

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

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Report title: Review of the Strategic Delivery Board	
Author: Name (Eco Bicester Project Team)	
Tel: 01295 221828 Email: jenny.barker@cherwell-dc.gov.uk	

1. Purpose of Report

1. To report the outcome of an audit of the project
2. To consider revisions to the terms of reference and working arrangements of the Board
3. To review the make up and functioning of the Board
4. To set out the relationship of the Board to other project management arrangements
5. To consider the Boards priorities for 2012/13
6. To consider the resource implications of the proposed priorities

2. Background

A number of factors which could impact on how the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) operates have emerged recently, which makes it timely to consider possible changes to its working arrangements and priorities so that it is able to respond appropriately. These are as follows:

1. An internal audit of the project was undertaken in February 2012. The out comes of which are reported below and recommendations addressed.
2. Since its initiation the SDB has expressed an interest in widening the original remit and taking an overview of the work relating to the town. As a result the original terms of reference have been reviewed and changes recommended.
3. When established the SDB undertook to review it's role and work on an annual basis. At the last meeting of the SDB the Board reviewed progress during the year and the work done by the SDB was reported. This report considers the structure of the Board in the light of 1. and 2. above to ensure the Board remains fit for purpose.
4. Since the Board was established there have been a number of changes in the project management arrangements at Cherwell District Council, the Environment Agency and the working relationship with OCC and these are set out so that Board Members can be clear about the relationship with these decision making bodies.
5. The NW Bicester project has reached a significant milestone with the signing of the S106 agreement and the issuing of planning consent for the Exemplar Phase of the NW Bicester development. This may presage a new and probably more intense phase of the project with the implementation of the planning permission and development of the masterplan and outline application for the whole 5000 dwelling site. This also needs to be taken into account in reviewing the Board's operational arrangements and is explored further below.
6. Following the reporting of the progress in implementing the vision and in the light of the audit recommendations priorities are recommended for the Board
7. In the light of the priorities identified the proposed scope of the work is presented for the consideration of the Board.

3. Internal Audit

The internal Audit report concluded;

'We noted no material weaknesses in the Council's processes but have the following recommendations to management:

- *A revised structure chart should be drawn up and circulated to all members of the Strategic Delivery Board*
- *Regular reports showing budget to actual should be reported to the SDB to ensure effective budget monitoring of project spend;and*
- *Going forward, the SDB should consider approving a suite of performance indicators (qualitative and quantitative) which will enable process against key objectives to be monitored'*

Revised structure chart is provided at appendix A. Section 6 also sets out the wider context within which the SDB functions.

Regular financial monitoring statements are already provided to the SDB. The current financial monitoring statement is agenda item 7.

This report at section 7 below suggests priorities and programme for the Board going forward.

4. Terms of reference and working arrangements of the Board

Since the Board was established its Members have been clear that they wish to consider proposals for Bicester as a whole as well as development proposals, including NW Bicester. Attached at appendix B are suggested revised terms of reference and working arrangements to reflect the position the Board has taken.

The primary change reflects the desire of the Board to consider the future of the town as a whole and those matters which will impact on it. This change has come about gradually as the Board has developed from its inception in 2010. The Board was originally set up in response to the need to provide focused management of the delivery of NW Bicester. However further significant growth is now identified within and around the town, through the Bicester Masterplan and Cherwell Local Plan. The Board could have a key role in ensuring a co ordinated and strategic approach to the development of the town.

Furthermore as the project has developed town wide initiatives have become a significant part of the work being carried out under the auspices of the Board. This has grown from the original six demonstration projects, which, with the exception of the travel behaviour project are now largely delivered, to a desire to deliver against a continuing range of projects including the reuse centre, water efficiency and further energy efficiency projects to deliver the aims of the Shared Vision.

5. Make up and functioning of the Board

The make up of the Board is set out at appendix A. The Board is comprised primarily of public sector bodies with the addition of representatives of Bicester Vision and the Chamber of Commerce. This reflects the original purpose of the Board to marshal public sector resources to deliver the eco town identified for NW Bicester. Although it is proposed that the Boards brief is widened it remains appropriate to bring together organisations to influence the development of Bicester and to ensure that the originating organisations have appropriate resource to deal with the issues arising.

There has been a number of changes in the representatives of the organisations represented on the Board over the time that it has met. As the Board currently meets quarterly, it is important that

there is some consistency in representation on the Board to ensure delivery of projects, some of which will take place over a number of years. The Board has functioned well, all be it with an evolving role, over the last two years and therefore it is not recommended that significant change to the make up of the Board is contemplated at the present time.

However there are a number of other organisations that are not currently represented on the Board that also have an interest in the town and its future growth. Furthermore previous engagement has shown that many residents have a keen interest in the future of the town. The government's reforms to the planning system emphasise the importance of 'empowering local people to shape their surroundings.' (NPPF para 17) To include all interested bodies on the Board would result in a very large Board and the Board needs to remain an appropriate size to function effectively. At 15 Members it is not recommended that the size of the Board is increased at the present time. However consideration could be given to forming a forum of wider interest groups to inform consideration of proposals that could then report to the Board. Such organisations could include voluntary sector organisations, local interest groups and local representatives of national organisations such as CPRE

The formation of a forum needs to be considered carefully. It is important that any such forum would add value and would not duplicate existing bodies, such as the local Strategic Partnership, that already exist. In addition the NPPF encourages the use of design review for development proposals and there is a need to ensure such processes do not slow down or add bureaucracy to the process of determining planning applications but genuinely add value by ensuring early engagement with interested people to improve the quality of proposed developments. The One Shared Vision identifies the aim to 'encourage people to have a real say in the future of their town' but it would be necessary to ensure that any forum has clear objectives and outputs that add value, to justify the resource required to run such a body. At present many organisations are consulted on planning applications when submitted by which time there is little opportunity for significant change. One advantage of a forum could be to provide informal feedback at an early stage in development proposals when there is greater scope for them to be amended. Such feedback could ensure genuine local engagement and influence on schemes going forward.

If the Board is supportive of the proposed approach of establishing a forum it is recommended that a further report is brought to the Board with an outline of how such a forum could be established, it's working arrangements and relationship to the Board.

6. Relationship to other project management arrangements

To provide operational overseeing of both the Eco Bicester project and the NW Bicester proposals a fortnightly meeting is convened. The meeting participants are the Cabinet Member for Growth and Infrastructure from the County Council, supported by the Deputy Director for Growth and Infrastructure and the Leader and Chief Executive or Director of Development of the District Council. This meeting ensures that key issues that affect project delivery are understood and resolved by senior politicians and officers within CDC and OCC so that it remains on track to deliver both on the Eco Bicester projects approved by the Board and the major development proposed at NW Bicester.

The Board works on consensus and organisations that are represented on the Board have functions that are relevant to the decisions the Board makes. A number of these related to planning rest with the District Council. The District Council has established a Place Programme Board which will oversee the progress of major proposals and corporate priorities within the District, including NW Bicester development. The Place Programme Board will ensure that the proposed development at NW Bicester progresses in line with the District Council's strategic

project management protocols, as appropriate and the necessary resources are in place to ensure that this is the case.

A diagram of the relationship between Board and other structures is attached at appendix C.

The Environment Agency has a number of change programmes which reached key stages of delivery on 1 June 2012. There has been a review of the Area priorities and in addition the Environment Agency has undergone a national review of the flood risk management structure.

Sally Coble now manages a new Environment, Planning and Engagement (EPE) Department (previously called Planning and Corporate Services) for the West Thames Area. The importance of work within Bicester has been recognised and as a result the following commitment to Bicester has been provided.

During the 2012/13 financial year the Environment Agency West Thames Area will;

- Continue to sit on the Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board (Sally Coble, Environment, Planning and Engagement Manager)
- Continue to invest the time of a Senior Sustainable Places Officer in the Eco Bicester Project Steering Group
- Prioritise our engagement on work in and around Bicester (through the Strategic Delivery Board, Project Steering Group, planning applications, Local Development Framework etc)
- Work closely with key parties on new and existing development in and around Bicester to help deliver environmentally sustainable outcomes

Further details of the Environment Agencies structure and priorities is attached at appendix D

7. Priorities for the Board

The Board approved the One Shared Vision in November 2010. This Shared Vision sought to capture the town wide ambition for Bicester. At the last meeting of the Board a review of progress against the Vision was presented. This highlighted the broad range of work that is being undertaken by a wide range of partners to deliver the Shared Vision. The Eco Bicester Project Team has been instrumental in much of the work. Looking forward it is clear that the project team's role needs to be clearly focused to ensure delivery against the Board's priorities. The Audit report has also suggested that the Board should set performance objectives against which progress can be measured.

The Shared Vision sets out the aspiration for the whole town but does not seek to identify specific development sites or opportunities as this is the role of the Cherwell Local Plan. However the Shared Vision does seek to identify high standards for new development in the town based on the Eco Town PPS standards for new development. The Shared Vision highlighted the importance of infrastructure for the town and the Bicester Masterplan and The Cherwell Local Plan will include proposal for infrastructure delivery. Assuming the Board are happy to accept widened remit set out at 4 above the overseeing of the delivery of major development proposals that impact on Bicester is identified as a priority for the Board.

NW Bicester, is the largest of the strategic developments identified for the town. In addition to its size, the site has the ambitious target of delivering a truly sustainable development, initially meeting the Eco Town PPS standards. As a major scheme, to deliver higher standards than are

being delivered on other schemes nationally, is an ambitious and challenging aim. It is therefore recommended that NW Bicester continues to be a priority for the Board.

The following reflect the priorities identified above;

Major Development Proposals	Justification
To take an overview of proposed major development within the town	Bicester is identified to grow significantly to 2031. The SDB brings together relevant organisations to have an over view of the changes proposed to the town. The Board could have a particularly important role in ensuring that consideration is given to the provision of appropriate infrastructure.
NW Bicester Eco Development	The development of land at NW Bicester to Eco Town PPS standards is an ambitious target. The Exemplar planning permission has achieved a number of firsts nationally and locally. The ambition remains to ensure the whole NW development continues to achieve exceptional standards of sustainability.

The Shared Vision seeks to ‘effect a town wide transition to a low carbon community.’ As a holistic vision for the town the Vision covers a wide range of aspects of the creation of a sustainable town. As demonstrated in the review of progress against the Shared Vision considered at the last meeting there is over 80 ambitions identified within the document. Some areas are inevitably progressing quicker than others. Consideration has therefore been given to the progress to date, the areas that are not currently being covered by others and the importance in delivering the Shared Vision.

The following areas have been identified as areas where work is not being done by others and where value could be added through the Boards focus on the areas identified. The priorities cover all the sections of the Vision to maintain the holistic approach of the Board and reflect the wide ambition for the town. The table below identifies elements of the vision which it is recommended are prioritised and the reason for selecting those elements.

Community First	Justification
Encouraging local people to have a real say in the future of their town.	Localism and the empowerment of local people are key planks to the government’s policy. Whilst the planning system still is a plan led system the role of local people in neighbourhoods, local organisations and business is essential in both in plan making and decision taking. The SDB has embraced the engagement of local people through the adoption of the engagement strategy in October 2011.
Making opportunities for local communities to own and govern local community assets. Retro Fitting a low carbon community	Looking forward there are opportunities arising from local ownership and management. However this is unlikely to happen initially without support for the community in delivering and adapting to change. A community Land trust has been established for Cherwell District and work at NW Bicester is looking to provide the opportunity for direct local management within the development. Existing homes will continue to be a significant contributor to carbon produced and inefficient homes are likely to be an increasing cost burden to occupiers. Work has commenced on retro fitting basic insulation measures but with the introduction of the Green Deal further opportunities may arise to address this and provide resilience to fuel price rises, reduce carbon and provide healthy living environment.
Delivering Local Infrastructure	The level and timing of infrastructure provided in connection with new development is a significant concern of local people. In the current financial climate there are challenges in the viability of new development and their

ability to deliver new infrastructure, accessing grants and for all local authorities. Never the less this remains a critical matter in relation to the growth of the town.

Provide access to local food
Promote access to open space and the countryside

Food has a high environmental and carbon footprint. Bicester is surrounded by agricultural land and local food producers.

Although surrounded by rural area with a number of public footpaths there is no circular walk identified for Bicester. The local woodland at Stoke Wood is heavily used but relies on vehicular access for the majority of users. A high value is put on open space by residents within the town.

Economy & Skills

Deliver new employment opportunities.
Provide opportunity for Skills training.

Justification

Growing the economy and increasing the number of jobs in the town is a significant aim of the Shared Vision. Work is underway through the LEPs, Economic Development Strategy and the work of groups such as Bicester Vision, the Chamber of Commerce and Cherwell Investment Partnership. However the SDB provides an opportunity to focus on areas not currently being delivered by others such as the opportunities arising out of new development.

Provide opportunity for Skills training

New development of the scale proposed in Bicester provides the opportunity to provide training opportunities that could benefit the town.

Transport

A significant increase in travel by means other than the car

Justification

Cars produce carbon, affect air quality and quality of the environment.

Congestion can discourage and create a poor impression of the town.

The travel behaviour project has sought to increase the attractiveness of non car modes, particularly through the promotion of cycling. However to achieve ambitious modal shift targets further measures will be required.

Low emission vehicles

It is recognised that a significant number of journeys will continue to be done by cars and there is not always a viable non car alternative. Therefore there is benefit in minimising the impact of these journeys. Low emission vehicles provide an opportunity to do this.

Environmental Sustainability

Green Infrastructure

Justification

GI is important to the quality of the environment and in maintaining biodiversity. This is reflected in the government's recognition of garden city principles.

Water Efficiency

Bicester is located within an area of water stress and new development increases the pressure on water resources. The ambitious target of water neutrality is sought for NW Bicester but wider measures are needed to avoid new development increasing pressure on the water environment.

Sustainable Energy Management

New development will put pressure on existing energy supply without measures to address the impact. The identification of an energy strategy for the town would identify opportunities to make best use of existing infrastructure, opportunity for zero and low carbon energy generation and measures that would enable the town to benefit from 'allowable solutions.'

Actions around these priorities are identified at Appendix E. These are set out to reflect the resource option considered further below based on the continuation of the project team.

8. Resources

Resources for Eco Bicester, over and above those already existing within the partner organisations, have come primarily from DCLG Eco Town grant. The Homes and Communities Agency have also provided grant funding for affordable housing to A2Dominion and some other smaller grants have been received by organisations like Bio Regional and Grass Roots Bicester to

deliver specific projects in the town. In addition Department of Transport has recently identified pinch point funding to improve M40 Junction 9 to facilitate development in the town.

DCLG grant funding is primarily capital but revenue was received in recognition of the need for specific resources to deliver the major projects like eco towns. A commitment was also given to the provision of demonstration projects in the town and funding identified to deliver these. Of the DCLG grant revenue funding was identified to fund a project team for five years to deliver the project. Regular reports have been brought to the Board setting out the spend and proposed use of funding and a financial monitoring statement is also included as Agenda Item 7.

The original make up of the project team was agreed in April 2010. Whilst this project team was in place by October 2010 a number of changes have since taken place reducing the resources currently available to the project team. Since the project team was established, Bicester has seen a number of other significant projects arise, particularly in the last 9 – 12 months. With limited resources available, it is likely that the County Council will be looking to focus its resource on a whole Bicester team rather than second people to a team that is predominately looking at one site and projects arising from the Shared Vision. Discussions are underway between the two authorities to ascertain the level of resource needed to take forward all of the work in Bicester.

Given the ambitious programme currently being pursued, both in terms of delivering major growth within the town and measures to improve the town for existing residents, and the long term nature of the work being undertaken, it is recommended that the original resources identified to fund the project team are retained to provide either the opportunity for further secondments into the team or for specialist consultancy to fill gaps arising either from the need for specialist skills or lack of capacity within the project team.

The project team has been in place since 2010 and based on the original five year proposal DCLG funding for the project team will be spent by 2014/15. Given the scale of the ambition for the town and the time it takes to progress and deliver large scale projects it is likely that much of the development proposed for the town would still be at planning or early stages of the development when the funding will come to an end. Similarly projects that relate to the actions of individuals like encouraging the take up of retrofit measures or encouraging people to change their behaviour to reduce the use of the car for short journeys within the town take time to reach a wide audience and show results, therefore going forward the resources necessary to deliver major growth in Bicester will need to be further reviewed.

9. Conclusions

The Eco Bicester project under the leadership of the SDB has successfully delivered demonstration projects at the Demonstration Building, Cooper School, Insulations Scheme, Bryan House redevelopment and been the catalyst for the JP11 community hall. The planning permission for Exemplar development at NW Bicester provides the opportunity for an exceptional development with standards above those achieved in other new developments nationally. In addition on going projects include work on travel behaviour, retro fit, reuse centre, collective energy switching and water efficiency.

The Board has therefore been effective in over seeing the delivery of a wide range of projects. Significant changes to the Board are therefore not recommended at the current time, although it is recognised that this is something that it is necessary to keep under review.

The Board's approach has been to take an interest in the wide range of issues affecting the town and it is recommended that this is recognised and the terms and conditions of the Board amended to recognise the Board's approach.

The Shared Vision for Bicester sets out wide ranging ambition for the town. As reported at the last meeting many actions are being undertaken to deliver against the vision. The reduced range of priorities set out above will help to focus the work of the Board, particularly focussing on areas that are not already being delivered or where work has commenced and is unlikely to be taken up elsewhere.

Finally with regard to resources it is recommend to maintain the current level of resources identified for the project team allowing either for secondments into the team or consultancy to fill gaps in capacity that currently exist.

10. Recommendations

The Board is recommended to;

1. Note the outcome of the Audit report
2. To agree the proposed revisions to the working arrangements
3. To note plan showing the structure of the Board
4. To ask the Project Team to explore the establishment of a forum of local interests to inform decisions on key development and report to the Board.
5. Note the revised project management arrangements for Eco Bicester and NW Bicester.
6. Note the Environment Agency's commitment to Bicester
7. To agree the proposed priorities for the Board for 2012/13, 2013/14.
8. That the original resources for the project team are maintained
9. Note the need to further consider the resources necessary to deliver the Board's priorities.

11. Appendices

- A. SDB Structure
- B. Terms of reference & working arrangements
- C. Wider project management arrangements
- D. Environment Agency
- E. Priorities and potential future projects