

20 October 2008

Our Ref: LPA letter Weston Otmoor

### **Eco-towns assessment process**

**John Hoad** and **Tony Wilson**, Cherwell DC  
**Ian Walker** and **Frances Fernandes**, Oxfordshire County Council

1. This is to update you on the eco-towns assessment process and to invite you to contribute to the final stages of this, in particular further development of s106 'heads of terms'.
2. As you will know, I asked promoters to fix their proposals at the end of July and to submit their final proposals and additional financial information to CLG by end August. Promoters' strategic transport proposals were due at the end of September.
3. Since this time our assessors have been busy reviewing the additional material and updating their analysis. They will soon be ready to start the final phase of assessment, which includes a final round of meetings with promoters and further work involving promoters and LPAs to develop s106 'heads of terms'.
4. I am planning to hold a series of meetings with promoters in early November. This will be an opportunity for CLG and its technical assessors to discuss the updated analysis and to provide a final opportunity for promoters to respond to any issues that may be critical to the final assessment of their schemes. Before this time I want to ensure that we have heard some more about your views on the proposals in your area and, in particular, to establish your expectations for any s106.
5. As I have said before, a key element of the financial assessment is to ensure that schemes have the potential to deliver a satisfactory s106 package. We also want to put LPAs in a strong position to quickly secure a satisfactory s106 package in the event of any planning application.
6. The s106 'heads of terms' are intended to provide a high level summary of a promoter's s106 proposal; we realise at this stage that further clarity is likely to emerge through discussions further down the line. The purpose at this stage is to assess, in broad terms, what is being offered as part of the bid, and to highlight any significant discrepancies between what is proposed and what is expected.

7. You were previously invited to contribute to this by means of a questionnaire (sent out by DWS in July). Our legal consultants DWS (sub-contractors to PwC) would now like to meet you face to face in order to seek further input from you now that we have more clarity on the development proposal for your area.
8. As preparation for this, we have asked the scheme promoters to share further information with you on their s106 offer as formalised in a standardised template produced by DWS. **I attach an example template for your information.** Parkridge have indicated that they are willing in principle to share this, but are currently working with us to ensure that the DWS template accurately reflects their latest position. A corrected version should be available shortly.
9. Further to this, I have asked scheme promoters to offer their LPAs a presentation on their latest proposals as submitted to CLG for assessment purposes. This would be an opportunity for you to ask questions and seek clarifications.
10. I understand that Parkridge have already offered a presentation. If you do wish to accept this, then please note that ATLAS (Advisory Team on Large Applications) have offered to facilitate if you think this would be helpful. ATLAS is an independent advisory body with a strong reputation working with LPAs and other stakeholders on large planning applications. **Let me know if you would like ATLAS to be involved so that I can make the necessary arrangements.**
11. In terms of timings, we plan to meet hold our technical meeting with Parkridge at some point during the period 12 to 18 November. Ideally we would like you to have the opportunity to share your views with DWS before this time so that we are aware of any critical issues for you, which we may want to raise with Parkridge when we meet with them.
12. I therefore propose a meeting involving you and DWS at some point in the period 27 October to 7 November. Representatives from CLG's technical assessment steering group would also attend any meeting, including some combination of me, John Walker and Stephen Hill (ATLAS). **My colleague Jane Halestrap will be in touch shortly to offer you a meeting date.**
13. 'Statement of intention'. The assessment process will support decisions on a final list of schemes to be announced as 'preferred bidders' in early 2009. In order to be announced as a preferred bidder, schemes must pass the various elements of the assessment process, relating to sustainability, transport and financial viability. They will also be expected to provide a public 'statement of intention'.
14. The statement of intention would describe the steps the promoter intends or needs to take in the formulation of a planning application submission through to the early stages of development. The statement, which we are currently developing guidance on, would incorporate some of the principles of Planning Performance Agreements (see: <http://www.atlasplanning.com/page/ppa.cfm>), with a strong emphasis on collaboration and joint working with the key stakeholders involved.
15. The statement may include some or all of the following.
  - Vision and development objectives;

- Post-announcement strategy up to outline planning permission and the first stages of development;
- Key tasks and stakeholders;
- Project management arrangements;
- Resources;
- Master planning;
- S106 'heads of terms' (described above); and, where appropriate
- Approach to delivery. The default assumption is that schemes would progress through the planning system, with the LPA(s) and planning authority and delivery secured through planning obligations (s106). However, in some cases, it may be appropriate to explore alternatives.

16. The purpose of the statement would be to provide Government and other stakeholders, particularly LPAs, with assurances about key elements a promoter's proposals and their commitment to an agreed and collaborative strategy post-announcement.

17. **We would like to hear your views on the 'statement of intention' concept.** The DWS meeting noted above would provide an opportunity for some discussion on this and other aspects of the assessment process.

18. Timetable. I have included a timetable in the annex, which sets out the main stages for the assessment process. Note that the main elements of the assessment are due to complete this side of Christmas. However, there will be some additional time in early 2009 to finalise statements of intention.

19. And finally, I am including a list of the documents that have so far been submitted to CLG for assessment purposes in relation to the scheme in your area. This is so you can check that any information you may have seen is consistent with the information we are assessing. Please note that some of the information listed may be commercially sensitive and as such has been submitted to us in confidence.

Final Bid Presentation Volume 1 (Non-technical summary)	10 hard copies and 10 CDs, cover letter dated 29/08/08
Final Bid Presentation Volume 2 (Technical Appendices)	
Final Bid Presentation Volume 3 (Technical Appendices)	
Additional information for financial assessment including high level funding and implementation plan.	Email received 31/08/08

Yours sincerely

**Paul Chamberlain**

Enclosed as separate email attachment: standardised s106 template

Week commencing	25/08/08	01/09/08	08/09/08	15/09/08	22/09/08	29/09/08	06/10/08	13/10/08	20/10/08	27/10/08	03/11/08	10/11/08	17/11/08	24/11/08	01/12/08	08/12/08	15/12/08	22/12/08	29/12/08	05/01/09	12/01/09	19/01/09	26/01/09	02/02/09	09/02/09	16/02/09	23/02/09	02/03/09
1 Promoters submit final, detailed development proposals for assessment	?																											
2 Promoters submit high level funding and implementation plans and additional financial information as requested		?																										
3 ATLAS deliverability assessment submitted to CLG (draft)			?																									
4 PwC financial assessment baseline report (based on promoters' earlier submissions)				?																								
5 Promoters submit strategic transport assessments						?																						
6 Promoters submit strategic environmental assessments (as required)						?																						
7 Finalise Sustainability Appraisal for publication and 12-week consultation (Scott Wilson/CLG)										TBC																		
8 Finalise eco-towns PPS for publication and 12-week consultation (CLG)										TBC																		
9 Consideration of promoters' high level funding and implementation plans (PwC)																												
10 Consideration of final development proposals (as submitted end Aug) and update of baseline financial assessment (PwC)																												
11 Review of final development proposals against the SA and draft PPS minimum standards (PwC)																												
12 Agree approach to s106 'heads of terms' and 'statement of intention' (CLG/PwC)																												
13 Update promoters and LPAs on next steps for the assessment																												
14 Promoters present their updated proposals to LPAs (ATLAS to facilitate)																												
15 Send out 'heads of terms' proforma for consideration by LPAs where agreed																												
16 Meetings with LPAs re: s106 'heads of terms' (PwC/CLG)																												
17 Inform promoters of the 'critical' issues to be resolved by November 2008 (PwC/CLG)																												
18 Meetings with promoters to discuss baseline financial assessment and 'critical' issues to be resolved by early December 2008 (PwC/CLG)																												
19 Promoters respond on 'critical' issues for financial assessment																												
20 DfT/HA consider outputs from strategic transport assessments																												
21 Bilateral discussions around transport proposals and assessments (promoters/HA&DfT)																												
22 Financial implications of transport assessments reflected in financial assessment (PwC/CLG)																												
23 Development of statements of intention (including s106 'heads of terms')																												
24 Final iteration of financial model and appraisal for purposes of the "early 2009" announcement of schemes (PwC)																												
25 Final report to CLG on financial analysis (PwC)																												
26 Finalise "statements of intention" for submission to CLG																												
27 Government decisions/announcement (TBC)																												