

# Cherwell District Council

## Executive

5 January 2015

### Bicester Garden Town Announcement

## Report of Commercial Director (Bicester)

### Purpose of report

To update the Executive regarding Bicester being designated as a Garden Town in the Autumn Statement on 3 December 2014 and the next steps.

### 1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the announcement in the Autumn Statement on 3 December 2014 that allocated Bicester as a garden town that could bid for funds to expedite the delivery of key infrastructure required for the planned growth.
- 1.2 Note that up to £50k from the economic development new homes bonus pot is available to progress the work required to prepare formal infrastructure bids in advance of the Council receiving a capacity grant for this activity.
- 1.3 Note that regular updates on the garden town status and outcome of the funding bids will be presented to the Executive.

### 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 In April 2014 the government issued the Locally-led Garden Cities Prospectus (see Appendix 1)
- 2.2 The Council submitted an Expression of Interest for Bicester to become a garden town which would deliver up to 13,000 homes, provide choice (self build/custom build), significant employment growth, improved infrastructure and community facilities.
- 2.3 This bid was submitted with the support of all tiers of local government and championed by our local MP, Sir Tony Baldry.
- 2.4 Bicester is a community that is already experiencing substantial planned growth, which is being delivered from a shared vision with the support of the community. The planned 13,000 new homes (Appendix 3) combined with new employment, retail, community and social facilities will be set in an attractive green infrastructure

connected through existing neighbourhoods. The bid seeks investment in roads and facilities for the area which can accelerate delivery.

### **3.0 Report details**

- 3.1 According to the Town and Country Planning Association, at the heart of the Garden City concept is the development of holistically planned new settlements which enhance the natural environment, tackle climate change and provide high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible jobs in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities.
- 3.2 The Town and Country Planning Association have set out a number of principles (Appendix 1 Para 7) that localities may wish to consider in deciding whether to submit an expression of interest. Many of these principles have synergy with the One Shared Vision for Bicester. (Appendix 2)
- 3.3 Bicester will grow significantly (Appendix 3) to become an important economic centre in its own right and is well located at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge knowledge spine with good transport links by road, passenger rail and rail freight. A major release of employment land is planned to compliment the housing growth and will target new investment in knowledge based industries, performance engineering, off site manufacturing and logistics.
- 3.4 We recognise that this designation provides a unique opportunity to strengthen the existing vision, to bring in new funding and development partners to grow our vision into '**Bicester Garden Town**'. We now need to build on the One Shared Vision and engage with public and private sector partners and government departments. Further engagement will also take place with the local community and businesses in the area to both maintain the consensus for and refine the shared vision to include garden town status.
- 3.5 DCLG have advised that they will make resource funding available to Bicester, to help ensure that planning and feasibility work can be conducted as quickly as possible in the form of a capacity grant funding to 2016, and brokerage; with the Homes and Communities Agency's ATLAS team providing planning support.
- 3.6 In order to make the deadline for infrastructure funding bids for the March 2015 budget process the Council will need to progress this work with immediate effect. As a result resources up to £50k will need to be made available ahead of the capacity funding being received.
- 3.7 These resources can be funded from existing resources in the form of new homes bonus funds received in 2014/15 that are allocated to economic development. Once the capacity funding is received from DCLG this pot will be replenished.

### **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Funding to support infrastructure will greatly assist the growth in Bicester and bring benefits to existing residents and new.

- 4.2 We have begun dialogue with DCLG on the process and will continue to provide updates to the Executive as work progresses along with proposals to consult with the residents and businesses of Bicester.

## 5.0 Consultation

None – once more information is available regarding the designation then a formal consultation event will take place in Bicester.

## 6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 There is an option not to provide funding during 2014/15 and submit bids for the 2015/16 budget process. This is not recommended as a number of priority actions require resources now.

## 7.0 Implications

### Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There is a requirement to provide revenue budget of up to £50k to fund resources to progress the funding bids.
- 7.2 These funds can be met from existing resources in the form of new homes bonus funds received in 2014/15 that are allocated to economic development. Once the capacity funding is received from DCLG this pot will be replenished.

Comments checked by:

Paul Sutton, Head of Finance and Procurement, 0300 0030106,  
paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

### Legal Implications

- 7.3 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

Comments checked by: Kevin Lane, Head of Law and Governance Tel: 0300 0030107, Email: kevin.lane@charerwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

### Risk Implications

- 7.4 There are no direct risks as a result of this report.

Comments checked by:

Paul Sutton, Head of Finance and Procurement, 0300 0030106  
paul.sutton@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

## 8.0 Decision Information

**Key Decision**

**No**

**Financial Threshold Met**                      **No**

**Community Impact Threshold Met:**      **No**

**Wards Affected**

Bicester

**Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

This proposal will enable the Council to deliver its vision for housing growth and promoting economic development which will meet the following objectives of the Council’s Strategic Objectives:

- District of Opportunity
- Thriving Communities
- Safe Green and Clean

**Lead Member**

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

**Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Locally Led Garden Cities
Appendix 2	One Shared Vision
Appendix 3	Bicester Growth (as per Local Plan)
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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