

Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 25 January 2018	AGENDA ITEM NO: 5
Report title: Garden Town Update	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides a progress update on the Garden Town programme and activities funded from Government capacity grant.

2. Funding

- 2.1 The Funding Agreement for £500k additional Garden Town capacity funding, announced in October 2017, has been signed. This funding will enable new studies to be undertaken including:
- Masterplanning exercise to produce a development brief for Queens Avenue site. This complements the funding through the One Public Estate programme (a partnership between the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association) to relocate existing 'blue light' services so enhancing the development potential of the magistrates court and possibly help facilitate release of NHS land
 - 'Central Corridor' highways infrastructure options including feasibility of a new Park & Ride site to north of town and improved access & connectivity between rail stations
 - A41 design & options assessment including improving pedestrian connectivity between Graven Hill site and Bicester 4 & 10 (employment) sites
 - Strategy for gas network extension and/or reinforcement in partnership with gas provider
- 2.2 Spending Review 2015 allocated £19m capital to Bicester Garden Town, of which £15m has been identified for infrastructure work to support the delivery of new homes. The business case for securing this funding is being finalised in partnership with OCC and will be shared with DCLG before the end of January.

3. Capacity-funded Studies

- 3.1 Bicester Masterplan
The public consultation on the draft Bicester Masterplan has been further delayed. The revised programme now envisages the consultation event to take place in Spring and an all Bicester Member briefing is being arranged as part of the consultation.
The intention remains for the final approved masterplan to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to Local Plan Part 1; the required statutory process remains on course for that to be achieved before the end of this calendar year.

3.2 M40 Junction Feasibility Study

The second stage of the study is being concluded and its findings will come to the Board at its March meeting.

3.3 Eastern Corridor Design Principles

The need for infrastructure improvements along the Eastern Corridor (A4095 & A4421 including Skimmingdish & Charbridge Lanes and Wretchwick Way) formed part of the evidence for the council's adopted Local Plan Part 1 and has been confirmed within OCC's Local Transport Plan (LTP4). These improvements are fundamentally important in terms of keeping the town moving – they offer the opportunity to divert traffic from the 'Central Corridor', so easing congestion in and through the town centre. Furthermore without these improvements identified strategic housing sites will be limited in their delivery.

The purpose of the commission is to set the design principles for how a currently fast, perimeter road around Bicester changes to increase traffic capacity while providing easy, safe and comfortable crossings from strategic housing sites to the existing town, so ensuring Bicester grows as envisioned, as a whole town.

Technical workshops will take in place in February with the study to complete at the end of March. Agreed design principles will then be taken forward to engineering design stage by Major Infrastructure Delivery team at OCC.

3.4 SPARK Funding

The fifth round of the SPARK grant scheme, financed by both garden town and healthy new town funds, closed on 6 December 2017. Four applications were received and while they were generally acceptable, further support for the applicants is required to refine the submissions to improve the community and health benefits from each. The deadline for the next wave of funding is 6 March 2018.

4. Refreshed Vision for Bicester

4.1 As a key element of the Garden Town programme, CDC has set out to re-define and shape the future of Bicester and develop a vision for its future both in terms of brand, identity and direction. The work has included detailed engagement in the form of interviews and workshop with key political figures and stakeholders, followed by a town-wide engagement to communicate the potential for Bicester associated with its Garden Town designation and understand the priorities and aspirations of the local community.

4.2 Key stakeholders outlined a vision for the town - a 'restful', 'assured' and 'homely' Bicester, with 'high ambitions', 'good connections' and a 'quality environment'. Residents called for a vibrant retail heart for the town. They want to be able to move around their town easily and they hope that growth will be well planned, and developed in a joined-up participatory manner. High quality infrastructure is essential and green spaces should be preserved and connected.

4.3 The work concluded that the future for Bicester should be built on more than the promise of future housing growth – the transition to a Garden Town offers Bicester the opportunity to shift the dialogue to genuine benefits for Bicester's residents, existing and future.

Three essential elements were identified - Quality Homes, Effective Infrastructure and Bright Prospects for All (see Appendix A) – with the town centre regaining its importance at the epicentre of the town.

These three strands align with growth principles this Board used to form its Task & Finish Groups, as well as the TCPA's overarching 'Garden City' principles.

- 4.4 The strands have been incorporated into a Vision for Bicester's future character and ambition. This has been produced in varying length (Appendix B) to ensure it is flexible and suitable for use with different audiences and communication opportunities.
The intention is to share and promote this refreshed vision with, and encourage its use by different stakeholders as a means for communicating consistent and positive messages about the aspirations for Bicester's future.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Board is asked to endorse the refreshed vision for Bicester and advocate its use by partners.
- 5.2 Board is also asked to note the progress with the capacity funded studies, funding opportunities and the promotion of Bicester garden town. Further updates will be presented to future meetings.