consultation document and upon the level of work carried out by other agencies.

Councillors Tony de Vere (Chair)
Terry Cox (Chairman)
Terry Fraser
Melinda Tilley
Jerry Patterson (apologies for absence)
John Dunsdon (absent)
Richard Webber (absent)

RESERVOIR ADVISORY GROUP

Background Papers: None

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY)
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3RD FEBRUARY 2006

EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 The Executive will be aware that the approved Housing Strategy for 2004/5 - 2007/8 contains an action to develop a specific strategy to address the issue of empty homes in the private sector across the District.

1.2 This report introduces this strategy to the Executive and considers the implications of its implementation.

1.3

The Contact Officer for this report is Paul Staines (Assistant Director Housing and Community Safety) (01235 547621)

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 *That the Executive approve the Empty Homes Strategy attached as appendix 1 to this report.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

(a) This report relates to the Council's vision and strands A, B, C, E and G.

(b) This report relates to the Housing Strategy

(c) This report complies with existing Council policies in respect of affordable housing and housing enabling.

4.0 Background and Supporting Information

4.1 It is one of the Council's specific actions detailed in the Housing Strategy to reduce the number of Empty Homes in the District. The Council wishes to work with owners of empty homes in the district to enable them to be brought back into use.

4.2 The reduction in the number of Empty Homes is a specific Best Value Performance Indicator. No 64 and the Council has set a target of 4 for 2005/2006.

4.3 The strategy is based upon recent legislation that enables the authority to use information held by the Council Tax section to identify empty properties and their owners.

4.4 Using this information concerted efforts have been made to reduce the number of Empty Homes. Over 440 visits have been made, details and photographs recorded, and over 85 letters sent to owners. To date 14 properties have come back into occupation following investigation and contact from officers.

4.5 The Housing Act 2004 is to introduce an additional power in 2006, namely Empty Dwelling Management Order, to bridge the gap between voluntary measures and existing enforcement procedures i.e. Compulsory Purchase. The legislation, which is discretionary, is intended to operate alongside measures such as voluntary leasing schemes run by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. It provides an effective back up to such arrangements where owners turn down offers of assistance and do not have plans of their own to bring the property

back into use. Officers propose to return to the Executive to discuss the possible enactment of these powers when more detail on their operation is available from central government.

- 4.6 The work undertaken to enact the strategy to date has suggested that there is not a serious problem concerning empty properties in the District when compared to many other Councils. This view has been endorsed by the findings of the 2005 House Condition Survey. This will make it difficult to improve on the BVPI as there is a low base line. However, a number of properties have been identified that are long term empty and an options appraisal to the merits of securing their return to use is needed. This could involve the Council's grant policy and nomination rights where appropriate.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The work associated with reducing Empty Homes is labour intensive with numerous, continual checks having to be made at each stage in the procedure mainly to avoid abortive visits being made. As empty property numbers reduce so this work will yield less results and the Council will need to consider the relative priority of the work.
- 5.2 Where owners are reluctant or resistant in bringing their properties back into use we need to consider what further action could be taken to enforce the policy.
- 5.3 The strategy will require review following the implementation of the relevant parts of the 2004 Housing Act, relevant details of which are still awaited.

Paul Staines
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (Housing and Community Safety)

CORPORATE EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

CONTEXT

- 1) The Vale of White Horse is located in the upper Thames Valley with the Council taking its name from the famous monument carved on the crest of White Horse Hill at Uffington, the oldest of all the White Horses in England.
- 2) The Vale is bound to the north and east by the River Thames and to the south by the Berkshire Downs. The District covers some 224 square miles (580 square kilometres) of country that is attractive and mainly rural in character. The Vale lies in south western Oxfordshire and is one of five districts within the County.
- 3) The population of the Vale is estimated as 116,746 which have increased by over 45% during the past 40 years. About half the population lives in the 3 historic market towns of Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon. The remainder is distributed in more than 60 villages and hamlets throughout the Vale.
- 4) The population of the Vale grew rapidly from the early 1960s to the mid 1980s, largely as a result of decisions made by the former Berkshire County Council prior to Local Government Reorganisation in 1974. Since then, the newly formed District Council has directed its planning policies at more sustainable levels of growth and a greater degree of environmental protection.
- 5) The Vale has 47,387 households of which nearly a quarter consists of a single person. The level of owner occupation, at 74.4%, is similar to the average for the South East Region but above the national average of 68.9 %.
- 6) Whilst the rate of population growth may have subsided, there has continued to be a dramatic increase in the number of households. This reflects the national trend towards smaller and more rapidly forming households.
- 7) In common with much of the country the Vale is experiencing an ageing population with 15.5 % over 65 in 2001, compared with 13.8 % in 1991.
- 8) The Vale is an area of high house prices, even by the standards of the South East, which is itself the most expensive region outside London. In Oct – Dec 2004 the average cost of a semi-detached property in the Vale was £217,035 compared with £214,280 in the rest of the South East and that of a flat or maisonette £158,880 compared with £148,953.
- 9) Oxfordshire is an area of relative high prosperity with an index of gross domestic product per head of 110, the third highest in the region, against the UK index of 100. The range in the South East Region is between 68 and 138. However there are pockets of deprivation in the Vale particularly at sub ward level. Rural isolation is an issue in some parts of the District.

EMPLOYMENT

- 1) The District is generally affluent with the economy benefiting from high levels of employment and high incomes largely due to the influence of a knowledge-based sector, which has replaced agriculture as the leading employment provider.
- 2) Unemployment rates in the Vale are low at 0.7 %, as at June 2002. Less than 8 % receive Housing Benefit compared with an all England figure of 17 %. The ratio of income of working households to house prices in the Vale is 3.65, the second lowest in the County.

HOUSING STOCK

- 1) The total number of dwellings in the District in April 2002 was 47,156 most of which is relatively modern. (Nationally more than a quarter of all homes in the UK are at least 80 years old) As at 31st March 2002 the tenure of housing in the District consisted of:-

a) Owner Occupied – 74 %	National average – 70 %
b) Private Rented – 10+ %	National average – 10 %
c) Housing Association – 13 %	National average – 20 %
d) Vacant – 1 %	
e) Other (e.g. Almshouses) – 2 %	

The level of owner occupation is similar to the average for the South East Region but above the national average. The level of outright owner occupation in the District is 3 % above the regional average of 26 % and the level of private rented is slightly above the national average of 10 % but significantly below that of Oxford City at 24 %.

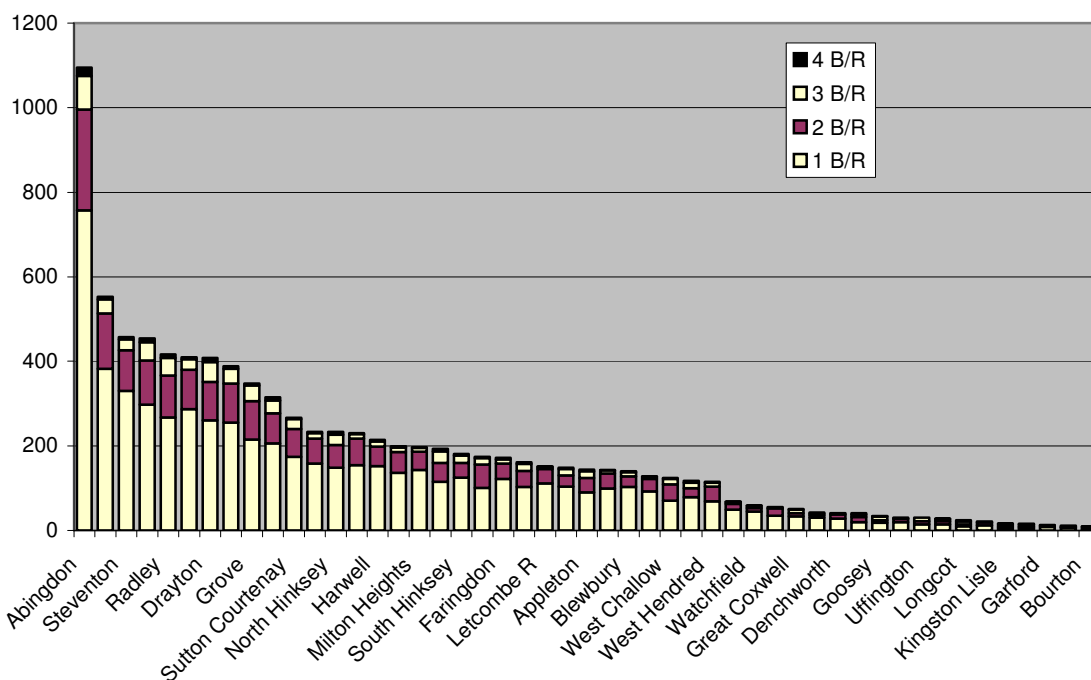
- 2) At the time of the transfer of the Council's housing stock to The Vale Housing Association Ltd. in February 1995 the Council set a target of 550 additional affordable homes within five years mainly using capital generated as a result of the transfer. This target was met within 4 years and to date (04/05) 1400 homes have been provided reflecting an investment of over £35m in social housing grant. Throughout this period land availability has been the limiting factor and the Council has been innovative and determined in reaching its targets against that constraint taking measured investment risks to bring forward sites that would otherwise remain undeveloped, such as the West Central Redevelopment Abingdon, and Limborough Road Wantage. The Council has also worked hard in the development of supported housing and was well prepared for the advent of Supporting People having worked with other Oxfordshire Authorities to start to turn supported housing development towards strategic objectives rather than opportunities on the ground. This has been demonstrated in a beacon status award for the Oxfordshire Supporting People regime.

HOUSING NEED

- 1) There are 2075 applicants registered on the Council's Housing Needs Register, as at April 2005, of whom 1195 are either lacking or sharing facilities or have a very high degree of social / medical housing need. All have applied for accommodation to rent but of the 1195 figure, 227 would be prepared to consider shared ownership as a possible solution to their housing problem.

1 Bedroomed accommodation demand from the Housing Register is:	1,050
2 Bedroomed	611
3 Bedroomed	269
4 Bedroomed	145

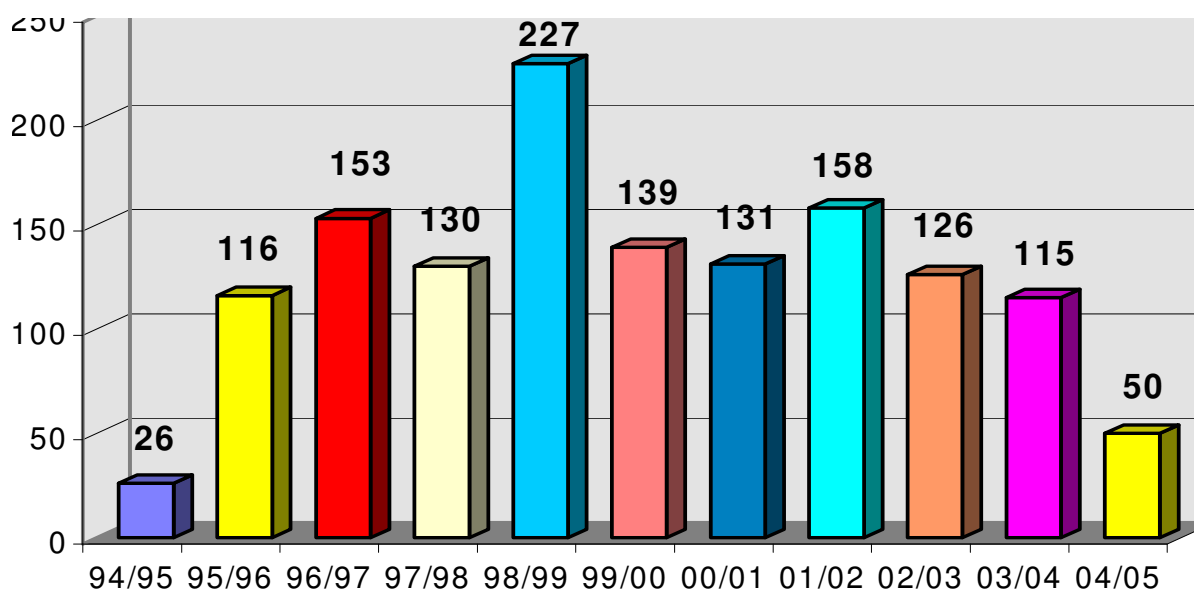
The following chart shows the general extent of housing need for specific areas of the Vale and sizes of dwellings required. (This chart does not show the demand from a specific area and does not take into account applicants who have chosen to be considered for more than one area.)



2) The social housing stock in the District currently totals 6145 and is all owned and managed by Registered Social Landlords. Nominations are made by the Council from its Housing Register in accordance with agreements made with each of the main providers. Vacancies reflect the national average of 2 % – 3% of general needs housing and 6 % of accommodation provided specifically for the elderly.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVISION

The following table shows the total additional social housing provided by RSLs in the Vale since 1994.



PRIVATE SECTOR

- 1) On the private housing sector the enforcement of housing conditions is focused on the mobile home parks in the district and more recently on houses in multiple occupation. The Vale Energy Team set up in 1996 has had considerable success in reducing home energy consumption in the District and reducing fuel poverty.
- 2) This sector also recognises an opportunity to increase the supply of housing, albeit marginally, through the revitalisation of the Council's Empty Homes Policy. This is particularly relevant at the present time with the demise of Local Authority Social Housing Grant and the total dependence on the Housing Corporation for grant funding to increase the supply of affordable housing.

BACKGROUND

- 1) The Government's statistics show that, as at April 2002, there were 772,000 empty private properties in England. The majority of these properties are in areas of housing need. For example there are 100,000 empty homes but also 50,000 homeless households and a huge problem due to lack of affordable housing. A total of 3.7 % of all private homes are empty.
- 2) The Government has set a target for Councils to reduce the percentage of empty homes to 3 %.
- 3) The Council's policy is to have a strategy to reduce the number of empty homes in the District. (Ref. 96/20 adopted 19/06/96)
- 4) Bringing an empty home back into use offers owners considerable potential advantages :-
 - a) Capital if the property is sold now or in the future.
 - b) Income if the property is let
 - c) Increased property value
 - d) Reduced outgoings e.g. Council Tax
 - e) Increased security and less likely to be vandalised
 - f) Improve/restore older buildings/homes to modern standards.
- 5) Benefits to the community include :-
 - a) Reduces pressure for Greenfield sites.
 - b) Encourages economic vitality. (Local shops)
 - c) Assists with any regeneration initiative.
 - d) Opportunity to making additional stock available for rent or shared ownership with nomination rights to the Council.
 - e) Creates employment opportunities.
 - f) Maximises the use of existing buildings and homes.
 - g) Helps in sustaining rural communities.
 - h) Increased revenue to the Council.



Coxwell Street Faringdon

AIM

The aim of the Vale's Empty Homes Strategy is to propose and implement action that will effectively address issues related to long term empty properties (vacant for more than 12 months) and to bring such accommodation back into use to assist the District in meeting its housing needs.

Not all empty homes will be suitable for the scheme. Many will be empty in the short term whilst in the process of being sold and others will be inappropriate because of type, size, location, state of repair and redevelopment issues.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- 1) To achieve the overall aim of the Empty Homes Strategy, and to raise awareness of the issue of Empty Homes, the following strategic objectives have been identified.
 - a) Empty homes represent a wasted resource that could be better used to help to alleviate homelessness and address housing need in the Vale. Restoring vacant properties can also help revitalise economic prosperity in particular areas thereby improving working partnerships between the public and private sectors. The demand for affordable and accessible housing far outstrips supply and the Council recognises that empty homes must be dealt with effectively across all tenures.
 - b) Properties that have been vacant for a considerable amount of time and those that are in a poor condition can be a source of on going nuisance attracting crime and anti social behaviour as well as devaluing surrounding properties. Empty homes represent a loss of revenue to the Council and are costly to maintain both to the private and public funds, e.g. as a consequence of rubbish clearance, police action on squatting and vandalism and other nuisances.

- c) In order to assess and monitor the extent and nature of the private sector empty homes situation it will be necessary to set up and regularly update a comprehensive register of such accommodation.
- d) In order to tackle the problem of empty homes it will be essential to involve other departments, agencies and organisations such as Environmental Health regarding unfit properties and dwellings in disrepair. (One in 13 houses in England is officially regarded as unfit for occupation)
- e) In order to raise the profile of empty homes throughout the District, it will be necessary to promote the issue within the Council and externally through the general public and other parties involved in the property sector.
- f) In order to ensure that properties are made available for letting to people in the greatest housing need, it will be essential to promote schemes such as the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. This will reassure landlords, that rent will be paid regularly and on time whilst demonstrating the Council's commitment to working in partnership with them. This can be done in association with local Registered Social Landlords who have the relevant expertise and experience in working with property owners.
- g) The Council recognises that private sector leasing schemes frequently result in market or near market rent levels being charged. The Council will try to ensure where nominations are made to temporary accommodation that households who are seeking employment are not deterred from taking up work as a consequence of high rents and the impact of benefit withdrawal.

IDENTIFYING THE EMPTY HOMES

- a) Local planners may be able to identify residential buildings, which may be blighted by redevelopment or transport proposals (e.g. proposed reservoir).
- b) Council Tax information is probably the best and main source of details of empty properties in the Vale, and this will form the basis of the Empty Homes Register.
- c) Legal Officers already help planners and environmental health officers trace ownership of land and buildings for various purposes. I.e. disputes and disrepair. Such established procedures can result in the identification of the owners and lead to homes being brought back into use.
- d) Environmental Health Officers are well placed to identify empty private sector homes and those properties which are likely to become vacant because of disrepair, those subject to a closing order and those dwellings which have been abandoned. Such officers also have an overview of local housing standards and their technical knowledge and input can accelerate the processes by which homes are brought back into use.
- e) Building Control officers are responsible for inspecting empty properties which have been identified as possible dangerous structures. Again there is scope for these to be targeted as part of the Empty Homes Strategy.

RECORDING OF THOSE PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED

- a) An Empty Homes Register will be established on an appropriate computer programme based on information already held by Council Tax, supplemented by the Land Registry records where needed.

- b) The information will be used to set up records of property owners, addresses and vacation dates. The system will then be used to record any action taken and progress made in bringing the property back into use.
- c) Other information, such as location, type of accommodation, state of repair, owner's preferred option for re-occupation, and nominated partners etc. will be added as required.
- d) Local situation: - As at December 2004 the number of unoccupied and unfurnished dwellings in the Vale that were vacant totalled 347.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE

- a) Some owners may not wish to have the responsibility of managing their properties and may prefer to use the services of an estate or managing agent. Such agents will also have the added advantage of providing valuation and surveying expertise.
- b) Owners with previous letting or management experience may wish to manage the properties themselves and there are "Landlord's guides" available to advise potential landlords.
- c) The Council will continue to maximise opportunities in the private rented sector through the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme to private landlords. This has proved to be successful in both meeting housing need and in encouraging property owners to make their accommodation available for letting.
- d) The main basis of this strategy is to promote participation and co-operation with owners of vacant accommodation but in certain circumstances the Council may consider using its legal powers in respect of Compulsory Purchase Orders. This approach will only be used as a last resort where an owner of an empty property has turned down Council offers of help to bring the property back into occupation. This action would need to be co-ordinated with a Registered Social Landlord who would be willing to purchase the dwelling from the Council and include it in their housing stock. The compulsory purchase of vacant property as empowered in Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985, can apply to dwellings that are derelict or abandoned. CPOs can be used for vacant properties that have not been the subject of any complaint including those dwellings that are:-
 - 1) unoccupied
 - 2) suitable for immediate residential use and occupation (subject to decorative and minor repair)
 - 3) not likely to be used or occupied for residential purposes in the near future unless purchased by the Local Authority.

The use of CPO powers to acquire vacant properties will be the exception rather than the rule and they will be normally targeted at vacant and derelict properties where the owner repeatedly fails to take responsibility for maintaining the dwelling despite requests by the Council to do so.

- e) The Government has announced its intention to introduce a Compulsory Leasing Scheme (Empty Homes Management Orders) to bring empty homes back into use. This power could be used as an alternative to Compulsory Purchase and as with CPOs an RSL may need to be involved to manage the leasing arrangement. (OSLA) The Council may facilitate the capital works needed to allow the property to be leased and use the dwelling, probably in conjunction with a housing association (RSL) to accommodate people in housing need (e.g. homeless or key workers). The rental income would pay for the cost of the improvements to the property. When the full amount had been recovered, the property would revert to the owner in a fit state to continue to allow the dwelling to be rented out.

- f) With the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme for Housing Association owned vacancies it might be appropriate, in certain circumstances, for privately owned empty homes to be filled using this facility.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

- a) Establish owner's details through Council Tax information or via a Land Registry search.
- b) Inform the owner of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy and how the Council could assist in bringing the property back into use
- c) Where owner responds positively advise them of relevant scheme and forward details on where appropriate.
- d) Where no response is received a second letter will be sent asking for the owner's plans to bring the property back into use.
- e) Where considered appropriate other options will be investigated including CPO and Voluntary/Compulsory Leasing arrangements. (EHMOs as and when they are included in future housing legislation)
- f) In the event that dwellings owned by a Registered Social Landlord are identified as being vacant for over 6 months and not addressed through ordinary joint partnering arrangements, the Council will determine the reason for the vacancy and try to help to resolve the problem through negotiation. (It is envisaged that such vacancies will be concentrated in sheltered housing stock where the demand for such accommodation can be limited in certain rural areas of the Vale especially at specific times of the year)

In addition:-

- 1) In partnership with RSLs the Council will continue working to promote sustainable communities through its development programme. This will ensure that hard-to-let /void accommodation is kept to a minimum.
- 2) The Council has developed a choice based lettings system in line with proposals contained in the Government's Housing Green Paper. This should help to minimise the numbers of applicants who are rehoused and immediately apply to go on the transfer register of the RSL resulting in increased void times as properties change hands.

MONITORING

It is vital that the success of the strategy in meeting its objectives is monitored on a regular basis and the appropriate action taken to address any identified weaknesses in delivery.

To assist the monitoring process the Council has set the following targets:-

- To consider all the options available for tackling the problem of empty homes and ensure that where vacant properties are identified every effort is made to bring the dwelling back into use to help meet local housing needs.
- To provide a procedural framework for bringing properties back into use including the initial grading and targeting of new and previously identified dwellings where action by the Council is considered necessary.
- To enhance the character of the local community through improvement and rehabilitation of derelict properties leading to improved safety and reduced risks of vandalism.

- To work corporately and in partnership with stakeholders in adopting a pro-active approach to identifying and restoring vacant properties to meet housing need.
- To carry out regular surveys of empty homes in the Vale
- To carry out mail shots to owners of vacant private accommodation
- To support bids made by RSLs to The Housing Corporation which seek to bring empty homes back into use.
- To promote the Strategy through consultation and working in partnership with stakeholders.
 - i) Owners/Landlords
 - ii) Estate Agents
 - iii) Parish Councils
 - iv) Housing Corporation
 - v) Registered Social Landlords
 - vi) General Public
 - vii) District Councillors
 - viii) Other Council departments
- To have an Empty Homes Co-ordinator based at the Council who will deal with enquiries and initiate the most appropriate form of action.

CONCLUSION

The strategy has highlighted the problem of empty homes in the Vale and proposed ways of bringing them back into use to help to address both the shortage of affordable homes and the limited access to accommodation for those who are benefit dependant or on low incomes. The Council will continue to update and review the strategy in line with its overall housing strategic objectives.

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL SERVICES
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3 FEBRUARY 2006

Customer Contact Strategy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

1.1 This report draws on a number of sources notably:

- The Consultants Report in respect of Customer Contact Strategy
- Business Case in respect of Customer Contact Strategy
- Project Appraisal Local Services Point 2
- Consultants Report in respect of partnering and/or outsourcing of Revenue and Benefit Services and
- Best Value Review Revenues and Benefits

1.2 The report draws together the issues arising from the above documents and recommendations for the adoption of a Customer Contact Strategy.

1.3 The Contact Officer for this report is Tim Sadler Strategic Director, 01235 540360.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive recommends to Council the Customer Contact Strategy attached to this report.

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

(a) The report relates to the Access to Services Strategy

(b) The Access to Services Strategy has been drafted to reflect current advice and related policy.

4.0 Background and Supporting Information

4.1 Members of the Executive will recall that the rationale behind drawing together a Customer Contact Strategy was to give clear direction and set clear expectations regarding the development of Access to Services, Local Service Points, Contact Centres and how service re-engineering, workflow and use of the contact centre would improve both customer satisfaction, services and efficiency.

4.2 The NCC report on the development of a Customer Contact Strategy and Business Case for the Vale confirms that the Council's approach of seeking "a broad and shallow" approach to the development of our Local Service Points and Customer Contact Centre and the integration of customer relationship management technologies is correct.

4.3 This is because of the costs and technical difficulties of joining together the customer relationship system with the various legacy systems in the organisation.

4.4 The broad and shallow approach enables the Council to generate benefits which are primarily non-cashable benefits, as set out in Appendix 1 of the proposed Strategy.

- 4.5 We have modelled the potential cost savings from driving a broad and shallow approach, combined with a rigorous approach to re-engineering and workflow around back office services and the collection of payments.
- 4.6 Theoretically the cost savings achievable are significant. However, when taking into account the consultants advice to discount these due to the limited economies of scale available at the Vale, being a relatively small District Council, uncertainty and potential growth, both in the number of contacts and as a consequence of the additional call on services, we believe that a realistic expectation of cost savings from driving a broad and shallow strategy are in the region of £40-50K per annum.
- 4.7 However, the actual cost savings after implementation are yet to be identified. Therefore the working assumption in the budget is that in the medium term, after implementation costs, the Strategy would be cost neutral. However, as and when specific savings are identified they would be taken at that time.
- 4.8 The cost of implementing the contact centre thus far have been set out in the post project review. The estimated costs of rolling out this approach to further service areas is £240K. This sum is included in the Executive's Initial Budget Proposition spread over 3 years.
- 4.9 We have therefore concluded that a customer contact strategy with the aims and principles set out as an appendix to this report is appropriate for this Council and request that the Executive confirm this and recommend it to Council in order that work can proceed on the detailed implementation plan.

5.0 **Conclusions**

- 5.1 It is our view that despite the limitations imposed by the relatively small scale of the operation of the Vale and the fact that this may get even smaller in the future that a Customer Contact Strategy which continues to implement the LSP2 customer contact centre under a "broad and shallow" strategy approach is warranted, not least by the non-cashable benefits achievable but also from the modest cash savings that are likely to accrue.

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers:

The Consultants Report in respect of Customer Contact Strategy
Project Appraisal Local Services Point 2
Consultants Report in respect of partnering and/or outsourcing of Revenue and Benefit Services
Best Value Review Revenues and Benefits



CUSTOMER CONTACT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Access to Services is a theme in the **Vale Community Strategy**. The Council has previously adopted an **Access to Services Strategy** which drove improvements in three areas of access to the Council's and Partners services:

- Physical access
- Opportunity and
- Electronic

Progress under that strategy has been good. The Council has:

- Developed its Local Services Points in Abingdon and Wantage
- Improved physical access to the buildings from which it delivers services
- Reached Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government improving equality of access to services
- Implemented Customer Relationship Systems and workflow to streamline customer contacts and improve quality of service
- Introduced a call centre and laid the foundations for online self service
- Improved the Council's web presence
- Introduced, with the other Oxfordshire authorities, the Community Information database www.oxfordshiregateway.co.uk

This strategy builds on the Access to Services Strategy and takes forward our Corporate aim of improving and modernising access to our services by providing a clear vision of how the Council wants to see access to services further developed and how new technologies and ways of working will be engaged.

Background Information

The Vale Council has around 700,000 contacts with customers a year. The channels for these contacts are set out in Table 1 below.

Current Contact Numbers by Enquiry Channel

	2003/04	2004/05
Face-to-Face		
Abingdon LSP	25964	27427
Wantage LSP	16276	16028
Cashiering – front and back office		
Abingdon	75000	71555
Wantage	17041	14980
Faringdon	6000	6190
Telephone		
Incoming Calls	294000	274000

Post In	261323	257967
Self-Serve	7000	7000
Total	708604	701147

The Council fully expects the number of contacts to grow reflecting both increasing demand and growth in the breadth of services but, most significantly, growth in 'new business' as contacting the Council is made easier and more convenient and more people utilize the services on offer.

The Vale is an affluent area with a well educated population.

Only 1.6% of the Vale population is unemployed, as compared with the rate of 3.4% for England and Wales. The population is generally better educated than average across the UK with 28.2% of people of working age educated to degree level or higher (England and Wales average 19.8%). (Source: Census 2001)

This profile is reflected in a high take up of new technology and broadband internet penetration in the area

PC ownership in Western Europe is around 70%¹. 99% of all premises in the UK are technically able to be connected to broadband internet² and take-up of broadband services is expected to settle at around 60% by 2008.³ The last survey of online take-up in the Vale was undertaken in 2002, when 59% of citizens had access to the internet from home. It is likely that this figure has risen since then. In addition, all libraries in Oxfordshire provide free access to the internet, as do VWHDC's two Local Service Points.

This places the Council in an ideal position to exploit new technologies to improve customer contact and gain efficiencies. The Council is aware that not everyone is able to make use of these technologies over the internet. However, the same underlying technologies can be applied to make face to face and telephone contact effective, efficient and of the desired quality.

Having said that, since the Council has introduced its Choice Based Lettings scheme, which is internet based, (see Valehomechoice.org.uk) and has a client group which includes many who are relative to the bulk of the population, disadvantaged. 72% of 'bids' reviewed under the scheme have been received on the internet.

AIMS

The aims of this Strategy are that:

- Cost effective channels will be developed and marketed to encourage as many customers as possible to self-serve or use our call centre services

¹ ZDnet news, 25 November 2005

² BT.com

³ ZDnet news, 25 November 2005

- Customer service will be, as far as practicable, coordinated and process managed to ensure a quality repeatable service which reflects the adopted service standards
- Opportunities will be taken through process re-design and workflow to create cashable and non-cashable efficiencies.
- The Council will continue to develop access channels which reflect the changing preferences of our customers

The Principles

These aims lead us to the following principles which underpin the Strategy:

- A small number of reliable access points of contact
- Consistent delivery of service standards
- Automation of transactions
- Removal of duplication and overlap
- From an efficiency point of view self serve is the Council's preferred channel

Current Position and Way Forward

The diagrams in Appendix 1 set out our thinking about our current position and the way forward. Diagram 1 represents where we were. Customers funnelled through a small number of access channels making contact directly into the service departments with little opportunity for control over consistency or opportunities from economies of efficiencies of scale.

Diagram 3 shows what most local authorities are aiming for. Broad access channels to a single point (or small number of points operating identically), contact information captured on a Customer Relationship Management system, backed up by a content management system which co-ordinates the same information as available from the front of house and call centre and "self serve" facilities.

Diagram 2 shows what it is feasible for the Vale, and the vast majority of local authorities to achieve for the foreseeable future. The front end is provided but there is little or no integration of the CRM and CMS into the back office systems. We refer to this as the "Broad and Shallow" approach. The reasons for this approach are the technological challenges and high capital costs of deep integration. We intend to follow the broad and shallow approach combined with a watching brief on developments, particularly through the national "connectors club" projects, looking for cost effective opportunities for deeper integration.

With this approach, without compromising service quality and customer satisfaction, the benefits are likely to be focused in the "non-cashable" elements set out on the grid attached – Appendix 2. In the light of this the Council will be cautious about firming up potential savings that would be achieved until identifiable savings steps have been identified.

LINKS TO OTHER INITIATIVES

This strategy should be read in conjunction with other initiatives across the organisation.

- Customer Focus – with initiatives around
 - Building understanding of modern approaches to customer care
 - The development of service standards
 - Consultation and customer feedback
- Re-organisation of central administration functions
- Re-organisation of processing functions such as land charges and licencing
- Financial transactions
 - The Council has introduced debit and credit card payments for those services transferred to the contact centre. This development presents opportunities to streamline payments to the Council and make efficiency savings. The Council's preferred methods of payment are:
 - regular payments by individuals – direct debits
 - one-off payments – debit or credit cards
 - regular payments on business or business basis – BACS payments

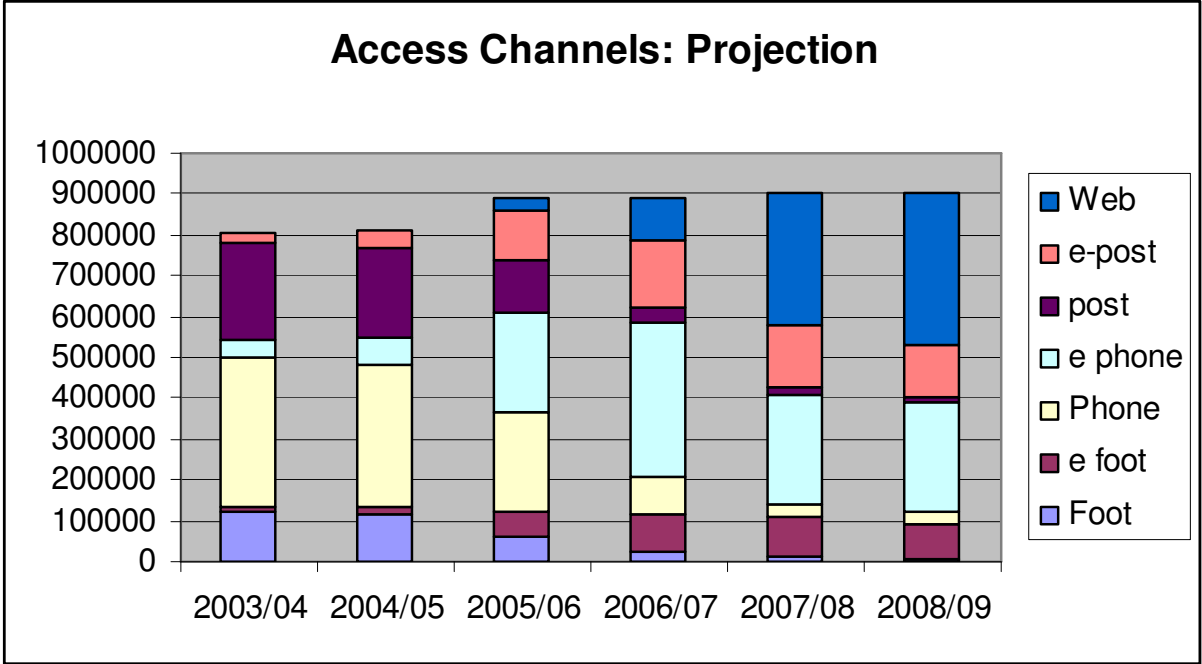
In implementing this strategy and the development of services these preferences will be taken into account. Over time this will significantly reduce the amount of cheques and cash handled by the Council. This will enable rationalisation of our cash and post handling functions.

Taken together there is expected to be significant opportunities for efficiencies and costs savings.

MILESTONES FOR STRATEGY

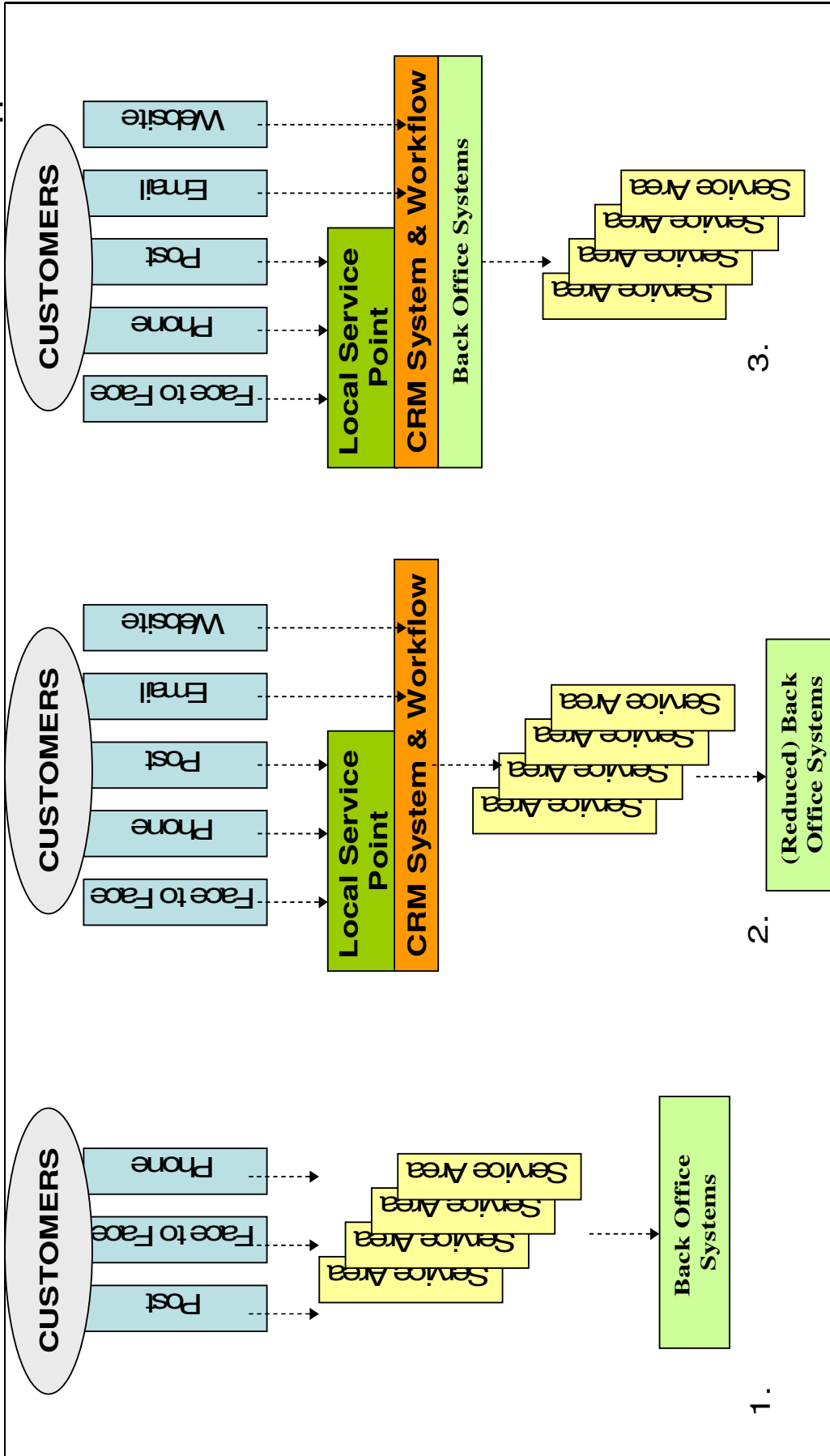
- Roll out LSP2 to remaining high call volume areas of the Council
- Implement service standard methods for those transactions which are essentially paying the Council.
- Review deep integration of services/transactions on an individual business case basis.
- Promote and incentivise the cheapest methods of transaction for the Council.
- Seek opportunities i.e. to build economies of scale through working in collaboration.

The graph below shows projected trends in usage of various access channels over the next 3 years, based on the current model of Council service provision.:

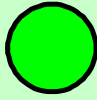





A separate business case investigating the costs, benefits and risks of the Strategy has been produced.

That business case will be used as the starting point for the project management of this Strategy.



What are the benefits?

		CRM Benefits Matrix	
Financial	Yes	<p>Cost Reduction & Efficiency Savings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of queries resolved first time • Reduction in repeat calls • More cost-effective use of channels • Queries quickly directed to subject matter experts (improved use of resources) • Single team of customer facing council staff (greater efficiency across entire council) <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>Service Improvement/ Added Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services delivered more effectively across the organisation • Development of re-usable skills • Enterprise-wide processing of information • More efficient production and effective use of MI • Use of MI for predictive management of services • Earlier cash collection <p style="text-align: right;"></p>
	No	<p>Service Improvement/ Added Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved customer satisfaction • Improved customer response • Use of new, more effective channels • Improved BVPI <p style="text-align: right;"></p>	<p>Strategic & Intangible Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public perception • Increased awareness of quality of local services • Improved information about citizens and authority customers • Catalyst for organisational change <p style="text-align: right;"></p>
		Yes	No
		Quantifiable	

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER AND SOLICITOR
TO THE EXECUTIVE
3RD FEBRUARY 2006

Freedom of Information Act 2000 and
Environmental Information Regulations 2004 –
Charging Policy

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 As Members will be aware, the above legislation came into force on 1st January 2005 and gives the public the right to request information from the Council which then has an obligation to respond promptly and within 20 working days by either disclosing the requested information or refusing to disclose on the basis of one of the statutory exceptions.
- 1.2 The 2000 Act gives greater public access to general information held by Public Authorities, like the Council and the 2004 Regulations provide a specific statutory regime for the disclosure of environmental information. Although “the right to know” is similar in both cases, the provisions are not identical and this is relevant when considering the issue of charging the public for the information sought.
- 1.3 The Council now has the benefit of one year’s experience of dealing with this legislation and 12 months on the time is right to decide whether or not the Council should seek to charge for the information in the future.
- 1.4 The Contact Officer for this report is David Quayle, Monitoring Officer and Solicitor [telephone number: 01235 540312].

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 *To note that there is currently no charging Policy in respect of “right to know requests for information and to consider whether such a Policy should be approved by the Council.*
- 2.2 *If Members are of the opinion that a Policy should be put into place, then the Executive is invited to consider the draft Policy attached at Appendix A and to recommend its adoption by the Council.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council’s Vision, Strategies and Policies

- (a) This report relates to the Council’s Vision and the aim which seeks to strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information.
- (b) This report is relevant to the Council’s approval of a budget for 2006/07.

4.0 Background Information

- 4.1 As Members know, the Council has a Vision to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community with one of its aims being to strengthen local democracy and public involvement through freedom of information. The Council therefore welcomed the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the related Regulations made 4 years later and have now had 12 months experience in dealing with requests from the public.
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report on 14 June 2005 (report No.12/05) on this subject and also a six-month review of the number and types of requests received on 15th December 2005 (item 12). Although the number and types of request have not been particularly difficult to deal with, they can be time consuming and deflect staff from dealing with other particular issues set out in their Service Plans. In general, the Council has not received more than one request from any particular person but there is one local resident who has submitted numerous requests in the last 12 months under both pieces of legislation.

4.3 As the Council is about to consider its budget for the next financial year and approve new fees and charges for the provision of its services, it is only right that the Council should consider whether to start charging members of the public for dealing with requests for information, whether they be under the 2000 Act or the 2004 Regulations. The charging provisions are a little different between the more general 2000 Act and the more specific 2004 Regulations and these are dealt with below.

5.0 The Powers to Charge for Information

5.1 The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 are self-contained and Regulation 8 deals with charging for environmental information made available following a request. The Council has the power to charge the applicant for making the information available subject to 2 exceptions:-

- (a) there is no charge for allowing an applicant to look at public registers or lists containing environmental information held by the Authority and
- (b) similarly, there is no charge for an applicant who wants to examine the information requested at the Council offices.

5.2 Any charge under the 2004 Regulations must be a reasonable one and the Council can require advance payment which must be made by the applicant within 60 working days of being asked to pay for the information requested. If the Council do invoke a charging system, then it will be under an obligation to publish a schedule of charges and information on the circumstances in which a charge may be made or waived.

5.3 The position is not quite so straightforward when dealing with the more general 2000 Act and the related Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limits and Fees) Regulations 2004. The first point to make is that under this legislation, the Council has the ability to refuse a request if the estimated cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate statutory limit which is currently set at £450. The Regulations indicate how the estimate is to be calculated. The draft Policy indicates that there should be a presumption in favour of refusing a request where the statutory threshold is exceeded but leaves discretion to the officers to grant an application in exceptional circumstances e.g where the estimate is only marginally over the £450 threshold.

5.4 Section 9 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Regulations 6 and 7 of the 2004 Fees Regulations make it clear that the Council has the power to charge a fee for an FOI request, but it must not exceed the maximum determined by the Council in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations. The Council can aggregate the costs it reasonably expects to incur in informing the applicant whether it holds the information and the cost of communicating the information to that person. These costs can include the cost of reproducing any document, postage or similar costs but the Council cannot take into account the costs which are attributable to staff time expected to be spent on dealing with the request. Thus, the scope for recovery of the Council's full costs is limited.

5.5 The draft Policy at Appendix A takes into account the above statutory provisions and Members are invited to recommend to the Council the adoption of the Policy which should be implemented as soon as possible and in any event by the beginning of the next financial year.

DAVID M QUAYLE
MONITORING OFFICER & SOLICITOR

Background Papers: None

VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CHARGING POLICY

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Vale of White Horse District Council (“the Council”) has a Vision to build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community and has a number of stated aims designed to turn this Vision into action. The Council aims to provide high quality services to the people of the Vale and is committed to strengthening local democracy and freedom of information.
- 1.2 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 set out a national framework to regulate public access to information held by the Council. The legislation allows Public Authorities; like the Council to charge applicants who request information and the Council has decided that a Charging Policy should be introduced to cover applications for information in the future.
- 1.3 This Policy was considered by the Executive on 3rd February before being approved by the Council on 22nd February 2006. The Policy comes into effect on 1st April 2006.

2.0 Policy Statement

- 2.1 **The Council aims to strengthen local democracy and public involvement to access to information and therefore welcomed the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 when they came into force on 1st January 2005. The Council acknowledges there is a duty to applicants who exercise their “right to know” to respond to their requests in accordance with the legislation. This Policy therefore applies to all applications made under the 2000 Act or the 2004 Regulations.**
- 2.2 **As and when the Information Commissioner produces Codes of Practice or other Guidance relating to charging applicants for requesting information, the Council will normally follow the Commissioner’s Codes or Guidance unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying a departure from the recommended approach. Any Code or Guidance issued by the Commissioner will be taken into account when dealing with specific charging issues.**
- 2.3 **The Council recognise that requests for information can be diverse and varied and therefore need to be dealt with by the relevant Service Areas subject to obtaining advice from the Council’s Monitoring Officer on any legal issues raised by the application. The Strategic Directors will have overall responsibility for compliance in their relevant Service Areas, but it will be the responsibility of the Deputy/Assistant Directors to deal with day-to-day requests for information which are relevant to the services they deliver. The adoption of this Policy should be regarded as giving both the Strategic Directors and the Deputy/Assistant Directors the delegated power to deal with such applications including the power to charge or waive charges in accordance with the legislation and the provisions of this Policy.**
- 2.4 **Assistant/Deputy Directors shall normally refuse a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 if the estimated cost of dealing with that case exceeds the statutory maximum set out in Regulations made by the Secretary of State. However, this presumption of refusal is not irrebuttable and may be overridden if the Deputy/Assistant Director is of the opinion that the circumstances warrant a departure from the normal approach.**

- 2.6 Subject to the statutory restrictions set out in legislation, the Council will normally charge for requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and will publish the relevant charges as soon as possible after the Council's annual budget meeting in February each year. The Strategic Director who is for the time being designated as the Chief Finance Officer of the Council shall determine the charges both for the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information applications, following consultation with the Council's Monitoring Officer.**
- 2.8 This Policy shall come into effect on 1st April 2006 and shall be reviewed at least once every 4 years and also when circumstances warrant it.**
