

## Annex 2

### Summary of the Draft Planning Policy Statement: Eco-towns

1. The draft PPS defines eco-towns as new settlements of between 5,000 and 20,000 homes which are separate and distinct, but well linked to higher order centres. They should act as exemplars of good practice and provide a showcase for sustainable and low carbon living. In a number of areas the PPS sets out more challenging and stretching standards than would normally be required for a new development.
2. The draft PPS suggests planning on this scale allows the development to exploit a number of opportunities and benefits and that eco- towns can:
  - a) relieve pressure for development in urban areas;
  - b) provide a good quantity of green space of highest quality ;
  - c) offer opportunities for space within and around dwellings
  - d) promote healthy and sustainable environments;
  - e) offer opportunities for infrastructure that make best use of technologies in energy generation and conservation in ways that are not always practical or economic in other developments;
  - f) use the opportunity to plan and deliver a locally appropriate mix of housing type and tenure;
  - g) take advantage of significant economies of scale and increases in land value to deliver new technology and infrastructure such as for transport, energy and community facilities.
3. The draft PPS says the Government remains committed to the plan-led system, and the preference is that the broad options for how best to meet housing need are explored in regional and local plans. The draft PPS makes it clear that eco-towns will need to be one of a range of options to be considered in regional spatial strategy (RSS) reviews. Where the local development framework (LDF) Core Strategy is in preparation and where an eco-town location is set out in the eco-town programme, the local planning authority should include it as an option for consideration. However, there is no requirement to allocate an eco-town if a better way of meeting future needs exists. The draft PPS and the list of locations emerging from the Eco-towns Programme will however be a material consideration in determining planning applications.
4. The draft PPS sets out principles to be considered when identifying suitable locations for eco-towns:
  - a) proximity to a higher order centre(s) where there is clear capacity for public transport links to that centre;
  - b) proximity to existing and planned employment opportunities;
  - c) where the eco-town can play an important role in delivering other planning, development and regeneration objectives; and
  - d) the Eco-towns Programme.

5. The draft PPS also sets out standards which proposals should incorporate as a means of promoting sustainable ways of living. These include:
  - a) Zero Carbon - all eco-town proposals must show that over a year buildings will achieve zero or below net carbon emissions.
  - b) Homes to achieve at least building for Life silver standard and level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
  - c) Communities must be resilient to climate change and planned with both mitigation and adaptation in mind.
  - d) Affordable housing - at least 30%.
  - e) Mixed use communities where unsustainable commuter trips are kept to a minimum. As a minimum there should be one employment opportunity per new dwelling that is easily reached by walking, cycling and/or public transport.
  - f) Sustainable transport, including travel plans, with priority given to options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
  - g) Green space - 40% of the eco-town's area.
  - h) Biodiversity - not damage important sites and include a strategy for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
  - i) Water - eco-towns should be ambitious in terms of water efficiency across the whole development, particularly in areas of serious water stress.
  - j) Flood risk management
  - k) Waste - applications to include a sustainable waste and resources plan.
6. The draft PPS says a long term approach is necessary to ensure a new town retains its integrity as an eco-town, and is able to manage change in a planned way. Planning applications should be accompanied by long term governance structures for the development
7. Annex A to the draft PPS lists 12 shortlisted locations compared to 15 in the first consultation round and now refers to "Weston Otmoor and Cherwell".

## Annex 3

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)**

1. A SA/HRA has been undertaken of the draft Eco Towns PPS, the Eco-Towns Programme and the individual proposals. Individual eco-town proposals will still require further assessments and where necessary, measures to avoid and mitigate effects.

#### **SA of the Draft Eco-Towns PPS**

2. The SA compares the situation with and without the draft PPS (and, therefore, eco-towns). Urban extensions are not regarded as a spatial alternative and are covered within the 'business as usual' (without draft PPS) option. The appraisal focuses on housing provision and the impacts of 'greener' homes. The appraisal identifies the following potential positive impacts associated with the draft PPS:

- Additional new homes (above that in RSSs) including family housing and responding to local housing need.
- Environmentally-friendly technologies and infrastructure.
- Relieving development pressure on neighbouring urban areas.
- Minimising the impact of new development on the environment and providing a showcase for sustainable living.

Potential negative impacts include:

- A risk that residents will travel by car to nearby settlements, particularly to work, unless adequate public transport is put in place.
- The inevitable generation of additional local traffic and potential strain on services in nearby settlements.
- Potential impacts on biodiversity, the landscape, the historic environment and other receptors depending on the location.

#### **HRA of the Draft Eco-Towns PPS**

3. The draft PPS does not give details of eco-town locations. The HRA concludes that further HRA work was unnecessary since the Draft PPS was unlikely in itself to give rise to adverse effects on European sites of nature conservation importance.

#### **SA of the Eco-Towns Programme**

4. An SA of the Eco-towns Programme has been undertaken covering the 15 short listed locations as well as alternatives. In the South East, only alternatives to Weston Otmoor were considered: Shipton on Cherwell Quarry (one of the original bids) and North West Bicester, which was suggested as an alternative for appraisal by Cherwell District Council.

5. The locations are evaluated against sustainability criteria. Benefits and negative impacts of the locations are identified together with potential mitigation measures. For each location, key strengths and weaknesses regarding sustainability are identified and an overall rating is given. The majority of the short listed locations have been identified in the sustainability appraisal as Grade B sites - suitable for eco-towns, subject to meeting specific planning and design objectives. One location (Norwich) has been rated as Grade A - generally suitable for an eco-town. Weston Otmoor is the only location graded C - only likely to be suitable for an eco-town with substantial and exceptional innovation. For the locations in Oxfordshire, the following conclusions are drawn.

### **Weston Otmoor and Cherwell**

6. Extracts: from “Eco-towns Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Eco-towns Programme – Conclusions”

#### ***“Weston Otmoor***

The key **strengths** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint are:

- The provision of affordable and commercial housing in an area of extreme housing pressure
- The proximity to the Oxford-Milton Keynes railway

The key **weaknesses** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint are:

- Almost entirely green field
- 30 per cent of the site falls within the Oxford Green Belt
- High grade and versatile agricultural land (grade 2)
- The site incorporates Ancient Woodland, and parts of two SSSIs.
- A further SSSI (Otmoor) could be affected
- The area is identified as an area of ‘serious’ water stress
- It is close to Bicester and has the potential to prejudice current development plans for the town, and
- It is close to a congested road junction on the M40 and A34 which may both encourage commuting and exacerbate congestion.

#### ***Shipton***

The key **strengths** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint are:

- The provision of affordable and commercial housing in an area of extreme housing pressure
- The proximity to the Southampton-Birmingham railway
- Regeneration of a disused quarry, defined as previously developed land.

The key **weaknesses** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint are:

- The proposed location contains a geological SSSI, although 98 per cent is described as unfavourable, declining condition and measures have been agreed to enhance the SSSI through further rock exposures
- The ecological importance of the County Wildlife Site (although development affecting the site has already been agreed)
- A significant proportion of the site falls within the Oxford Green Belt but the acceptability of development in the quarry, within the Green Belt, has been accepted
- The area is identified as an area of 'serious' water stress, and
- It is close to Bicester and has the potential to prejudice current development plans for the town.

### ***North West Bicester***

The key **strengths** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint are:

- The location is not constrained by environmental designations or high quality agricultural land.

The key **weakness** of the location from a sustainability viewpoint is:

- The fact that the site is adjacent to Bicester will mean that it is less separate and distinct than if it were more removed. This may lessen infrastructure innovation (easier to use existing systems), lessen behavioural change (Bicester is on the doorstep) and make the creation of a distinct community more difficult.

With reference to the sustainability indicators the alternatives for Weston-Otmoor and Cherwell were assessed as:

### **Weston Otmoor**

C. Location only likely to be suitable for an eco-town with substantial and exceptional innovation

### **Shipton**

B. Might be suitable for an eco-town subject to meeting specific planning and design objectives

### **North West Bicester**

B. Might be suitable for an eco-town subject to meeting specific planning and design objectives

In relation to the HRA and impacts on European wildlife sites, it has not proven possible to say that the development that may be delivered at Weston

Otmoor under the Eco-Towns Policy Statement will not lead to adverse effects on Oxford Meadows SAC or Cothill Fen SAC (as a result of recreational pressure). It has also not been possible to conclude that development at Shipton or North-West Bicester will not lead to adverse effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC as a result of recreational pressure.

Additional measures are therefore required within the PPS to give greater certainty that adverse effects will not result (see the SA and HRA of the Draft PPS). “

## Annex 4

### Summary of the Weston Otmoor Eco-town Proposal

1. This section outlines the Weston Otmoor Eco-Town proposal. It is based on material provided by the developer Parkridge in their final bid presentation (August 2008). It does not represent the views of the local authorities about the proposed development.
2. Parkridge propose a free standing town with up to 15,000 homes and up to 15,000 jobs. The proposed eco-town site at Weston on the Green is located to the west of the M40, at the intersection of the motorway with the A34/A41 (Junction 9) and north of the proposed East-West rail line. The site is approximately 3 miles to the south west of Bicester. A copy of the master plan is attached -Map 1.
3. Parkridge say that Weston Otmoor responds to three specific challenges: climate change, the need for more sustainable living and the need to increase housing supply. In terms of choice of location they point to the site being:
  - in an area where people want to live and where affordable homes are desperately needed;
  - situated on the only operational part of the East West Rail Line;
  - close to Oxford, Bicester and the M40 so in the right place to attract occupiers for the employment space; and
  - in an area already identified for growth within SEEDA's Central Oxfordshire Diamond for Investment and Growth and within the Oxford to Cambridge arc.
4. Parkridge say that Weston Otmoor can deliver an exemplary sustainable environmental design that integrates sustainable solutions for low energy; carbon management, biodiversity and ecology; landscape; site wide water and waste water management; sustainable materials and waste recycling.

#### Community and Governance

5. Parkridge propose Weston Otmoor will be governed and managed by local people participating in an Eco-town Trust, initially endowed by the developer. They suggest the Trust will own and manage key community assets and maintain them in perpetuity; and would aim to run key public services including on site public transport provision, the management of affordable housing, schools, green infrastructure and the public realm, as well as community services.

#### Homes

6. Parkridge propose that at least 30% of the 15,000 houses at Weston Otmoor would be affordable of a type and tenure tailored to meet local needs. They propose that all dwellings will have real-time public transport information and energy monitoring systems; high-speed broadband access; and will be built to achieve Building for Life Silver Standard and level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

## **Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

7. Parkridge propose that over half the total will be green space including the provision of recreation facilities, ranging from play areas and pocket parks to a Sports Village, interconnected by greenways, to encourage car-free accessibility. A Biodiversity and Habitat Action Plan and a sustainable urban drainage system (to enhance the watercourse network) are proposed, together with robust protection for the adjacent SSSIs.

## **Employment**

8. Parkridge highlight the following elements in terms of the potential for economic success at Weston Otmoor:
  - The Oxford-Cambridge arc
  - Knowledge-based employment growth
  - Proximity to London
  - The 'Oxford factor'
9. They propose jobs will be spread across a wide range of hi-tech, service and industrial sectors with about 12,000 jobs in 'wealth-creating' employment with a deliberate target of knowledge based activity. Up to further 3,000 jobs would be in community, educational and retail sectors. Parkridge say that the Town & Country Planning Association estimates that 'the eco-town will not be self-contained economically' and suggest a 'self containment' rate of less than 50%. Parkridge believe Weston Otmoor can achieve better than 50%.

## **Transport**

10. Parkridge consider there is the opportunity to effect a dramatic revision to the way transport is designed, managed, and operated, because of the site's connections to the East-West Rail line and association with the Oxford-Cambridge arc.
11. Their approach is to seek to provide a fast, free and frequent public transport system including a high quality on-site tram network and a fast and frequent rail service, from a new Weston Otmoor Station to Oxford, Bicester, Milton Keynes and London. They propose that no dwelling or workplace will be more than about 300m from a tram stop; that the majority of people will live and work within only 100m of one; and that there will be a deliberate discouragement of private car use, by a combination of:
  - On site priority to pedestrians, cyclist and the tram
  - Demand management, particularly at peak times
  - A variable road toll charge to enter or leave Weston Otmoor
  - Park and ride with a capacity for 6,000 cars is also proposed for existing car travellers heading to Oxford along the A34
12. Parkridge say that to be effective the various elements of the transport scheme will need to be operational from the first occupation of dwellings or workplaces and that before anything else happens, the infrastructure items which will be implemented include:
  - Dualling the East-West Rail line to deliver capacity
  - Construction of Weston Otmoor Station
  - Rebuilding of M40, Junction 9
  - Development of Weston Otmoor Park and Ride

- Implementation of tram routes and links to the Station.

### **Local Services**

13. The proposal includes a high street with shops, schools, healthcare, leisure and business facilities. The secondary schools and primary schools are seen as major focal points for the community. A Sports Village to provide for a high standard of competitive sporting events is also proposed.

### **Zero Carbon**

14. Parkridge say that as a whole the development will achieve zero carbon; with the objective of delivering a solution that is innovative, exemplary and goes beyond present and future governmental expectations. They propose a 6 step strategy:
  - Step 1: Best Practice Master planning and site layout
  - Step 2: Develop ultra low carbon solutions in operation – equivalent to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4
  - Step 3: Develop efficient and effective on-site power production – an integrated combined heat and power plant is being considered
  - Step 4: Integrate economic site wide renewable energy solutions and low carbon technologies
  - Step 5: Develop a solution that delivers low embodied carbon in construction
  - Step 6: Create a community carbon fund that will deliver better than zero carbon in construction and provide an incentive to encourage ongoing reductions in carbon emissions

### **Waste**

15. A key feature to the success of waste recycling and reusing schemes is seen by Parkridge to be public encouragement and provision of information on waste minimisation. Opportunities for organic waste recycling and composting schemes are also proposed to be provided and encouraged on a household basis; with waste being transported to an on-site Anaerobic Digestion (AD) facility and potential composting sites. Eliminating CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the transportation of waste is being viewed as a prime consideration and the use of 'Cargo trams' is being explored. A waste management strategy is proposed for each phase of the development.

### **Water**

16. Parkridge's long-term aspiration for Weston Otmoor is to achieve water neutrality, i.e. no net increase in water consumption over a year. They say that a new wastewater treatment plant will be required; and that reducing the site's dependency on the main water supply will strongly depend on the extent of treatment provided by the new treatment plant. Initiatives proposed include significantly reduced demand on the main potable water supply (60-70% if water is treated to bathing water standards );an overall water consumption of 105l/p/d or less in homes; a significant reduction in water supply to all other buildings; best practice water saving appliances; and potable and non-potable water meters.
17. Parkridge say a robust SuDS strategy has been developed which uses a variety of techniques deemed most suitable for different aspects of this development.



