

Eco Bicester Strategic Delivery Board

Date of meeting: 23 July 2015	AGENDA ITEM NO: 6
Report title: Garden Town Update	
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on both central government funding available for delivering the Bicester Garden Town concept and consultations undertaken.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its March meeting, the Strategic Delivery Board received an update on capacity and capital funding submissions made to Government.
- 2.2 As part of the Budget Statement in March, the Government confirmed that the total requested Garden Town capacity funding (£1.47m) was being made available. However the request for capital funding was considered premature but Government confirmed it would work with Cherwell District Council to help meet Bicester's infrastructure needs, through the potential for recoverable government investment, subject to the submission of business cases.

3. Current Funding Position

3.1 Capacity Funding

The first tranche of capacity funding was received at the start of June.

The funding will provide the skilled personnel needed to progress Bicester Garden Town and fund feasibility assessments including studies on infrastructure, delivery approach, community engagement and transport.

- 3.2 We are planning to hold an engagement event in spring 2016 along similar lines as the previous "Bicester Summit" with a focus on engaging with current businesses and residents on the benefits of the Garden Town status as well as launching a prospectus for Bicester that will target new businesses and residents.

- 3.3 Receipt of a second tranche of funding is expected in autumn 2015 and is dependent on key milestones being met. We are currently on track.

3.4 Capital Funding

An initial Business Case for capital funding through the Spending Review was submitted in June. This seeks approximately £29.5m capital funding towards the following projects:

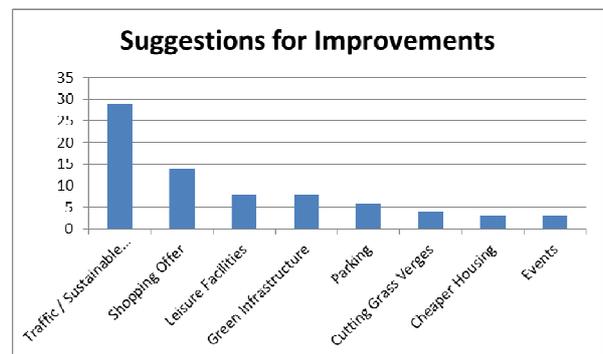
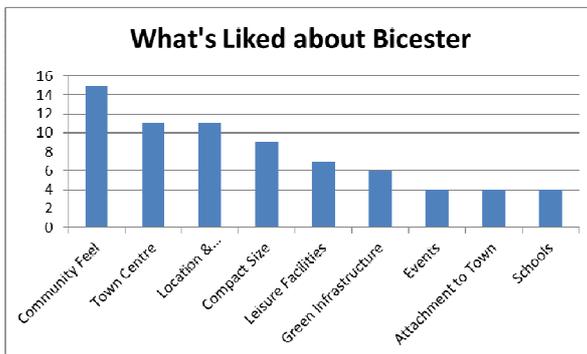
- Cycling and walking network improvements
- Electricity grid improvements to enable generation from renewables

- Forward funding of community infrastructure
- Off-site housing manufacturing facility

Almost £5m has been requested as grant with the remaining identified as recoverable loan investment, repayable from developer contributions and revenue generation. However it should be noted that securing capital funding is likely to be difficult in the current climate.

4. Consultation Update

4.1 A 'light touch' consultation approach has started in order to better understand what residents think about Bicester – what they like and suggestions for improving the town. A short questionnaire was used at the Bicester Big Lunch and the key findings are shown below:



- 4.2 Bicester's community feel is the aspect that most respondents like about the town, closely followed by its town centre; its central location and ease of connection to other places; and its compact size.
- 4.3 At almost 40% of responses received, traffic issues (including the need for sustainable modes of transport) are overwhelmingly cited as the key area that needs improving in the town. Approximately a fifth of all responses also suggested the town's retail offer needed improving with improvements to leisure facilities and green infrastructure in the town also featuring strongly.
- 4.4 Part of the Garden Town capacity funding will be used to undertake transport studies including assessment of further sustainable transport opportunities; and improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure forms part of the capital funding submission to Government (section 3 above). The Board's attention is also drawn to the agenda paper on sustainable transport.
- 4.5 The questionnaire will continue to be used at upcoming events, including the Bicester Bike Day (19 July) and Bicester Town Council's Teddy Bear's Picnic and Activity Day (5 August), as an initial means of gathering residents' views and helping shape the town's future as a Garden Town.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The successful capacity funding bid provides resources to move forward dialogue around the vision for Bicester Garden Town and commission key studies that will guide delivery of the concept in a holistic and sustainable manner and across the whole town. Work on securing capital funding to meet the Garden Town's infrastructure needs, both from

Government and other opportunities, will continue to be explored.

- 5.2 Further funding and consultation updates will be provided along with progress reports on the capacity funded studies.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Board is asked to note the progress on garden town funding from Government and to continue to receive further regular updates.