

# Executive

## Eco Bicester One Shared Vision

6 December 2010

### Report of Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Economy

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To report to the Executive the Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision as approved by the Strategic Delivery Board meeting on 8 November 2010.
- To report back on the consultation feedback and seek approval for the revised document to be approved for development control purposes for planning proposals in Eco Bicester.
- To provide summary of the consultation on the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and the main issues arising from the consultation.

This report is public

#### Recommendations

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The Executive is recommended:

- (1) To consider the contents of the report.
- (2) To consider the proposed changes following the consultation on the Draft document.
- (3) To approve the Revised One Shared Vision document contained in Appendix 1 as informal planning guidance for development control purposes.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 The Eco Bicester One Shared Vision, prepared by the Eco Bicester Project team with input from partners on behalf of the Strategic Delivery Board (SDB), sets out the aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town over the next 20 to 30 years. It sits alongside other planning policies and strategies for Bicester and will be used to guide the SDB in the delivery of proposals for Eco Bicester.
- 1.2 One of the aims of the SDB was to develop a clear vision for Bicester for the next 30 years. The preparation of a shared vision was agreed by the SDB at its first meeting in April 2010. It clearly defines the aims and objectives of the SDB in delivering the eco development at North West Bicester and

integrating it with the long term aspirations for the existing town. It is designed to be a clear and concise summary of the key issues affecting the town as it continues to grow. The purpose of the shared vision is summarised as follows:

- To provide a shared vision for the whole of Bicester supported by partners
- To guide the local delivery of the eco-town of national, if not international, significance with the private sector
- To articulate key infrastructure needs to support the eco town
- To inform engagement between the local authority partners, Government departments and agencies on where they can help deliver the project

### **Consultation**

- 1.3 The Draft shared vision was agreed for consultation in late summer 2010. Consultation took place over a six week period between 23<sup>rd</sup> August and 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010. It was launched on the Cherwell District Council website and responses were invited using the online consultation portal. Local organisations, community and amenity groups were contacted directly by post and email. As a result Launton Parish Council took up the offer of a presentation on the Draft Shared Vision.
- 1.4 Students of the Cooper School and Bicester Community College were given the opportunity to give their thoughts and ideas on the Draft Shared Vision when members of the Eco Bicester Project Team visited the school. The Eco Bicester Project team also organised a market stall in Sheep Street for two days in September, distributing approximately 500 copies of the shared vision. A summary of the consultation strategy is set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.5 In addition, officers and a leading member representing the SDB attended the Bicester Vision Partnership Board meeting in September to present the One Shared Vision and record the comments of representatives of the private sector in Bicester.
- 1.6 In total 55 responses were received from individuals, agents, local groups and businesses. The comments have been collated by officers and summarised in the table contained in Appendix 3. The table summarises comments referring to a specific section in the shared vision. The comments have been considered and a summary of the officer response is provided. The responses were generally positive although there was some concern about the existing infrastructure and community facilities in the town. Other issues shared by many of the respondents included the need for housing and employment.
- 1.7 A separate table containing other comments not specifically relating to the contents of the Draft Shared Vision is included in Appendix 4. It uses a similar format to the table discussed above.

### **Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision and Planning Policy**

- 1.8 The final revised version of the shared vision follows a similar format to the draft version and should be published in advance of determining any

planning application submission for North West Bicester. The shared vision is not a formal development plan document. However it is suggested that it is adopted as a statement of informal policy and as such will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for major development proposals in Bicester, including any planning application at North West Bicester. It will also inform the emerging policies of the development plan as the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) progresses. It will in effect form the basis of local standards for eco development in Bicester only at this stage.

- 1.9 It is noted that the vision has strong all round support in the local community and with key partners. On that basis the Council sees the vision as the model for, and an emerging draft of, one of the “neighbourhood plans” that the Government has suggested will be a feature of their new planning system (forthcoming Localism Bill).

### **Proposals**

- 1.10 The revised shared vision sets out the aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town in six sections. The Vision statement is contained in section one and followed by sections setting out more detail on community, economy, transport and environmental sustainability. The final section provides eco development standards for the town as a whole and is informed by the eco town standards set out in the supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1: Eco towns.
- 1.11 The vision statement seeks to create a vibrant Bicester where people choose to live work and spend their leisure time in sustainable ways. The proposed eco development at North West Bicester will act as the catalyst for the wider regeneration of the town, attracting inward investment and economic development. The theme of integration is fundamental to the shared vision and this is particularly relevant to the North West Bicester eco development and the existing town. Improvements to transport, community facilities and infrastructure all follow the theme of integration.
- 1.12 Sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) is another fundamental principle of the shared vision. The Revised document emphasises zero carbon, retrofitting and energy efficiency as key objectives.
- 1.13 The vision focuses on community first and provides the opportunity for people to influence the place where they live work and spend their leisure time. The community first section has been amended following the involvement of local residents and others. It focuses on the aspirations for new development in creating new communities through new housing, community support and improvement to existing facilities.
- 1.14 Retrofitting will be an important part in the new Eco Bicester with the aim of improving energy efficiency of existing buildings. The availability and provision of high speed broadband and digital infrastructure has been included as a priority for retrofitting. The vision also sets out high standards of sustainable design and construction for eco development.

## Consultation

- 1.15 Consultation was a key requirement of the shared vision's preparation. A consultation strategy was prepared which focussed on direct contact with local groups, partners and organisations (including parish councils, amenity groups and schools) and involvement with local residents and businesses.
- 1.16 A six week consultation took place between 23rd August 2010 and 1st October 2010. The Draft Shared Vision was widely publicised in the local media and online using the Cherwell District Council website and Twitter. Response forms were distributed in the town centre and online with general comments captured as part of the various presentations and meetings taking place during the consultation period.
- 1.17 Local stakeholders were contacted including parish councils, residents associations, local partners and schools. Presentations were given to Launton Parish Council and Bicester Vision Partnership Board. In addition, a public engagement exercise was held in Bicester Town Centre (Sheep Street) at the Farmers Market and Market on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Over the 2 days approximately 500 copies of the Vision document were distributed and officers provided information to over 100 people. Exhibitions at Bicester Community College and Cooper School took place on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 respectively and comments have been collated as part of the further work in revising the document. As part of the engagement with partners, a local members' group meeting took place on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010.
- 1.18 In summary, 55 responses were received from the general public, partners, agents and businesses. The majority of responses related to the draft vision but also issues affecting Bicester generally. Some responses, however, referred to detailed comments on specific issues and are more appropriate to other Council policies and strategies such as the emerging Local Development Plan (LDF). Each response has been reviewed and analysed by officers with comments and proposed changes resulting in a revised shared vision agreed by the SDB at its meeting on 8 November 2010. A copy of the Final Version of the Eco Bicester One Shared Vision including revisions is contained in Appendix 1.
- 1.19 These comments are included in a separate Appendix. The comments submitted online and using the response forms have been collated and reviewed by officers and form the basis of the revised document. A summary of the consultation comments and responses is contained in the attached tables (**Appendices 3 and 4**). Comments were received on a range of topics but generally relating to growth of the town, lack of services and facilities and infrastructure.
- 1.20 There was general support for the vision but many of the comments focussed on existing issues rather than the long term vision set out in the document. There was some uncertainty and scepticism about the proposals for future development with many respondents focussing on the proposals for eco development at North West Bicester. As a result, the area covered by the shared vision has been defined more clearly so that there is no doubt that the vision statement and other sections refer to the whole of Bicester and not just the proposed eco development. Also, the references to integration and a holistic whole town approach have been made more explicit to avoid any confusion about the geography of Eco Bicester. Transport was a major

concern for many respondents with comments referring to existing travel patterns and infrastructure requirements to accommodate further growth.

- 1.21 The meeting of the Bicester Vision Partnership Board on 21<sup>st</sup> September was attended by representatives of over 20 local businesses. Again the focus was on integration, a holistic approach to eco development and employment opportunities and support for local businesses. Representations were made on behalf of local landowners and businesses relating to specific sites and proposals. Many of these comments are more appropriately dealt with through the development plan process.
- 1.22 The Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision is presented to the Executive for consideration and approval, subject to any further amendments. Once the final version is agreed it will be used to guide the delivery of Eco Bicester. This report has been prepared by the Eco Bicester Project Team and will form the basis of reports to Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 and Bicester Town Council. The Vision will have no formal planning status as it has not been through the statutory planning process but it will be used as informal planning guidance in the consideration of proposals in the town until local standards for sustainable development are adopted in the local development plan. It will be a material consideration in determining development proposals in the town and be used for development control purposes, including in relation to in determining the exemplar proposals at North West Bicester.

### **Conclusion**

- 1.23 The Revised Shared Vision for Eco Bicester clearly defines the aims and objectives of the SDB and has evolved from the Draft Vision published for consultation earlier in the year. It has focussed on the long term aims, aspirations and ambitions for the town as a whole and has stimulated some debate among the local community. The views and comments of those responding to the consultation have been taken into account in the preparing revisions to the final version.
- 1.24 The vision recognises that there are existing issues in the town that need to be addressed such the need to provide infrastructure to support further growth. It also emphasises the importance of integrating new development with the existing town in creating a new Eco Bicester.
- 1.25 The eco town standards set out in the Eco towns PPS have been incorporated as appropriate into the shared vision as the basis for developing local standards and policies for determining planning applications. These will be further developed as the emerging development plan progresses. The Localism Bill and National Planning Framework are expected imminently and should provide more guidance on the preparation of local planning policy. In the meantime the One Shared Vision will be used as informal guidance in determining planning applications for major new development in Bicester.
- 1.26 It is intended that the Revised Vision will be published as the final version by the end of 2010 in order for it to be in place in time for the determination of the Exemplar application at North West Bicester. Going forwards, the vision statement and supporting aims will be used to measure and monitor the delivery of the Eco Bicester project.

## **Background Information**

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- 2.1 The Eco towns PPS was published in July 2009 and has been used as the basis of the eco standards in the vision. The Revised One Shared Vision was approved by the Strategic Delivery Board at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010.
- 2.2 The Eco Bicester Project Team continues to discuss proposals for North West Bicester as part of the eco development of Bicester. A planning application for the first phase is being prepared and expected to be determined by the end of March 2011. A masterplan for the North West Bicester proposals is also being prepared and an outline planning application is expected in summer 2011.

## **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

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- 3.1 The preparation of the One Shared Vision and response to consultation.
- 3.2 The planning status of the One Shared Vision and its role in determining planning applications in Bicester.
- 3.3 The alignment of the Vision with the emerging Local Development Framework planning policy.

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendations is believed to be the best way forward

**Option One** To note the contents of the report and agree the recommendations to approve the vision as informal planning guidance for development control purposes

**Option Two** To amend the recommendations and make further amendments to the vision

**Option Three** To reject the recommendations

### **Consultations**

The Eco Bicester One Shared Vision has been subjected to extensive consultation throughout its preparation. It has been prepared by the Eco Bicester Project Team on behalf of the Strategic Delivery Board and has involved partners of the project and external consultation with local residents and businesses. Details of the consultation are summarised in the report above and also in the appendices.

### **Implications**

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**Financial:** The preparation of the vision has been funded and resourced through the Eco Bicester Project team and the financial implications will be reviewed by the Strategic Delivery Board. The Vision provides the opportunity for

attracting significant inward investment to Bicester.

Comments checked by Karen Curtin, Head of Finance  
01295 221551

**Legal:**

The shared vision is not a formal development plan document. However it is suggested that it is adopted as a statement of informal policy and as such will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for major development proposals in Bicester, including any planning application at North West Bicester. It will also inform the emerging policies of the development plan as the preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF) progresses. It will in effect form the basis of local standards for eco development in Bicester only at this stage.

Comments checked by Liz Howlett, Head of Legal and Democratic Services 01295 221686

**Risk Management:**

The shared vision has been prepared as a statement of the Strategic Delivery Board's aims, aspirations and ambitions and will be used to guide the delivery of eco development. It includes eco development standards to be used in determining not just the planning proposals at North West Bicester but the town as a whole. It is anticipated that the vision will inform the preparation of local development standards when it's planning status will be formalised. In the meantime it will remain informal planning guidance and corresponding weight will be given to it planning decisions. The likely planning reforms to be introduced by the Localism Bill will need to be carefully considered as the vision progresses.

Comments checked by Rosemary Watts, Risk Management and Insurance Officer 01295 221566

**Wards Affected**

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**Ambrosden and Chesterton, Caversfield, Bicester North and West directly but impact on whole district and sub region**

**Corporate Plan Themes**

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**Cherwell: A District of Opportunity; A Cleaner, Greener Cherwell; A Safer and Healthier Cherwell.**

**Executive Portfolio**

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**Councillor Gibbard  
Portfolio Holder for Planning Housing and Economy**

**Document Information**

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<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
Appendix 1	Revised Eco Bicester One Shared Vision

Appendix 2	Summary of consultation strategy
Appendix 3	Table showing consultation responses relating to the vision
Appendix 4	Table showing consultation responses – other issues
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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