

## Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

<b>Date of meeting: 18 October 2018</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM NO:</b>  <b>8</b>
<b>Report title: Bicester Garden Town Report</b>	
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### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Whilst all the work in Bicester relates to creating a whole place approach this report covers areas of work specifically under the Government's Garden Town Programme.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 In 2015 Bicester was announced as a Garden Town and has received government support to deliver the plans for the town. This is the latest report to provide an update on the work that is undertaken specifically under the Garden Town Programme.

### 3. Update

#### 3.1 Funding

- 3.2 Since the last report the Council has received £583k in two payments of £100k and £483K. The later was section 19 funding so covered work and costs that had already been undertaken. A further round of capacity funding for 18/19 was announced and a bid has been made for further support to cover work to support the delivery of the growth of Bicester. The timing of the bid was such that it was not possible to consult the Board on the content of the bid.

- 3.3 The bid sought funding for a range of activity in response to the funding criteria. The summary is presented below;

Accelerating Delivery of the Garden Town
Deliverables from the Masterplan <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town Centre development opportunities</li><li>• Market Square design RIBA stage 2/3</li><li>• Magistrate Court feasibility</li><li>• Natural Capital strategy</li><li>• Embedding healthy place making in all new developments using lessons from the HNT programme</li></ul>
Strategic Infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Central Corridor highway infrastructure options and rail station connectivity</li></ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A41 (through town) options and design assessment including southern connectivity link</li> <li>• Graven Hill and south east rail connectivity feasibility</li> <li>• Transport Hackathon to deliver new movement strategy for Bicester taking account of East West Rail and Oxford Cambridge Expressway</li> </ul>
Quality Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design charrette/review process established for future developments</li> </ul>
Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a vision to 2050</li> <li>• Garden Town Legacy – feasibility in creating funding to deliver a lasting legacy</li> </ul>
Staff Resource – additional resource to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>engagement</b> on delivery of the masterplan, market square, healthy places, green infrastructure and cultural offer</li> <li>• <b>Developing the vision</b> for Bicester 2050, working with stakeholders</li> <li>• <b>Communicating</b> the benefits of the growing town through web site, newsletter, social media and other channels</li> <li>• <b>Delivering projects</b> including the writing of briefs, commissioning of work and implementation</li> </ul>

There are now 23 garden settlements so the bidding for the funding will be competitive. It is anticipated that the outcome will be known by the end of the year.

- 3.4 A further bid for funding was made for Garden Town Capital funding. This seeks funding for highway improvements to facilitate housing delivery. The bid has been complex and additional appraisals are being provided. However funding has to be used in this financial year and as such delivery options are being explored.

### 3.5 Studies

- 3.6 Since the last report the Bicester Eastern Corridor Design Principles have been completed. The aim of the work was to explore options for the design of enhancements to the eastern road corridor around the town. Until now this route has formed a perimeter to the town but with land allocated to the south east it will in the future be a road through the town. It is anticipated that this route will require additional highway capacity but it is equally important that the route facilitates walking and cycling and does not form a barrier to between the new development and the town. In addition the aim to ensure new highway works in the town are of a high quality design so they are attractive for users and residents. The design of changes to this route therefore need to be carefully designed to balance potentially competing interests.

- 3.7 The principles were prepared with the input of a range of stakeholders including officers from the Highway Authority. Further comments on the draft have been provided by Cherwell's Development Management Officers and County Highways Officers. A final draft report has now been received.

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3.8 The design principles provide an overview of existing conditions along the route and have identified the following principles for future changes;

- Speed limits are reduced to 30mph-40mph
- Carriageway widths remain sufficient to accommodate large vehicles, with dual carriageways introduced / retained on Links A, B, C, and E
- Segregated facilities are provided for walking and cycling
- Signalised crossings for pedestrians and cyclists are provided at, or as close as possible to, desire lines to support convenient active travel journeys
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) are incorporated
- The streetscape is attractive, to be designed as far as possible as a tree-lined boulevard. In the short term, the corridor acts as a peripheral road. However in the future, with the potential for development on the outer side of the corridor, it will be embedded within the urban fabric and a boulevard would be appropriate.
- Seating is provided at regular intervals - at least every 200m

3.9 The report provides illustrative cross section for the route that seek to respond to the context through which the particular section runs. These are intended to inform the thinking of designers of highway schemes so they are aware of the aspirations for the route. They will help to indicate how the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles can be balanced, allowing for increases in vehicles whilst improving provision for walking and cycling. Ultimately detailed design of any highway improvements will need to be undertaken, including form consultation, but by looking at the principles now the aim is to influence the design to ensure it delivers a high quality corridor allowing for movement by all modes and creating an attractive and legible streets.

### **3.10 Delivery from the Draft Masterplan**

3.11 At the last meeting the Board supported a switch to delivery from the work already undertaken on the draft masterplan. This was focussed on the following matters;

3.12 Reduction in speed limits to support sustainable travel.

3.13 The reduction of speed limits needs to the support of the Highway Authority. The County Council are looking at the reduction of speed limits on the peripheral routes around the town as a first step. This is also a matter highlighted in the Eastern Corridor Design Principles as set out above.

3.14 Creating green spines

3.15 The masterplan proposed the creation of green spines through the town. In addition work by Dr Alison Smith and colleagues at the ECI at Oxford University, has been testing tools for green infrastructure and a bid was made for ESIF funding to be able to enhance bio diversity in the town. These areas of work are now being drawn together, as the work by Oxford University has identified opportunities to increase

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access to natural green space and the funding bid was focused on bio diversity networks based on the streams that flow through the town, where works would have supported the aim of increasing access to natural greenspace by increasing bio diversity in some existing spaces.

- 3.16 However the funding bid, which was a large partnership bid has now hit difficulties with MHCLG. This is disappointing as the partnership were encouraged to bid and the bid was submitted at the end of last year. Other funding opportunities are therefore being explored for the projects that have been identified. There are some smaller funds available that could be sought for small individual projects but substitute funding of a larger scale has not yet been identified. Further work is being done to identify how this area of work can be taken forward. In the meantime work to facilitate the transfer of land to the south of Vendee Drive to enable the creation of the Burnehyll Community Woodland is progressing with a joint committee of Bicester Town Council, Chesterton Parish Council, Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council being established to deliver the proposals. The site of approximately 100 acres is due to transfer from Countryside properties during 2019.
- 3.17 Town Centre
- 3.18 Two areas of work were identified with regard to the town centre, enhancement of the public realm and potential to intensify use. The areas identified for enhancement were Sheep Street and Market Square. This year the Town Council has taken a lead in a spruce up of Sheep Street and the planters have redesigned and replanted to open up the views across the street. These have refreshed the appearance of the street. The priority therefore is to focus on Market Square. The County Council are reviewing resources with the aim that they will be able to resource participation in 2019. To avoid abortive work the full participation of the highway authority is necessary and therefore a programme will be developed with the knowledge of resource availability.
- 3.19 The potential development opportunities in the town centre will inform work on the next local plan.
- 3.20 Considerable work on the garden town is progressing and the financial support of the government is assisting and enabling this to happen. Inevitably delivery of the areas discussed above will be phased but a good start has been made on moving to delivery.

## **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1 The Board is asked to note the report