READING PASSAGE 2

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 14–26**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.*

Sustainable growth at Didcot: the outline of a report by South Oxfordshire District Council

A

The UK Government's South East Plan proposes additional housing growth in the town of Didcot, which has been a designated growth area since 1979. We in South Oxfordshire District Council consider that, although Didcot does have potential for further growth, such development should be sustainable, well-planned, and supported by adequate infrastructure and community services.

B

Recent experience in Didcot has demonstrated that large greenfield* developments cannot resource all the necessary infrastructure and low-cost housing requirements. The ensuing compromises create a legacy of local transport, infrastructure and community services deficits, with no obvious means of correction. We wish to ensure that there is greater recognition of the cost attached to housing growth, and that a means is found to resource the establishment of sustainable communities in growth areas.

C

Until the 1950s, the development of job opportunities in the railway industry, and in a large, military ordnance depot, was the spur to Didcot's expansion. Development at that time was geared to providing homes for the railway and depot workers, with limited investment in shopping and other services for the local population. Didcot failed to develop Broadway as a compact town centre, and achieved only a strip of shops along one side of the main street hemmed in by low density housing and service trade uses.

D

From the 1970s, strategic planning policies directed significant new housing development to Didcot. Planners recognised Didcot's potential, with rapid growth in local job opportunities and good rail connections for those choosing to work farther afield. However, the town is bisected by the east–west railway, and people living in Ladygrove, the urban extension to the north which has been built since the 1980s, felt, and still feel, cut off from the town and its community.

E

Population growth in the new housing areas failed to spark adequate private-sector investment in town centre uses, and the limited investment which did take place – Didcot Market Place development in 1982, for instance – did not succeed in delivering the number and range of town centre uses needed by the growing population. In 1990, public-sector finance was used to buy the land required for the Orchard Centre development, comprising a superstore, parking and a new street of stores running parallel to Broadway. The development took 13 years to complete.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

F

The idea that, by obliging developers of new housing to contribute to the cost of infrastructure and service requirements, all the necessary finance could be raised, has proved unachievable. Substantial public finance was still needed to deliver major projects such as the new link road to the A34 on the outskirts of the town at Milton, the improved railway crossing at Marsh Bridge and new schools. Such projects were delayed due to difficulties in securing public finance. The same problem also held back expansion of health and social services in the town.

G

In recent years, government policy, in particular the requirement for developers that forty percent of the units in a new housing development should be low cost homes, has had a major impact on the economics of such development, as it has limited the developers' contribution to the costs of infrastructure. The planning authorities are facing difficult choices in prioritising the items of infrastructure which must be funded by development, and this, in turn, means that from now on public finance will need to provide a greater proportion of infrastructure project costs.

H

The Government's Sustainable Communities Plan seeks a holistic approach to new urban development in which housing, employment, services and infrastructure of all kinds are carefully planned and delivered in a way which avoids the infrastructure deficits that have occurred in places like Didcot in the past. This report, therefore, is structured around the individual components of a sustainable community, and shows the baseline position for each component.

I

Didcot has been identified as one of the towns with which the Government is working to evaluate whether additional growth will strengthen the economic potential of the town, deliver the necessary infrastructure and improve environmental standards. A programme of work, including discussions with the local community about their aspirations for the town as well as other stakeholders, will be undertaken over the coming months, and will lead to the development of a strategic master plan. The challenge will be in optimising scarce resources to achieve maximum benefits for the town.

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* land that has never previously been built on

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions 14–26

Questions 14–19

Reading Passage 2 has nine paragraphs, ***A–I****.*

Which paragraph contains the following information?

Write the correct letter, ***A–I****.*

14 reference to the way the council's report is organised

15 the reason why inhabitants in one part of Didcot are isolated

16 a statement concerning future sources of investment

17 the identification of two major employers at Didcot

18 reference to groups who will be consulted about a new development plan

19 an account of how additional town centre facilities were previously funded

Questions 20–23

Look at the following places and the list of statements below.

Match each place with the correct statement, ***A–F****.*

Write the correct letter, ***A–F****.*

20 Broadway

21 Market Place

22 Orchard Centre

23 Marsh Bridge

List of statements

A It provided extra facilities for shopping and cars.

B Its location took a long time to agree.

C Its layout was unsuitable.

D Its construction was held up due to funding problems.

E It was privately funded.

F It failed to get Council approval at first.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions 24–26

Complete the sentences below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*

24 A certain proportion of houses in any new development now have to be of the ..... type.

25 The government is keen to ensure that adequate ..... will be provided for future housing developments.

26 The views of Didcot's inhabitants and others will form the basis of a ..... for the town.

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