

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)  
SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND EXECUTIVE  
3 DECEMBER 2008  
COUNCIL  
10 DECEMBER 2008

**Local Development Framework**  
**The Core Strategy: Preferred Options Report**

**1.0 Introduction and report summary**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council has to produce a local development framework which is a new style of development plan that will replace the local plan. The first document to be prepared is the Core Strategy and an important part of the process is engaging with the public. To this end a draft Preferred Options report has been prepared under the guidance of the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group. It is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 At the meeting on the 3 December there will be a presentation to members of the Development Control Committee and Executive, with time for questions and discussion. Immediately afterwards the Development Control Committee will make its recommendations to Executive, which will then in turn make its recommendations to Council on the 10<sup>th</sup>.
- 1.3 The contact officer for this report is Katie Barrett, Development Policy Manager (tel no 01235 540339, email [katie.barrett@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:katie.barrett@whitehorsedc.gov.uk)).

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 *That the Development Control Committee and the Executive recommend Council to*
- a) *Approve the Preferred Options report for publication in January*
  - b) *Delegate changes that do not alter the overall content and message of the report to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) and, if necessary, more substantive changes to him in consultation with the chair of the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group and the opposition spokesman.*

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

- 3.1 This report relates to the vision and all its aims. The Core Strategy will guide development and investment decisions in the Vale to 2026, will help deliver the priorities in community strategy and the local area agreement, and all planning applications will be determined in accordance with it.

**4.0 Background**

- 4.1 Members will be aware that the planning system introduced by the Government in 2004 replaced local plans with local development frameworks. The existing local plan to 2011 will be replaced by two documents: the Core Strategy and the Managing Development document. The Council is progressing work on the Core Strategy, which

will establish the broad framework to guide development to 2026 and identify major sites for development. It has to comply with the policies and requirements in the South East Plan and help deliver the priorities in the Community Strategy. The Managing Development document will set out detailed policies and identify smaller development sites.

- 4.2 Last November the Council and the Vale Partnership consulted on a range of issues and options that would be important for both the Community Strategy and the Core Strategy. During this year the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group has been assessing the comments made at the issues and options stage and has been guiding the work preparing the Preferred Options report. If members agree, this will be published for consultation in January.

## **5.0 Summary of the main points in the report**

- 5.1 The preferred options report sets out

- A portrait of the Vale today
- The vision and objectives for the future
- The preferred strategy for locating new development – urban concentration – with an explanation of why this is favoured over the alternative of more development in villages. It looks in detail at what this means for housing, employment, shopping and transport across the district
- Policies that will apply to specific places in the Vale: Abingdon, Wantage & Grove, the Didcot area, Botley, Faringdon and the rural areas. For completeness and to show how the local development framework will achieve its ‘place shaping’ role, an indication is also given of the policies that are likely to be included in the Managing Development document
- Policies that will apply across the district divided into four broad themes: building communities, supporting prosperity, delivering quality environments and protecting and improving the high quality natural and built environment.

- 5.2 There are some elements in the report that will be controversial including

- Identifying land for some 4,470 homes on greenfield sites on the edges of the main towns in addition to sites already allocated in the local plan. This is required to meet the housing requirement set out in the draft South East Plan. It involves
  - 2,300 homes west of Didcot in Harwell parish
  - 250 homes at Wantage and Grove on sites of less than 200 homes
  - Either 1,500 homes south west of Abingdon or 1500 homes north east of Wantage in Grove parish
  - 420 homes south of Park Road at Faringdon
- Locating most employment development at the existing large employment sites of Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, where there is considerable potential for further growth. Also making limited additional provision at Wantage & Grove and Faringdon, and at Abingdon if the site south west of the town is selected for housing development
- Redeveloping Bury Street precinct and the Charter in Abingdon, the Waitrose/Campbells Yard area in Wantage, the area of Budgens store and Southampton Street car park in Faringdon and West Way shopping centre and

Elms Parade in Botley. This will enable more retail floorspace to be provided in existing centres and environmental improvements to be made

- Safeguarding land and seeking contributions where appropriate for new road construction including
  - Schemes identified in the Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy to support growth in the Wantage & Grove – Didcot area, including
    - a relief road north east of Wantage
    - a link road from the A4130 to the A417 west of Didcot running more or less parallel with the A34
    - a link from the A417 to the A34 Chilton interchange and improvements to Featherbed Lane, or a southern bypass to the Rowstock crossroads
    - a range of road safety and junction improvements on the A417 east of Wantage and the A338 north of Grove
    - (the requirement for the link road north of Grove needed in association with the development of the former airfield is unchanged)
  - Schemes referred to in the Local Transport Plan for the medium-long term including
    - Improvements to the A415 including a new bridge over the Thames at Newbridge
    - A bypass for Marcham
    - A southern bypass for Abingdon (subject to further study)
  - Investigating and safeguarding land for schemes that are desired in the long term including
    - A Wantage western relief road
    - The reopening of the A34 slip roads at Drayton
    - Providing south facing slip roads at the A34 Lodge Hill interchange.

5.3 Further details of all these proposals are set out in Section 4 of the draft Preferred Options report. Although they may arouse public controversy the Government makes it clear that through core strategies Council's must make difficult decisions, and that all reasonable alternatives must be considered. It should also be stressed that this is a consultation document and that final decisions of what to include in the Core Strategy will not be made till next year. These decisions will take into account a whole range of factors including

- the responses of town and parish councils, the public, service providers, landowners and developers
- national and regional planning policies
- the viability of the schemes and the risks of them being not being developed.

5.4 Some elements in the Preferred Options report are aspirational and will take time to come to fruition. However, the Core Strategy is a long-term plan and it is important that the Council establishes what it wants to achieve to guide future development and investment decisions.

## **6.0 The next steps**

6.1 If Council approves the report for publication there will be a 6-week period of public consultation and engagement until the 27<sup>th</sup> February. The report will be put in a proper publishing format and photographs will be included to make the text more inviting to read. It will be widely circulated in accordance with the Council's statement of community involvement (this sets out how people will be invited to be involved in the

planning process). There will be exhibitions and workshops/discussion groups starting with one for all town and parish councils on 22<sup>nd</sup> January at Wantage civic hall. Full details will be posted on the Council's web site.

- 6.2 The consultation on preferred options is an important stage leading to the preparation of a draft Core Strategy that will be published early 2010. Although this seems a long time in the future, it is necessary to make sure all the information on the major sites proposed for development is completed. Among other things this has to include an implementation plan that will set out what infrastructure is needed to support the development, how much it costs, how it will be funded and provided and when it will be delivered. It also has to set out the risks of the sites not being developed and the Council's alternative strategy if they are not.

RODGER HOOD  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY)