



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 12 OCTOBER 2022
Report Number	Agenda item 12.
Subject	SALT CROSS GARDEN VILLAGE AREA ACTION PLAN – PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATIONS
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Tel: 01993 861686 Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To agree the District Council's formal response to consultation on proposed Main Modifications to the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP).
Annexes	Annex A – Suggested draft response to the AAP proposed Main Modifications
Recommendation/s	a) That the suggested draft response attached at Annex A be agreed for the purposes of submission to the AAP examination
Corporate priorities	In guiding the future delivery of Salt Cross Garden Village, the Area Action Plan (AAP) will help to ensure that a number of the priorities identified in the Council Plan are realised.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Salt Cross AAP has been the subject of extensive public consultation in accordance with legislative requirements. As part of the examination process, public consultation is taking place on proposed Main Modifications to the AAP over a 6-week period from 23 September until 4 November 2022.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Members will be aware that land to the north of the A40 near Eynsham is allocated as a strategic location for growth in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and is to be taken forward in the form of a new garden village known as 'Salt Cross'.
- 1.2. Salt Cross is one of a number of emerging garden communities recognised under the Government's 'Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities' programme launched in 2016.
- 1.3. The detailed planning of Salt Cross will be guided by a separate Area Action Plan (AAP) which, once adopted, will sit alongside the Local Plan and carry the same statutory weight in plan making terms.
- 1.4. As part of the AAP examination, the District Council is facilitating a public consultation on a series of proposed changes to the AAP known as 'Main Modifications'. These are changes which the appointed Planning Inspectors have identified as being necessary to make the AAP 'sound' and thus able to be adopted.
- 1.5. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of that process and to agree a formal response to the consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Work on the Salt Cross AAP began in 2018 with extensive stakeholder engagement leading to the publication of a final draft version of the plan in August 2020. The draft AAP was formally submitted for independent examination in February 2021, with hearing sessions taking place a two-week period from 28 June – 8 July 2021.
- 2.2. Subsequently, the District Council was invited to undertake some additional work on infrastructure phasing and on 26 May 2022, the Inspectors wrote to the Council to confirm that the AAP can be made 'sound' through Main Modifications.
- 2.3. A total of 55 proposed Main Modifications have been identified and these are the subject of a 6-week period of public consultation running from 23 September – 4 November 2022.
- 2.4. The consultation material is available to view online at www.westoxon.gov.uk/gardenvillage with hard copies of the proposed Main Modifications also made available in local libraries and various other locations.
- 2.5. All representations received on the proposed Main Modifications will be provided to the Inspectors who will then consider them along with all other relevant information and considerations before issuing their final report.
- 2.6. At that point, it will be a matter for Full Council to decide whether the AAP should be formally adopted in accordance with the Inspectors' recommendations.

3. AAP - PROPOSED MAIN MODIFICATIONS

- 3.1. Preparation of the AAP began has been ongoing for some time with a considerable amount of resources devoted to its progression to submission and through examination.
- 3.2. It is therefore extremely pleasing that the Inspectors have confirmed that the AAP can be made sound through Main Modifications.
- 3.3. A total of 55 proposed Main Modifications have been identified as being necessary to make the AAP sound and on the whole, these are considered reasonable.

- 3.4. Importantly, many of the core aspects of the submission draft AAP remain intact which will help to ensure the delivery of a highly sustainable new settlement based on garden community principles.
- 3.5. However, the Inspectors have indicated that they do not consider AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon to be consistent with national policy or justified.
- 3.6. This is naturally disappointing as the policy is considered by many, including the District Council, to be something of a ‘flagship’ policy for the AAP. It is also being closely watched by a number of other local authorities taking forward similar policies through their own Local Plans.
- 3.7. In the opinion of Officers, Policy 2 as originally drafted is ambitious and comprehensive yet precise and specific in terms of the expectations of new development.
- 3.8. In short, development at Salt Cross would need to demonstrate net zero operational carbon on-site through ultra-low energy fabric specification, low carbon technologies and on-site renewable energy generation with specific KPIs and reporting requirements ensuring that the implementation of the policy can be properly monitored and understood.
- 3.9. In contrast, the proposed Main Modifications to Policy 2 which have been agreed with the Inspectors for the purposes of public consultation, are considered by Officers to introduce a much greater degree of subjectivity and interpretation with all of the specific KPIs and perhaps most importantly, the requirement for net zero operational carbon on-site, removed from the policy altogether.
- 3.10. It is for this reason that Officers are proposing the slightly unusual step of seeking to formally respond to the consultation with a suggested draft response attached in letter form at Annex A.
- 3.11. Subject to the agreement of Members, the letter will be provided to the Planning Inspectors who will then consider it along with all other representations received before issuing their final report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. This report raises no direct financial implications.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. None arising from this report.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. No specific risks have been identified.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1. This report raises no specific implications for any particular equality strand.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon and the AAP as a whole, are intended to address the climate and ecological emergency ‘head-on’.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 9.1. The District Council could choose not to respond to the proposed Main Modifications consultation.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1. None.