Invitation to quote for the provision of a renewable and low carbon energy assessment and strategy

March 2016

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The District Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to 2031. The draft plan was formally submitted for independent examination in July 2015 and the initial hearing sessions were held from 23 – 26 November 2015.

1.2 Following the publication of the Inspector’s preliminary findings in December 2015 the examination has been suspended until December 2016 with the Council proposing to undertake additional work and analysis to help inform public consultation on ‘main modifications’ later in the year.

1.3 The Council has decided that the suspension presents a useful opportunity to update and augment its existing evidence on renewable and low carbon energy, the most recent study on which was published in September 2009¹.

1.4 The new evidence will be required to address the following key elements:

   - An assessment of renewable and low carbon energy potential in West Oxfordshire;
   - A renewable and low carbon energy strategy for West Oxfordshire; and
   - Planning guidance on key matters relating to renewable and low carbon energy (e.g. landscape and visual impact of solar farms.)

1.5 Further explanation of the project brief is provided in Section 3 below.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 National policy emphasises the role of the planning system in supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

2.2 To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, local planning authorities should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources.

2.3 Local Planning Authorities should:

- have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources;
- design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts;
- consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure the development of such sources;
- support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy, including developments outside such areas being taken forward through neighbourhood planning; and
- identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

2.4 The Government's practice guidance provides further clarification stating that:

- Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable;
- When drawing up a Local Plan local planning authorities should first consider what the local potential is for renewable and low carbon energy generation;
- There are no hard and fast rules about how suitable areas for renewable energy should be identified, but in considering locations, local planning authorities will need to ensure they take into account the requirements of the technology and, critically, the potential impacts on the local environment, including from cumulative impacts;
- Identifying areas suitable for renewable energy in plans gives greater certainty as to where such development will be permitted;
- In the case of wind turbines a planning application should not be approved unless the proposed development site is an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a Local or Neighbourhood Plan; and
- In addition to the factors that should be considered regarding the acceptability of a location for any form of
renewable energy development there are particular considerations for the following technologies: hydropower, active solar technology (photovoltaics and solar water heating), solar farms and wind turbines.

2.5 The Council’s existing evidence on renewable energy was published in 2009 in the form of a renewable energy and sustainable construction study².

2.6 The study (known as the CAG Study) was a joint commission with Cherwell District Council and was intended to provide an evidence-based understanding of the local feasibility and potential for decentralised, renewable and low carbon technologies; local targets for decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy; and local requirements for sustainable construction.

2.7 In relation to large-scale energy technologies, the study focused primarily on wind and CHP/district heating and concluded there were limited opportunities for large renewable and low carbon energy developments in the district due to significant constraints, such as the landscape and historic environment. Small-scale technologies, such as ground source heat pumps and solar hot water, were seen as being more suitable technologies for West Oxfordshire. The study did not however address the issue of solar farms and energy from waste, which are technologies that have come to the fore in more recent years.

2.8 Having regard to this evidence base, the pre-submission draft Local Plan 2031 which was submitted for examination in July 2015 includes draft Policy EH4 – Decentralised and Renewable or Low Carbon Energy Development.

2.9 The policy is criteria-based and offers support in principle for renewable and low carbon energy developments especially small-scale community-led initiatives, subject to certain criteria being met.

2.10 As part of the examination process, the Council put forward a proposed minor modification to Policy EH4 to take account of the requirements of the Government’s written ministerial statement dated 18 June 2015 in relation to wind energy³.

2.11 The proposed modification reinforced the need for wind energy development to be located in an area identified as suitable for wind energy and address all relevant planning impacts including those identified by local communities. It suggested that the identification of potentially suitable areas for wind energy would be further assessed by the Council through an early review of the Local Plan.

2.12 In light of the suspension of the examination and the Inspector’s recommendations contained in his preliminary findings, the Council is however no longer proposing to undertake an early review of the Local Plan and will instead seek to address all necessary amendments to the plan through proposed modifications to be published for consultation later in the year. This will include the identification of potentially suitable areas for wind energy.

3. **PROJECT SPECIFICATION**

3.1 To help inform the forthcoming Local Plan main modifications and to provide the Council with a sound evidence base upon which to determine planning applications, the Council wishes to appoint an independent consultant to prepare a renewable and low carbon energy assessment and strategy for West Oxfordshire.

3.2 It is anticipated that the project will have three distinct, but inter-related elements including:

- An assessment of renewable and low carbon energy potential in West Oxfordshire;
- A renewable and low carbon energy strategy for West Oxfordshire; and
- Planning guidance on key matters relating to renewable and low carbon energy (e.g. landscape and visual impact of solar farms)

3.3 Further explanation of each element is outlined below. These elements may be presented in the form of a single report or split into separate reports as appropriate.

*Assessment of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Potential*

3.4 Chapter 4 of the CAG Study provides an assessment of the feasibility and potential of renewable energy and low carbon technologies. As changes in technologies are likely to have occurred in the seven years since this assessment, along with changes to government financial incentives, an update of the assessment is required.

3.5 Whilst the assessment of domestic/small-scale technologies covered a wide range of renewable and low carbon energy, the assessment of larger-scale technologies focused mainly on wind turbines. Other forms of energy should now also be considered, including solar, hydro, biomass and energy from waste.

3.6 In terms of wind energy, the CAG Study mapped wind speeds, a buffer area around dwellings, aerodromes, ancient woodlands, SSSIs, the Cotswolds AONB and Special Areas of Conservation as part of the assessment on suitability of West Oxfordshire for larger
scale wind development. Very few unconstrained sites were found to be potentially suitable for wind developments and those opportunities that were identified were relatively scattered, with no obvious spatial pattern of clusters or groupings of sites that would lend themselves to identification in a Local Plan. The conclusion at that time was, therefore, that there was insufficient evidence to identify suitable areas for larger scale wind development in West Oxfordshire. This new study will need to revisit the analysis and, based on current Government guidance, if appropriate identify potentially suitable land for wind energy.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Strategy

3.7 Using the evidence obtained from the update of renewable and low carbon energy potential, an energy strategy is required that will:

- Set out the current energy policy context and key drivers for a local energy strategy
- Identify the key technologies, appropriate for the area’s environment and communities, that will enable West Oxfordshire to help meet national and international targets and commitments on carbon reduction and low carbon energy generation
- Identify the key priorities for the district, particularly through the Council’s role as local planning authority
- Assess the role and potential for community energy and provide guidance for those undertaking Neighbourhood Plans
- Review the existing planning policy approach to decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy development in the draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and recommend modifications if necessary, including identification of land suitable for energy generation.

Planning Guidance on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

3.8 General guidance is required relating to all the main renewable and low carbon energy technologies, as well as specific siting and design guidance, including the issue of cumulative impact.

3.9 The renewable and low carbon energy to be addressed should include: wind, solar, hydropower, biomass, heat pumps, advanced energy from waste and anaerobic digestion.

3.10 The guidance should provide information on a range of matters, such as:

- Landscape and visual impact
- Ecology
- Historic environment
- Pollution e.g. noise, glint and glare, odour, pest control
- Agricultural land
- Drainage, flood management, water quality
- Aviation and electromagnetic transmissions
Final Reporting

3.11 The consultants will provide 2 bound and covered hard copies of the final report(s) at standard A4 size. The reports will also be provided electronically in Adobe portable document format (.pdf).

3.12 The consultant’s name will appear as the authors of the reports and senior officers of the commissioning authority will sign the report. The reports should be “open for public use”. The copyright in the completed reports and any annexes will belong to West Oxfordshire District Council which will retain ownership of the final report, any data collected and any analysis that is undertaken as part of this study.

4. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

4.1 The Council requests that all bidders ensure that they meet the following minimum requirements as outlined below:

- The supplier must provide details of two references from existing clients in the last three years that are relevant to the Council’s requirement.
- The supplier must provide details of relevant insurance held. The Contractor must hold the following insurance levels throughout the life of the contract. Minimum cover for any one incident of the following must be held:
  - Public Liability - £1,000,000.00
  - Should the Contractor’s existing insurance policies not be at the level indicated the Council will require confirmation that the Contractor is willing to increase this to the level stated if awarded the contract.
- The supplier must provide evidence to demonstrate its commitment to equality of opportunity and approach to service delivery.
5. **RESPONSE TO PROJECT SPECIFICATION**

5.1 Tender submissions should include the following information.

1. **Technical Capacity, Expertise and Experience**

5.2 Please detail your organisations technical capacity, expertise and experience over the last five years of carrying out similar work. Please provide brief CV’s for nominated staff who will be working on this project and an indication of the time each team member will contribute.

5.3 Please also provide telephone contact details for two recent and relevant references.

2. **Understanding and Addressing the Project Specification**

5.4 Submissions should include a method statement setting out your understanding of the brief and how you intend to fulfil the project specification as set out in Section 3.

5.5 Submissions should confirm that the outputs specified in this brief can be achieved by the proposal and any elements where this is in doubt should be clearly stated.

3. **Quality Assurance**

5.6 Does your organisation hold a recognised quality management certification and/or is a member of a relevant trade/professional body for example BS/EN/ISO9001?

5.7 If yes, please detail those certificates held and/or trade/professional membership details.

5.8 If not, does your organisation have a quality management arrangement in place (including processes/procedures that are compliant with legal requirements)? Please provide details.

6. **TIMESCALE AND SUBMISSION OF QUOTATIONS**

**Timescale**

6.1 The anticipated timetable for this commission is set out below although we will be guided by tender submissions with regard to the practicalities of achieving the reporting dates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Despatch invitation to quote</td>
<td>11 March 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisations return proposals to Council</td>
<td>1 April 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment</td>
<td>w/c 4 April 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft report</td>
<td>May/June 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report</td>
<td>June/July 2016</td>
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</table>
Submission of Quotations

6.2 Tender submissions may be sent by post or electronically.

6.3 A clear explanation of the costs relating to the overall project should be provided.

6.4 The postal address for hard copy submissions is as follows:

Planning Policy Team
West Oxfordshire District Council
Elmfield
New Yatt Road
Witney
OX28 1PB

6.5 Electronic submissions should be sent to:

planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk

6.6 The deadline for submissions is 5pm on 1st April 2016.

6.7 The Council will not be liable for any expenses incurred by bidders in the preparation of their tender returns and no quotation will be considered if it is not received by the date and time specified.

6.8 Following receipt of Quotations, they will be arithmetically checked. Any arithmetical errors will be corrected, and a revised Quotation price calculated. The Bidder(s) concerned will be notified of any errors and amendments and asked either to confirm the revised Quotation price or withdraw the Quotation.

6.9 The Council reserves the right to investigate further any Quotation where it believes that the rates and price(s) submitted may be unrealistic, and this will be grounds for rejecting such a Quotation and for referring the same to the Office of Fair Trading for further investigation.

6.10 The Council does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any Quotation that is received, but if it does accept a Quotation then all Bidders will accordingly be notified of the outcome of the Quotation exercise.
7. **AWARD AND EVALUATION CRITERIA**

7.1 The award of the contract will be based on the Most Economically Advantageous (MEA) offer received. The Council has decided that the split between quality and financial matters will be 60:40 respectively.

7.2 The criteria contributing to the quality evaluation (60% of the overall evaluation) comprises the following:
   - Quality assurance (5%)
   - Technical capacity, expertise, experience (20%)
   - Understanding and addressing the project specification (35%)

7.3 The financial evaluation (40% of the overall evaluation) will be carried out against a single criterion:
   - Price (40%)

8. **PROVISION OF FURTHER SUPPORT AT EXAMINATION**

8.1 The successfully appointed consultants may be required to provide evidence at examination.

8.2 A separate daily rate should therefore also be provided.

9. **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

9.1 Any potential conflicts of interest should be clearly identified in order for the Council to be able to form a view on this matter.

10. **THE COUNCIL**

10.1 West Oxfordshire District Council is the contracting Council for the purposes of this quotation and its headquarters and main offices is located at Woodgreen, Witney, OX28 1NB.

**Contact Officer**

10.2 To enable efficient Management of the Contract the Council will appoint a named Contact Officer who will be the main point of contact for the Council.

10.3 The Contact Officer for this contract will be Janice Bamsey or such other Officer of the Council as the Council may decide and notify to the successful contractor in writing. The contact details for any queries are:
11. PRICING

11.1 Consultants should provide a fixed fee quote including expenses. VAT should be shown separately.

11.2 A separate hourly and/or daily rate should be provided for the potential provision of support at examination.

12. PAYMENT PROCEDURES

12.1 Payment will be made in full on satisfactory completion of the final report.

13. COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION

13.1 The Contractor will be responsible for ensuring that in the undertaking of any work for the Council that it fulfils all the requirements of UK and EU law together with all health and safety and equality and diversity legislation. The Contractor must inform the Council immediately if it suspects that it has in anyway breached any UK and EU legislation in the performance of the Contract.
For the provision of a renewable and low carbon energy assessment and strategy

I certify that the information supplied is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I understand that West Oxfordshire District Council may contact anyone to verify this information, and that false or misleading information could result in my/our exclusion from the select tender list.

I also understand that it is a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment to give or offer to give any gift or consideration whatsoever as an inducement or reward to any servant or member of a public body. In addition your specific attention will be drawn to the clause in the proposed contract empowering the Authority’s to cancel the contract and to recover any loss from the contractor if the contractor has offered any gift or inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining the contract.

Signed
____________________________________

Position held
____________________________________

For and on behalf of
____________________________________

Date
____________________________________
As you know, from January 2005, the Council is required to comply with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “Act”). This means that all information held by the Council has the potential to be disclosed to a member of the public requesting it. In order to limit disclosure it is necessary to categorise information as exempt information under Part II of the Act.

Typical exemptions which might apply are as follows:

1. Information that constitutes a trade secret.
2. Information the disclosure of which would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person, including the Council.
3. Commercial information, which can be kept confidential for an agreed period following which, you acknowledge it will be released if a request for it is received under the Act. The Act defines commercial information as a trade secret, or information, the disclosure of which would prejudice the commercial interests of either party.

Therefore in submitting your tender, quote or proposal to the Council, you are asked to clearly identify which of the information you have provided you desire to be kept confidential as exempt information. Please also specify the period of confidentiality, which you reasonably consider should be applicable to that information. The Council may or may not be able to comply with this request.

You should also be aware, that any information you consider to be commercially confidential, may at a later date cease to constitute exempt information, or it may subsequently prove to be in the public interest to disclose such information. Also, please note that any decision on non-disclosure of information could later be overridden by the Council’s obligations to disclose under the Act.

Please list any information you wish to be kept as confidential.
The parties acknowledge that, except for any information which is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (“The Act”) the text of this Agreement, and any Schedules to this Agreement, is not Confidential Information. The Council shall be responsible for determining in its absolute discretion whether any part of the Agreement or its Schedules is exempt from disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Notwithstanding any other term of this Agreement, the Contractor hereby gives its consent for the Council to publish this Agreement and its Schedules in its entirety, including from time to time agreed changes to the Agreement, to the general public in whatever form the Council decides.

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