

ABINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2020 – BRIEF TO CONSULTANTS

Abingdon Town Council is seeking suitably qualified consultants to undertake the first stage of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for the town. We are referring to this as the “Scoping Stage.”

About Abingdon

Appendix A includes some background information on the town.

Further information may be found on the town’s website, www.abingdon.gov.uk

Decision to undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan

At its meeting of 18th November 2019, the Council agreed in principle to undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Abingdon. On 29th January 2020, the Council released a sum of £10,000 to deliver the first stage of the process, which is detailed in this briefing document. The Council wishes to undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan within a period of two years and would anticipate the plan would be ready to be presented for local referendum by 31st March 2022.

Abingdon Town Council is a large town council but does not have the resources, skills or expertise to undertake the work which is necessary to support the Neighbourhood Plan process. Consequently the Council is seeking to appoint a suitably qualified consultant to take this work forward. For this first stage the Council is seeking to work with a consultant who has undertaken similar work with other councils and who has solid experience of community engagement. The Council would also be seeking a consultant who has expertise in planning.

Tasks required at the scoping stage

The Council expects the chosen consultancy to help define the exact scope of work required but it is expected to include:

1. To launch the Neighbourhood Development Plan process.

The appointed consultant will be required to launch the Neighbourhood Plan process at the annual town meeting which is due to take place on Tuesday 10th March 2020 at 7pm.

2. To work with the Council and take such necessary steps as are required to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group for Abingdon

The Council envisages that this group will comprise of councillors and non-councillors. The Town Clerk will act as the liaison with the Council together with a lead councillor for Neighbourhood Planning. At an early stage the consultant will be required to work with the Steering Group to recommend to the Council a neighbourhood plan area designation.

The consultant will need to effectively engage with the Vale of White Horse District Council and their lead officer assigned to the Abingdon Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The consultant will also be required at this early stage to make contact with neighbouring parish councils, some of whom already have Neighbourhood Plans. The consultant will be requested to explore with these councils the appropriate level of engagement with the Plan process.

3. Community Engagement and Consultation

This is a key part of the process. The Council wishes to effectively engage the community in taking forward the Neighbourhood Plan process and consult widely. The consultant's proposals as to how this would be best achieved within a town the size of Abingdon are requested and the consultant will lead on this engagement.

As part of the process the consultant will be expected to report progress to the community and the media through an effective communication plan.

Work was previously undertaken on a Community-Led Plan. Whilst the Plan was not completed the "Abingdon for All – Community Survey Autumn 2017 Results" provide some useful evidence and a copy of this document is attached.

4. Development of an evidence base.

Alongside the work to undertake effective community engagement, the Council wishes to create an initial evidence base in the form of a document which will include:

- (a) Relevant current and emerging planning policy documents at national, regional, county, and district level. The consultant is requested to have particular regard to evidence in relation to the climate and ecological emergency.
- (b) Highlighting those parts of the documents which are specifically relevant to Abingdon.
- (c) Identifying and summarising the policy requirements within those documents and implications of them for the ANDP.
- (d) Identifying local plan policies which are appropriate for local interpretation and to comment on those which might be sufficiently robust and as such not likely to require additional work.

5. The scope of the Plan

The Consultant will work with the Steering Group in order to produce a report for the Council which proposes:

- (a) A vision for the plan.
- (b) The objectives of the plan.
- (c) The scope of the plan. Given the potentially wide scope of the plan the Council would wish to focus on areas where the plan could have the greatest impact on the future of the town.
- (d) In developing the vision, objectives and the scope of the plan the Council ask that the Council's vision and key strategic objectives, as detailed in Appendix B, are taken in to account.

- (e) To propose a detailed work plan for the ANDP, this to include a timetable for the work.
- (f) To advise the Town Council on maximising the support available to the plan process including sources of funding for the plan.

6. Further work on the Plan and other matters

Work beyond the scoping stage This appoint relates only to the Scoping Stage detailed above. At the end of this stage, the Council will consider its procurement of the next stages of the ANDP.

Ownership of documents etc All documents, databases and evidence created at this stage of the plan should be shared with the Town Council in digital and editable form and for avoidance of doubt, would become the property of the Town Council as part of this process. This would include all publicity material, photo images, etc.

Administrative support provided by the consultant The consultant would be expected to undertake the necessary administration in relation to this process such as publicising meetings, booking rooms, writing and distributing any consultation documents, producing agendas and minutes for meetings etc. if any administrative support is required from the Council the consultant is asked to specify this in their fee proposal.

7 Fee proposal

Suitably qualified consultants are requested to e-mail the Town Clerk, Nigel Warner, with their proposals to carry out this work at enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk and cc nigel.warner@abingdon.gov.uk

Please use the subject header: "Fee proposal for scoping of the Abingdon Neighbourhood Development Plan."

Proposals should summarise the methodology/ approach to be used and set out all assumptions which are made. Whilst the Council's view on what is required during the scoping stage is detailed above, we recognise that this is an area in which we do not have experience or expertise and therefore whilst we require proposals which will enable the Council to proceed with a Neighbourhood Development Plan with an agreed vision, objectives and scope, we would wish consultants to bring their experience to this matter and include within their proposals any matters which they do not consider are being addressed in this document.

Consultants are requested to provide a quotation for this work, showing a day rate and the number of days which they envisage would be involved in undertaking this work. A contract with the Council would be based on this day rate but with a capped amount for the number of days in order to deliver the work.

Disbursements for travel expenses etc are not payable, any such expenses should be factored into the day rate quoted.

Expenses in relation to matters such as producing publicity material, hire charges for meeting rooms etc are payable. Applicants are requested to list these as part of their quote and quantify these where possible.

All quotes should be given excluding value-added tax (VAT).

Please provide a CV of the people who would work in relation to this contract, with evidence of two examples of similar work. This CV should also include the names and contact details (e-mail address and telephone number) of two previous clients who could be approached as references.

The quote should disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including being related to or friends with any councillor or employee of the Town Council.

Scanned copies of relevant insurance documents should also be included.

Should you have any queries or clarifications in relation to this matter please contact Nigel Warner on 01235 522642 or by e-mail nigel.warner@abingdon.gov.uk by 1pm on Friday 14th February 2020. If you express an interest in submitting a quote then a paper detailing queries or clarifications of a generic nature will be published later that day to all those who have expressed an interest in quoting.

The closing date for receipt of quotations is 11pm on Friday 21st February 2020.

8 **Decision making**

The Council will establish a short list based on a scored approach relating to the quality of the fee proposal (25%), past experience (40%), a demonstration of Abingdon's specific needs (25%) and cost (10%).

It is anticipated that shortlisted consultants will be invited for interview on Thursday 27th February 2020.

Nigel Warner
Town Clerk
7th February 2020

Appendix A

The Town of Abingdon

Abingdon has a rich heritage which is steeped in history. The town has been home to local residents since 700 BC/ BCE and can claim to be the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in England, with evidence of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlements found during excavations.

The town grew up outside the gates of the seventh century Abingdon Abbey which, at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538 in was the sixth richest in Britain. Little of the Abbey remained following the dissolution but the town continued to develop and prosper.

In 1556, Abingdon received its first Royal Charter from Queen Mary I. The Charter provided for the creation of the Borough Council and granted a number of rights and privileges to the town. Abingdon developed as one of the chief towns in Berkshire and was until 1868 the county town of Berkshire. During the 19th and 20th centuries the town grew considerably and became home to a number of major industries, including the MG Car Works, Morland's Brewery and the Pavlova Leather Company. Whilst these historic industries eventually disappeared the town continues to be home to many employers, with a bias to the scientific and engineering sectors, and nearby major employment sites at Culham, Harwell and Milton Park, which are now part of the "Science Vale".

The pace of growth in Abingdon increased from the 1960s onwards, with major housing developments and the population of the town grew from 18,575 in 1971 to 34,030 in 2016 (mid-year estimate).

Abingdon is often considered to be a typical market town based in a prosperous region. This is evidenced in many of the statistics in relation to the town:

- Average weekly household income is £1,014 compared with the average in England of £766 (ONS / 2013/14). After deducting housing costs this falls to £668 (average for England £495).
- There were 180 unemployment benefit claimants in October 2017 representing 0.8% of adults (aged 16-64) compared with the average for England of 1.9%.
- Recorded crime is roughly half the English average, based on 168 crimes in March 2017, representing five per 1,000 of the population compared with the English average of 10.
- There is a high level of satisfaction with the local areas as a place to live, at 86% compared with the English average of 79% (Place Survey 2008).

Although Abingdon has much to commend it, it also has its problems.

- There are significant areas of deprivation within the town. Abingdon has one area, within Abingdon Caldecott Ward, which is ranked within the 20% most deprived areas nationally (Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c). The area is within the 10% most deprived on education, skills and training. 38% of people have no qualifications (compared with Abingdon overall – 17%, National average 22%). The

area is within the 20% most deprived in relation to income and employment (2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation).

- There are 680 children aged under 16 in low income families in Abingdon (Child Poverty Measure, HMRC August 2015). However the rate of children in low income families varies significantly with 2.6% in Abingdon Dunmore to 24% in Abingdon Caldecott. In the Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c area, 41% of children are living in poverty (compared with Abingdon overall – 12%, National average 20%).
- There are pensioners facing challenges without access to transport, who are lonely and who are in poverty. This varies considerably across the town. Taking one index in relation to poverty, 8.4% of pensioners in Abingdon claim pension credit (DWP May 2017). This is almost half compared with the England average of 15.6%. However in the Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c area, the figure is over double the national average, at 32.5% (DWP August 2016).
- Whilst most health and wellbeing measures in Abingdon are statistically similar to or better than the English average, hospital stays for self-harm are statistically worse than average in three wards, Abingdon Abbey Northcourt, Caldecott and Fitzharris. GP practice data also shows that prevalence in depression recorded by each of the four GP practices in Abingdon was well above the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and England averages.
- In common with many towns housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable, particularly for younger people. The increase in house prices in Abingdon has been higher than the rest of England. From the year ending March 2012 to the year ending March 2017, the median price paid for semi-detached dwellings in England rose from £165,000 to £195,000, an increase of 18%. During this period house prices rose in the five Abingdon wards by between 42% and 71% such that for the year ending March 2017 the median price for semi-detached dwellings in Abingdon ranged from £282,995 in Abingdon Caldecott to £385,000 in Abingdon Dunmore.
- Large housing estates were developed at a time when local authority powers and priorities did not provide for what are now considered to be adequate community facilities and infrastructure.
- Abingdon operates within a national context of difficult economic circumstances and structural changes to retailing. However, with much of the town's development in the 1960s and 1970s, planning permissions were granted for out of town retailing and the town centre precinct which may not have been allowed today. This has had a detrimental effect on the town centre which is further limited by the constraints of the historic town centre with traffic negotiating narrow streets, a difficult pedestrian and cycling environment and poor air quality.

Consequently, whilst there is much to commend in Abingdon, the town has significant challenges and problems and the Town Council is determined to work with the community to

exercise its powers in meeting the challenges and improving opportunities for *all* who live in the town.

Sources used in this section:

“Community Insight” profiles for “Oxfordshire Las only,” “South Abingdon Priority Community” and Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c” areas, 24th February 2017.

Abingdon Community profile of Health and Wellbeing evidence from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, October 2017.

“Community Insight” profile for “Abingdon” area, 26th January 2018.

Appendix B

Abingdon Town Council - Our Vision

To develop an inclusive community so that Abingdon is the place where everyone wants to live and where the wellbeing of residents is prioritised. In developing this community the town will be one which is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, resilient and safe.

Our key strategic objectives

- 1 To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
- 2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- 3 To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
- 4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.