

Growth and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee 20 October 2011

Progress in Preparing the Strategic Infrastructure Framework for Oxfordshire

Report by Deputy Director (Growth & Infrastructure)

Purpose of Report

1. This note outlines the work being undertaken to prepare a Strategic Infrastructure Framework for Oxfordshire and the next steps in progressing it, including the involvement of District Councils, the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP), and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Background

2. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership identifies investment in infrastructure as being at the heart of ensuring that Oxfordshire realises its full potential. The Government has placed a clear emphasis on the planning system doing everything it can to support sustainable economic growth, via the Draft National Planning Policy Framework, which is currently out for consultation. Earlier this year SPIP confirmed its commitment to producing a Strategic Infrastructure Framework for Oxfordshire as the overarching framework for strategic investment needs.
3. The purpose of the Framework is to:
 - a. Identify priority items of infrastructure which are required to deliver economic growth
 - b. Provide a framework which encourages and facilitates the co-ordination of investment decisions and programmes across agencies
 - c. Provide clarity on the most appropriate funding stream(s) to pursue for specific investments.
4. The Infrastructure Framework will:
 - a. List and rank strategic infrastructure priorities, in particular those supporting the three spatial priority areas of Bicester, Science Vale and Oxford, and show why they are important, what outcomes will be achieved and how they meet wider strategic objectives
 - b. Set out delivery issues associated with schemes and the practical steps that need to be realised for successful implementation
 - c. Discuss the potential range of funding sources.

Progress in preparing the Strategic Infrastructure Framework

Identifying strategic infrastructure requirements

- Work is under way to compile schedules of strategic infrastructure requirements. This stage of work has updated information originally prepared for the Local Investment Plan and in particular seeks to arrive at a better definition of “strategic”, looking at schemes which foster economic development and growth, and create significant numbers of jobs.
- Initial work has focussed on the three spatial priority areas identified by the Local Enterprise Partnership – Bicester, Science Vale and Oxford; and is being developed for the other main settlements.
- Discussions have been held with key external agencies such as Thames Water, Scottish and Southern Energy, the Environment Agency, the Primary Care Trust. Discussions have also been held with County Council colleagues on education and skills, and broadband.
- Profiles of places are being compiled drawing on existing strategy documents (including Core Strategies) and other evidence looking at what we are trying to achieve in these areas and what the challenges are.

Development of a Prioritisation Methodology

5. A key issue is the method used to prioritise strategic infrastructure requirements. Work is under way to develop an approach to prioritisation which targets schemes delivering the outcomes that are sought, particularly in relation to economic growth.
6. Prioritisation criteria were originally set out in the Local Investment Plan but these are in the process of being substantially revised, in order to develop an approach which enables comparison of the relative merits of projects.

Next Steps and key milestones

7. The aim is to have the Infrastructure Framework prepared by March 2012.
8. Over the next few months a key focus for work will be developing and refining the prioritisation methodology. A workshop is proposed for November 2011 to allow SPIP members to input into the prioritisation methodology, with input from the LEP.
9. An initial draft of the Framework document and the final prioritisation methodology will be presented to SPIP on 1 December 2011.

10. Work on prioritising projects will begin in early 2012. The final Framework will be reported to SPIP on 15 March, thence to Cabinet on 17 April 2012.

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