

## **NW Bicester Eco Development**

### **Delivery and Governance - Notes on Proposed Arrangements**

These notes provide clarification and detail in respect of the outline proposals contained in the CDC's Eco Towns funding Bid submitted to Government in November 2010.

It is important to recognise that the proposals presented are for the initial phase of work. They are expected to evolve as the project progresses and reference is made to the possibilities that exist in that respect.

Final arrangements will respond to the specific needs of the project and in particular to developments in the local authority partnership and decision making framework. In addition the relationship between public sector leadership and private sector delivery will be influential (characterised in CDC's funding Bid as the preferred private sector led form of delivery, as against the possible contingency plan involving greater direct public sector involvement).

### **Bid Submission Statement**

The following is an extract from the Bid document (Section 7) :

#### **“ 7. LOCAL DELIVERY MECHANISMS**

There is now clear political support for NW Bicester in each local authority. In light of this we propose to put in place the arrangements detailed in this section, comprising

- A NW Bicester Strategic Delivery Board, supported by a number of Strategic Delivery Board sub-groups
- An independent 'challenge panel' modelled on the national model used during the early stages of eco town selection
- A dedicated NW Bicester delivery team
- A forum for leading members from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to meet formally to facilitate decision-making
- A forum for senior officers from Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Bicester Town Council and other organisations represented on the Strategic Delivery Board to meet formally to facilitate delivery

These arrangements could be further developed in the future and we touch on this at the end of this section.

#### **7.1 NW Bicester Strategic Delivery Board**

The NW Bicester Liaison Group has operated very effectively until now. The NW Bicester Strategic Delivery Board represents an evolution from this, bringing together the key organisations and government agencies which collectively have the powers and authority to deliver the NW Bicester development.

The NW Bicester Strategic Delivery Board will comprise Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Bicester Town Council, Bicester Vision, the Homes and Communities Agency, the South East Development Agency, the Government Office of the South East, the Environment Agency and Oxfordshire PCT. Other partners will be asked to attend as required.

The Board's job will be to steer the project to delivery, by providing direction to the sub-groups and delivery team and resolving issues which threaten to get in the way of delivery. Its proposed membership is laid out below and it will meet every six weeks for the foreseeable future.

We consider it important that this Board has an appropriate link to the private sector developers involved in the eco town (currently P3 Eco) and as the development of the Eco Town progresses the Board will establish a formal liaison arrangement with lead developer(s). This will include the facility for reports made directly to the Board. However, we recognise that for some items of business development partners will not be present and that it will be the decision of the other Board members as to when and when is not appropriate for them to be in attendance.

Like the current NW Liaison Group the status of this Board will initially be informal, although a greater degree of formality could be adopted in the future.

The Board will be the vehicle for a local area element of the Local Area Agreement and will seek to agree implementation targets with Government. Its work will also play a key role in wider arenas such as the Single Conversation led by the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Partnership and overall LAA delivery led by the Public Service Board.

The administrative support for the Strategic Delivery Board will be provided from within the NW Bicester delivery team.

#### *Proposed membership*

- Cherwell District Council (3 members): Leader; Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing; Portfolio Holder for Economy and Estates (a member for Bicester)
- Oxfordshire County Council (3 members): Leader; Portfolio Holder for Strategic Infrastructure; Portfolio Holder for School Improvement (a member for Bicester)
- Bicester Town Council (3 members): Leader; Chairman of Planning Committee; one other to be agreed
- Bicester Vision (1 member): Chairman
- Homes and Communities Agency (1 member): Regional Director
- South East Development Agency (1 member): Corporate Director
- Government Office of the South East (1 member): Locality Manager
- Environment Agency (1 member): Regional Director
- Oxfordshire PCT (1 member): Director for Commissioning

### **7.2 Strategic Delivery Board sub-groups**

We will establish a number of **Strategic Delivery Board sub-groups** comprising Delivery Board member organisations and others as appropriate. The groups which are required will change over time but these seven will be established now:

- Planning and design
- Transport
- Technology
- Community building
- Consultation and communications
- Education
- Health and social care

### **7.3 An independent 'challenge panel'**

Modelled on the national panel, this will bring together national, regional and local experts from the public, private and voluntary sector to challenge the Strategic Delivery Board and the private developer (s) on issues of technology and of meeting the PPS standards.

### **7.4 Dedicated NW Bicester delivery team**

This will be a dedicated staff team with appropriate expertise and access to specialist consultancy skills. It will report to the Strategic Delivery Board. A full time Project Manager and Implementation Officer, with part time administration support are already in place (forward funded by CDC from reserves).

Details of the proposed team are at Appendix .8.2

### **7.5 A forum for leading Members from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to meet formally to facilitate decision-making**

This arrangement is designed to deliver consensus between Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council on a whole host of key areas of policy and implementation. Where decisions are required by the District's Executive or the County's Cabinet these will be discussed informally at this meeting with the objective of tackling in advance any key issues and agreeing the content of the formal reports which will then be considered by the appropriate existing Committee. This group will also meet every six weeks.

#### *Agreed membership*

- From the District Council: Leader; Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing; Portfolio Holder for Economy and Estates (a member for Bicester)
- From Oxfordshire County Council: Leader; Portfolio Holder for Strategic Infrastructure; Portfolio Holder for School Improvement (a member for Bicester)

The secretariat for this meeting will be provided by Cherwell District Council.

### **7.6 A forum for senior officers from Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Bicester Town Council and other organisations represented on the Strategic Delivery to meet formally to facilitate delivery**

This group will support the work of the Delivery Board, Delivery Team and the leading members and will be critical to facilitating delivery across the organisations on the Strategic Delivery Board.

#### *Proposed membership*

- From the District Council: Chief Executive; Strategic Director for Planning, Housing and Economy
- From Oxfordshire County Council: Chief Executive; Director for Transport and Infrastructure
- From Bicester Town Council: Chief Officer
- From the Homes and Communities Agency: Area Manager
- From the South East Development Agency: Area Director
- From Government Office of the South East: Locality Manager
- From Environment Agency: Regional Director
- From Oxfordshire PCT: Director of Commissioning

As plans for creating NW Bicester develop, local partners will be ready to consider establishing a more independent arms-length partnership for delivery. This more formal partnership would be designed to support a long running commitment to the scheme and its implementation. This could be particularly useful in respect of community building and long term custodianship of the public assets created by the development. The partnership could utilise a company structure or other formal arrangement. One potential route is to consider the further development of the existing Bicester Vision partnership, (which is already based on business sector leadership and an independent Chairmanship), although this will need considerable further thought and agreement of the partners currently involved."

## **Delivery and Governance Structures**

To support the Bid statement the proposed initial structures are illustrated in the three attached Charts:

Delivery and Governance Chart A - Strategic Delivery Board

Delivery and Governance Chart B - Delivery Team

Delivery and Governance Chart C - Arrangements to Facilitate Decision Making

The notes below provide further detail on how these arrangements will function.

## **Delivery and Governance Chart A - Strategic Delivery Board**

Role: Provides overall partnership leadership to the Project and in particular provides continuity of leadership on a long term basis, regardless of changes in the local political environment. Informally constituted and operates by consensus. It will make recommendations to all delivery partners.

A series of special interest, implementation sub groups are envisaged. Examples are shown in the diagram. (see also Chart B below for management arrangements)

Potentially meetings of the Strategic Delivery Board are open access to the public.

The board will meet at least quarterly, but at certain stages more frequent meetings will be required.

### Terms of Reference:

- To act as custodian for the “vision” of the project as a special form of development
- To achieve consensus on the policy framework for implementation of the development (policy in the general sense – this is wider than formal planning policy)
- To achieve Project “buy in” and delivery action by public sector partners
- To support and advise CDC as the primary accountable body for public sector actions on the Project
- To encourage the private sector interests implementing the Project to retain the “vision”

### Guidance Notes:

- The preferred delivery model for NW Bicester is a private sector led development within a strong local authority policy framework. The role of the local planning authority in deciding formal planning policy, determining planning applications and striking the correct balance on planning agreements is the leading public sector role. This position is particularly important in the initial phases of delivery. For this reason the Chairman of the Delivery Board is the leader of the Council as it is the ultimate accountable body.
- Given this private sector led delivery model and the current landownership / developer position it would be inappropriate for these interests to be formally represented on the Board. However a strong

arms length relationship with landowners and developers will be built. This will allow formal reports in and information and guidance exchanges with the Board (as shown in the diagram).

- To achieve long term continuity it may eventually become desirable to consider a company structure and independence of chairmanship. Early involvement of the existing Bicester Vision Partnership (business led) allows for this issue to be addressed effectively at the appropriate point.
- The local Planning authority intends to explore how it might establish a second phase delivery vehicle that has power and influence in terms of community building and the long term custodianship of the eco development. This can however only be achieved by the application of planning powers and the use of pump priming funding in the context of planning policy and development control decisions. A suitable planning agreement will be needed to secure a delivery body with a sufficient land, financial or other equity stake in the development to secure these objectives. At this point it may be possible to form a formal partnership delivery body with formal landowner / lead developer involvement.

### **Delivery and Governance Chart B - Delivery Team**

Role: This is the executive arm of the Delivery Board and has a direct, two way, reporting and action taking relationship with the Board. It will project manage, identify issues and propose solutions.

The Team provides the additional special purpose staff capacity to undertake core public sector work on the Project. A series of special interest / implementation sub groups is likely to be needed. Examples are shown in the diagram. These will be accountable to the Strategic Delivery Board but will report in via the project team to ensure effective project management arrangements

The Project Team Leader has day to day management control and authority over the Project Team, and is accountable to the Board (with a direct reporting line). Partners will need to secure internal authority for executive actions but this will be driven by the recommendations and backing of the Strategic Delivery Board.

#### Terms of Reference:

- To prepare a project (business) plan and project manage the Project
- To provide the central public sector administrative support and expertise for governance of the Project.
- To provide the core public sector technical expertise and support to progress the Project.

- To advise, and make recommendations to the Delivery Board, and through that mechanism, to influence its constituent partners.
- To advise, and make direct recommendations, to the Local Planning Authority, (taking account of Delivery Board recommendations).
- To advise and make recommendations to public sector partners participating in the projects (some as part of the Delivery Board, others as partners affected by the proposals).
- To establish appropriate liaison and co operative working arrangements with the private sector land owner and development interests involved in the Project. (In addition, to seek appropriate methods to develop and enhance that relationship in order to progress the Project effectively, particularly through use of planning agreements and public sector pump priming funding. Such arrangements may lead to adjustments in the role of the Project team in respect of Local planning authority reports and recommendations).
- To oversee and advise on the use of any pump priming funding budget for the project where provided by Government or other partners (CDC will be the accountable body for this budget, but will hold it in a ring fenced account with proposals for, and monitoring of, spend reported quarterly to the Strategic Delivery Board).

Guidance Notes:

- The Delivery team will report direct to the Strategic Delivery Board and be responsible for implementing its recommendations.
- The Project is expected to be a primarily private sector led and funded project. There is however a necessity for a strong public sector “policy”, project management and support funding framework. Planning decisions (policy and development control) and associated planning agreements are the main public sector tool to provide that framework. For this reason the Delivery Team is proposed as being employed by and embedded within Cherwell District Council – the body responsible for decisions on these matters. Also for this reason the Delivery Team will need to report direct to the Council’s Executive and Planning Committee as well as to the Delivery Board.
- Delivery Team skills and expertise will need to be developed and adjusted to circumstances. Where possible direct staff employment will be favoured. Support from secondments by partner agencies and retained consultancy will be part of the skills available. Existing in house staff teams will be expected to provide routine input in a number of areas.

- In the short term it is recognised that ready access to skills in economic viability and property and in specialist project management will need to be available to the Team.

## **Delivery and Governance Chart C – Local Authority Arrangements to Facilitate Decision Making**

### Role:

This Chart shows general arrangements (involving three types of meeting) that will operate flexibly “behind the scenes”. The first purpose is to facilitate decision making within the three councils involved. The second is to provide for inter-authority and partner liaison on a more regular basis than is feasible through formal partnership meetings. It is essential to organise the work in this way so as to ensure that the formal partnership arrangements operate effectively at high level (in the Strategic Delivery Board).

All meetings involved are business meetings and there is no public access.

Because the structure set out here is an informal working arrangement there is no danger of confusion with the formal Strategic Delivery Board’s role. There is no formal linkage to the role of the Project Board and the Strategic Delivery Board. The Board will clearly hold the lead role, albeit it may receive reports and recommendations that have been influenced by prior work through these informal arrangements. In practice there will also be a need to manage the business and level of detail of Board work to an appropriate level, and this will serve to further avoid any confusion of roles.

CDC currently has its own internal Project Board which operates to the Council’s standard project management system (allowing for the inclusion of Portfolio holding Members). CDC will continue to lead most of the public sector work on the Project for the foreseeable future and this arrangement is essential to plan and deliver the necessary work corporately. It is anticipated that the County and Town Councils may have some need for similar arrangements to cover their day to day involvement in the project, so this is shown as a feature of the structure.

### Terms of Reference:

CDC NW Bicester Project Board is a regular monthly meeting to organise CDC’s day to day involvement in and resourcing of the Project. This will be crucial to ensure the substantial and detailed work of the Council on as community leadership of the project and on Local Planning Authority matters is effectively managed.

Ad hoc, informal, meetings between appropriate combinations of senior officers from key partners are envisaged for delivery facilitation

Similarly ad hoc, informal, County and District local authority joint Member meetings may be required to facilitate decision making.

Guidance Notes:

- All these meetings are working internal or partnership business meetings. There are no formal links to the formal project structure described in Charts A and B. The arrangements are however important mechanisms for informal influence and to facilitate detailed preparatory or problem solving work on issues that feature in the Board's overall work programme.
- Any final, or strategic, decisions will always be made through the formal Strategic Delivery Board.

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