

## Annex 4

### ATLAS Statement of Intention

#### DRAFT GUIDANCE NOTE ON ECO-TOWNS STATEMENT OF INTENTION

##### Introduction

This note has been drafted by ATLAS and is intended to provide guidance for bidders in respect of advancing their bid through the planning application process and onto implementation.

The Statement of Intention needs to succinctly describe the steps that bidders intend/need to take as they progress their scheme through the planning process, concluding with views on how the scheme will be delivered and managed in the long term. The Statement should essentially provide an initial, basic roadmap of how the bidders envisage progressing individual proposals from 'preferred bid' through to planning applications and beyond into implementation, based on the principles of creating a sustainable community (see Appendix 2 for a definition of the key components required).

The Statement should incorporate the principles similar to that of, and preferably formalised through, a Planning Performance Agreement<sup>1</sup>, with a strong emphasis on collaboration and joint working with the key stakeholders involved.

It should form the basis of a project plan that can **potentially** be signed up to by all key parties involved in formulating the scheme and ultimately a planning application. (Although it must be recognised that, particularly given the nature of the process to date, it will not be possible in all cases to achieve consensus from all key stakeholders. However, in the absence of full consensus, it is anticipated that the Statement will at least form the basis for a discussion by highlighting the critical issues involved in progressing a scheme). The Statement itself should therefore ideally be the subject of consultation before it is ultimately finalised, to ensure that it is realistic in its intentions and has correctly identified the key stakeholders involved.

Bidders should set out in the Statement their understanding of the current planning policy situation relating to their particular location (from Regional Spatial Strategy down to Local Development Framework) and how they intend to progress their schemes through the planning system. Bidders should set out how they will work alongside the local authority to support the evidence base and the development of the planning document being prepared, **in line with the development plan process**.

It is emphasised that the Statement should be a succinct document and should consist of no more than 20 pages (excluding appendices, etc). Whilst it should briefly summarise the current position in respect of the components

---

<sup>1</sup> ATLAS/CLG Guidance Note 'Implementing Planning Performance Agreements' June 2008, which can be found on the ATLAS web site [www.atlasplanning.com/page/ppa.cfm](http://www.atlasplanning.com/page/ppa.cfm)

outlined below, the main emphasis must be on how it is intended to take the process forward through to and beyond a planning application submission. There is no need to provide any detailed background documents that have already been published, or to provide detail on tasks already complete or anticipated – although if appropriate these can be referenced.

The Statement should comprise of the following key elements:

1. Vision and Objectives - clearly articulate the current vision and identified objectives for the Eco-town concerned, including the level of support received from key stakeholders to date. This section should also provide a commentary of the current status of the development plan for the area concerned (including the RSS), together with comment on how the scheme conforms with planning policy;
2. Key Tasks Towards a Planning Application Submission – specify the tasks that have been undertaken to date and draw out those tasks that still need to be undertaken prior to the submission of a planning application (including identifying those already carried out);
3. Proposed Project Management Framework - identify who from the promoter's team together with other stakeholders will need to be involved in seeking to resolve those tasks and how the tasks and overall planning submission will be co-ordinated;
4. Masterplanning – describe progress on the masterplan to date and how this is to be evolved up to the planning application submission stage, to take account of further work, such as the EIA, final Transportation Studies, etc;
5. Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy – which stakeholders have been engaged to date, how have they contributed and who needs to be involved from both stakeholders and the wider community in the future;
6. Delivery, Governance and Long-Term Management - what is the current thinking on the mechanisms required to deliver the scheme through the planning system, together with views on what would be the initial phases of development. What management systems should be put in place for the long-term evolution of the town.

These elements are explained in detail below.

### **1. Vision and Development Objectives<sup>2</sup>**

The first stage at the outset of any complex development project is to draw up a vision. It helps to focus partners on the kind of place to be created, and helps establish the focus for collaborative working. A successful vision must be based on a clear idea about the character and function of the place that will be created. It should set up a framework for developing a hierarchy, not only of streets and spaces but also a hierarchy within a mixture of uses. The vision should also provide a sound basis to implement incremental development and change over time.

---

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the ATLAS Guide: *Planning for Large Scale Development* at <http://www.atlasplanning.com> for further clarification on what a vision and objectives statement should incorporate.

Developing a shared vision helps to establish consensus with all parties and enables objectives to be identified collectively, so that agreement can be reached on how that vision can be achieved. The vision and objectives provide a benchmark for stakeholders to refer back to, ensuring that discussions on detailed issues remain appropriate and aligned to meeting the broader strategic goals.

It is acknowledged that many of the bids already have a vision in place or are well underway in their formulation. While to a certain extent an overarching vision is set by the PPS, each Eco-town should have their own character and identity, captured in an individual, site specific vision.

This needs to be articulated in a clear and concise manner and any development objectives that flow from it must be realistic in terms of their implementation. To achieve this it is necessary to consult and engage with key stakeholders, so as to identify a vision and key set of objectives that are realistic, viable and capture all appropriate issues. Ultimately, the aim should be for all key parties to agree and provide commitment to a shared vision and set of objectives.

The vision should also have reference to the current development plan status for the areas concerned and articulate how the scheme will accord with the regional, sub-regional and local needs and aspirations as set out in existing and emerging planning policy.

As part of the Statement, bidders will therefore need to articulate their emerging visions and objectives in clear and concise terms. They should state what engagement/consultation specifically on the vision and objectives (if any) has taken place to date and what their strategy for stakeholder engagement will be (see below), with a view to achieving agreement.

Where it is considered that agreement is unlikely to be reached with particular key stakeholders (e.g. where local authorities are firmly opposing the proposal), the Statement should set out what steps will be taken to seek to overcome this opposition i.e. what opportunities have been afforded to key stakeholders to participate; will further steps towards engagement on the vision be taken; has the vision been based on current or emerging development plan policy?

## **2. Key Issues and Tasks**

The Eco-town Planning Policy Statement (PPS) identifies the key supporting documents that developers need to submit as part of the planning application for an Eco-town. These include, but are not limited to, the:

- zero carbon strategy,
- economic strategy,
- travel plans,
- provision of services,
- provision of green space,
- local biodiversity strategy,

- water cycle strategy (including plans for management of surface water and flood risk),
- sustainable waste and resources plan,
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA),
- Infrastructure Impact Assessment,
- masterplan (detail in point 4),
- proposals for governance (detail in point 6),
- fit with the area development plan (including the Regional Spatial Strategy and Adopted Development Plan Documents).

Detailed requirements for the above documentation is provided in the draft PSS. The development of these documents should, where relevant, take into account projected risks of climate change and the Sustainability Appraisal for the Eco-town. Depending on local circumstance, and in reference to the agreed vision and objectives, developers and local authorities may identify additional tasks and specific issues to the above that need to be undertaken/resolved as part of the work required to support a planning application submission. For example, in some proposals a Habitats Regulation Assessment may be required or more work may need to be carried out in relation to housing need.

The Statement should include an Issues and Tasks Plan that details all issues and associated tasks considered relevant to delivery of the vision:

- The documentation that will be submitted as part of the planning application, including the information required to prepare this documentation. Where evidence bases already exist, for example in development plan documents, these should be identified.
- What tasks have been carried out to date to prepare this documentation and which key stakeholders have been involved (e.g. who undertook the transportation study; have the highway authority been involved; if so, how?). If some of the tasks are ongoing, the Statement should specify what further work is required to complete each task and which key stakeholders need to be involved.
- Which tasks and issues it is considered are outstanding and how they propose to be tackled (i.e. which studies are still to be prepared?) – again this should specify who will undertake the task, which key stakeholders will need to be involved and details of any further engagement/consultation envisaged.

It should be recognised that the Issues and Tasks Plan can only be a draft at this stage, as in most cases it will require further engagement from stakeholders. However, bidders should be in a position to identify many of the issues and tasks that are considered appropriate in the formulation of a planning application and beyond.

### **3. Project Management Framework**

A project management framework to oversee the formulation of the scheme through the planning process (including up to a planning application) and

agreement on who will be involved is essential. It is strongly recommended that local authorities and developers establish a planning performance agreement, as a tested framework for taking complex proposals through the planning system. It is anticipated that a series of task groups will be required to move the Issues and Tasks Plan forward and the Statement should set out how the various groups will be co-ordinated.

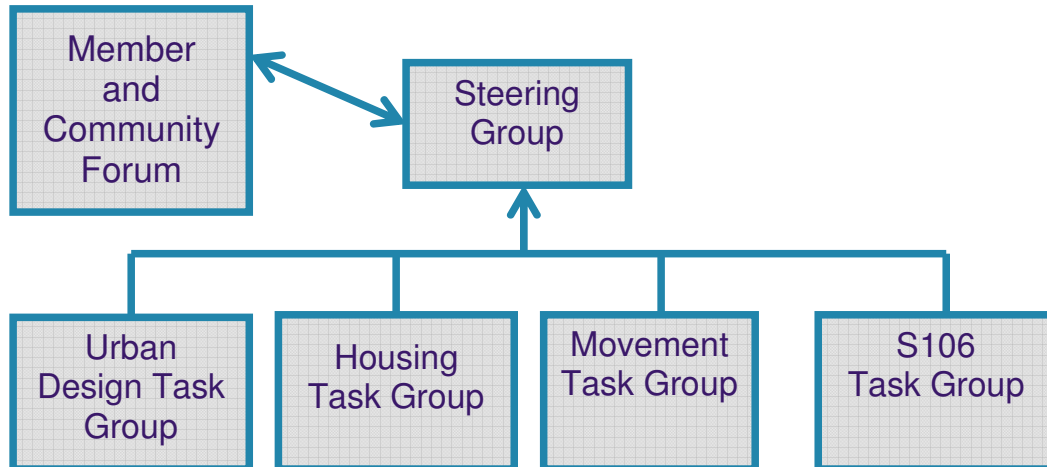
The Statement should set out what kind of project management framework it is envisaged needs to be in place and what the overall approach to project management will be. Through setting out the Issues and Task Plan (as described above), it should also be possible to identify task groups, including which stakeholders it is anticipated would input to which group. For example, it may be possible to identify that a Transportation Working Group is required to develop the draft transport study further. This group would include the bidders' highway consultants, the local Highway Authority(ies) and potentially other parties such as Network Rail/Highways Agency, etc. It may also be appropriate to identify an overall steering group to co-ordinate and oversee the production of tasks.

An example of a project management framework is contained below:

Where local authorities are in the process of preparing or adopting local development frameworks, there is an expectation that developers will liaise closely with the authority to identify how key tasks in preparation for the submission of a planning application fit with emerging development plan documents. Depending on the current status of the local development framework process, a substantive evidence base prepared by the local authority, e.g. strategic housing market assessments, may be available and should inform the Eco-town planning application.

The issue of resources should also be commented upon on this section. In particular, has there been any discussion with the local authorities and key stakeholders concerned regarding their current and future ability to engage fully in the development process – and if so, have any solutions been discussed such as additional funding for certain posts, etc.

If possible, the Statement can specify the need for external support from other agencies (such as CABE, ATLAS, etc) either confirmed or anticipated and whether agreement has been reached with such organisations. In short, the Statement can be used to highlight concerns relating to resources that may impact upon the scheme's development and where possible identify potential solutions.



#### 4. Masterplanning

All Eco-towns applications should include a masterplan which demonstrates how the Eco-town standards set out in the planning policy statement will be achieved and sustained. The masterplan should articulate an appropriate design-led approach in order to achieve these standards and create a thriving and cohesive community where residents want to live, work and raise their families.

Well designed development and good urban planning can contribute to promoting and supporting healthier and more active living; the proposed Eco-town should be designed and planned to support healthier and sustainable environments where residents can make healthy and environmentally responsible lifestyle choices easily. This design led approach will need to be articulated through the provision of a high level masterplan<sup>3</sup>, which must reflect the agreed vision and development objectives.

It is accepted that work is well underway in relation to masterplans for individual Eco-towns. It should also be noted however that the work still to be done in progressing through the planning system (as described above) will need to inform the masterplan development.

The masterplan will need to be accompanied by an implementation plan which shows how the masterplan will be delivered. The requirements of the implementation plan are detailed in paragraph 4.32 of the draft PPS and include:

- a detailed timetable of delivery of neighbourhoods, facilities and services;
- plans for the operational delivery of priority core services;
- plans for the provision of health and social care;
- how developers will support the formation and growth of communities;
- how developers will encourage environmentally responsible behaviour;

<sup>3</sup> As defined in the 2000 White Paper – *Our town and cities: the future*

- mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress in low carbon living and efficient water usage;
- a governance transition plan from developer to community;
- mechanism for monitoring and managing carbon emissions from the construction of the development.

The Statement should therefore describe what work has been done to date on a masterplan and what are its key components. The Statement should then demonstrate how the masterplanning process will interact with the processes identified above to ensure that the masterplan develops to become a realistically deliverable document that in effect translates the Eco-town vision into physical development on the site in question.

### **5. Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategies**

In addition to the statutory process, it is envisaged that consultation and engagement appropriate for a project of this nature will need to go over and above, to ensure the widest possible audience of stakeholders and community interests are included.

**Stakeholders:** It is recognised that engagement has already taken place to date with some key stakeholders. However, during the course of the development of the scheme through the planning process, further engagement will be necessary with these parties, together with the need to involve others as appropriate.

The Statement should therefore set out:

- Which stakeholders have been engaged to date and at what level
- Who it is envisaged still needs to be consulted/engaged with
- How the developer will conform with statutory consultation requirements and ensure that all statutory consultees have been engaged with
- How it is envisaged that further engagement will take place (through what particular mechanisms?)
- How any further stakeholder views/engagement will feed into the planning application preparation process

**Community:** It will be essential for developers preparing schemes for Eco-towns to demonstrate a high level of engagement and consultation with prospective and neighbouring communities. To ensure that community engagement is effective and meaningful, it should be started early and there should be continual communication to ensure as many people as possible feel able to make a difference to shape the emerging proposal.

Again, it is accepted that a degree of consultation has taken place to date, but the announcement as a preferred bidder should signal a step change in consultation and engagement as schemes are worked up to the detail required for a planning application submission. The Statement should therefore outline what consultation has taken place to date (in broad terms such as who has been involved and at what stage), followed by a strategy for

future community engagement in the preparation and delivery of the scheme through the planning process.

It should also be acknowledged that because the Eco-towns proposals result in new communities, this element provides a particular challenge and bidders are invited to demonstrate how they can build in the aspirations of a community that is not yet in place (this may involve looking at good practice elsewhere, engaging with existing groups over a wide area, etc).

## **6. Delivery, Governance and Long-Term Management**

Good delivery, governance and long-term management are all key components of sustainability, without which good planning will become wasted effort. Large scale, integrated development of the kind envisaged in an Eco-town requires effective long-term management processes and structures to be put in place (beyond that which is normally applied to individual development projects by house builders or commercial developers).

A long-term approach is necessary to ensure that new Eco-towns prosper economically and socially and that they maintain their ambitious vision beyond their initial delivery phase. Developers are expected to work with local authorities and local communities to formulate long-term governance structures for the development to ensure continued community involvement and that Eco-town standards are monitored, met and maintained. The governance proposals should be appropriate to the scale and complexity of the development, and should complement where possible existing democratic arrangements for parish and local governance. Detailed guidance on what to include in a governance structure is set out in the draft PPS.

The Eco-town process to date has encouraged promoters to create multi-disciplinary teams to respond to the wide range of issues involved. This has meant that in many cases, the core of an organisation that could then go on to deliver the development, working with and/or through key stakeholders such as the local authorities, is already apparent in some proposals. The question to be addressed now is how these embryonic organisational ideas can be developed for effective long-term delivery, governance and management, to give confidence to investors and local communities. In particular, the future envisaged role of relevant local authorities should be highlighted.

A second unusual feature is the freestanding nature of most (but not all) of the Eco-towns. This means that they may not be able to rely on existing institutions to the same extent as is normally the case in incremental expansion of existing towns. New institutions may be needed to ensure that the towns prosper economically and socially and that they maintain their ambitious vision beyond their initial delivery phase.

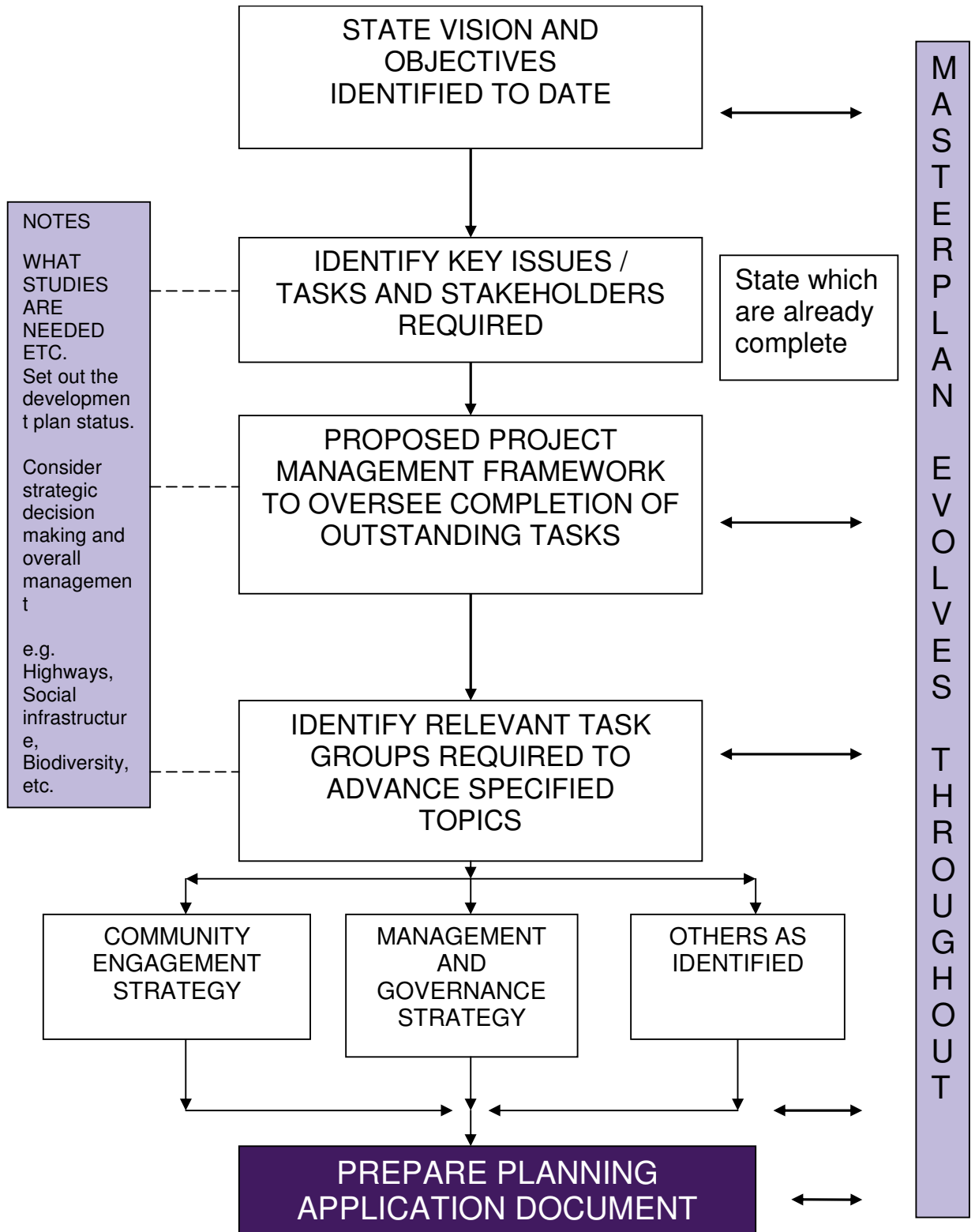
### **Key questions regarding future delivery will need to be answered such as:**

- How will phasing be handled (and quality maintained over the life time of the project)?

- Who will ensure that the masterplan is implemented in full?
- How will infrastructure be delivered in a timely manner?
- How will compliance with the Eco-town standards be monitored and, if it is underperforming, brought back on track?
- Who will own and manage the public areas and energy facilities?
- How can the developing community be part of the governance and management?

The Statement should set out the promoters' current strategy on delivering the final masterplan, starting from the assumed point of grant of a planning permission through to long-term management and governance of the town as a community. It is accepted that, given the early stage of the proposals, bidders' thinking on this is still emerging, but it should be possible to identify issues around deliverability flowing from the specific site and its location; how these issues have been tackled to date; and how it is envisaged that a deliverability strategy can ultimately be implemented.

## Appendix 1 – Outline summary of process



## Appendix 2 – Definition of sustainable community

### What is a sustainable community?

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment, and contribute to a high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned and managed and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all.

### The components of a 'sustainable community'

Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. They do this by:

- balancing and integrating the social, economic and environmental components of their community
- meeting the needs of existing and future generations
- respecting the needs of other communities in the wider region or internationally to make their own communities sustainable

Sustainable communities are diverse, reflecting their local circumstances. There is no standard template to fit them all. But they should be:

1. Active, inclusive and safe - Fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities
2. Well run - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership
3. Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment
4. Well designed and built - featuring quality built and natural environment
5. Well connected - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services
6. Thriving - with a flourishing and diverse local economy
7. Well served - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all
8. Fair for everyone - including those in other communities, now and in the future



The Egan Task Force on skills for sustainable communities, which reported in 2004, identified seven inter-related components of a sustainable community, which help understand the concept. They are illustrated in the above diagram, with the addition of equity following the ODPM's response. This diagram is commonly known as the Egan wheel.