



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	<b>Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b> <b>Thursday 19 November 2020</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item No. 11</b>
Subject	<b>Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk">michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
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Summary	The report introduces a first draft of a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (attached as <a href="#">Appendix 1</a> ). The report explains the purpose of this unique approach, the scope and content of the Vision, and the timeline for the current engagement and finalising the Vision. The Draft Vision is presented for discussion and comments to help inform revisions prior to future Growth Board endorsement
Appendix	<a href="#">Appendix 1</a> – Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire
Recommendation	That the Committee submits comments on the Draft Strategic Vision for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 December 2020.
Corporate priorities	The Strategic Vision is relevant to the Council's vision in relation to climate action, a vibrant district economy, strong local communities, and meeting the housing needs of our changing population.
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultation	This report is consequent on the Growth Board's current consultation on the draft Strategic Vision, which extends to the public.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The Oxfordshire Growth Board ('the Board) was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee<sup>1</sup> of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. Following a recent review, the Board's aim is to help coordinate economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits. The Board's establishment was premised on strengthening partnership arrangements across Oxfordshire for pragmatic working on key strategic issues. It has successfully done this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire were seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.2. Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It is also facing significant change, but with change comes the opportunity for progress based on new ways of thinking. Conversations between Growth Board partners and the public, and innovative work on economic inclusivity, have shown that there is a desire to see a different approach to place-shaping in Oxfordshire. For example, the public's responses to the consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 document gave us a clear steer that there is an appetite for an approach that:
  - is ambitious, radical, innovative and creative
  - is Oxfordshire-specific and reflects the views of local people
  - prioritises climate change
  - focusses on social, economic and environmental well-being, not solely on a narrow definition of growth
- 1.3. Through the Growth Board, the councils have collectively expressed their desire for plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire to be ambition-led and outcome-focussed. Achieving these ambitions will require all those who make future decisions about investment, and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire, to maximise impact by working together based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions. Developing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire is a unique opportunity to respond to this challenge, through the Growth Board, on behalf of local councils and partners.
- 1.4. Establishing a clear and coherent vision for Oxfordshire setting out what the partners are seeking to achieve and their strategic priorities, also plays an important role in helping manage some of the risks to the Oxfordshire Plan at Examination.
- 1.5. The draft Strategic Vision included at [Appendix I](#) is due to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 December 2020, and this Committee is invited to submit comments to be taken into account at that time.

## **2. PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THE DRAFT STRATEGIC VISION**

- 2.1. Building on the success of recent engagements and consultations, the Growth Board partnership wishes to consider in a positive, open and transparent way what the ambition for Oxfordshire should look like and how it can be achieved by drawing on new ways of thinking about sustainable development. The Draft Vision is intended to be the start of a conversation with our communities to build consensus around a common set of goals for Oxfordshire, strengthening and improving the Vision.

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<sup>1</sup> Under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012

<sup>2</sup> As a Joint Committee, the Board may discharge executive functions if delegated to it by each constituent local authority, but each constituent authority retains the ability to exercise all executive and non-executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development including where applicable provision of housing, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning

- 2.2. In doing so, the Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. It is crucial to not lose sight of the rich variety of places that make up Oxfordshire and all that is valued about the character of our city, towns and villages and our natural and historic environments. It is recognised that delivering the Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect particular circumstances. That happens best through a detailed understanding of places and communities to arrive at solutions that work for them. Delivering the Vision will require long-term collective commitment and investment by the partners that make up the Growth Board but also, crucially, by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partnerships.
- 2.3. The Strategic Vision is part of the existing portfolio approach to plan and strategy development in Oxfordshire. The Vision has a specific role and a clearly defined non-statutory status. While it is similarly looking to 2050 and is intended to support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan indirectly, it is not part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 itself. It explicitly does not deal with the quantum of housing or economic growth for Oxfordshire, nor direct where it should go. Those are matters more appropriately dealt with through other plans (Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Local Plans). The Vision can however play an important role in seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic well-being which may be reflected in emerging plans, strategies and programmes.
- 2.4. The Oxfordshire Plan will deliver parts of the Vision, but not all the ambitions and outcomes are within its sphere of influence. The Strategic Vision cuts across many sectors and is designed to inform a range of plans, strategies and programmes. Local plans, infrastructure plans, economic strategies and associated plans and programmes will all have important roles to play. For example, having a set of long-term, strategic, economic, infrastructure and environment investment priorities aligned to shared outcomes will help ensure Oxfordshire is investing in the right infrastructure and other assets in a timely way, maximising the benefits of that investment, avoiding unnecessary expenditure and helping ensure it is better placed to influence the priorities of other relevant organisations. Having a 'whole system' agreed vision of where we are heading, and our expected outcomes would go a very long way to help align our work and our infrastructure programmes.
- 2.5. The Vision should also be read by partners beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it. Of particular significance is the Government's announcement in March 2020 of its backing for a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire can help achieve its collective ambition by looking to influence any framework for the Arc based on its Strategic Vision.

### **3. SCOPE OF THE DRAFT STRATEGIC VISION**

- 3.1. The Draft Strategic Vision is high-level, overarching and long-term. It is positive, optimistic and aims high in its ambition for Oxfordshire. The Vision sets out how the plans, strategies and programmes for Oxfordshire, including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, can be ambition-led and outcome focussed, facilitating a step-change in the approach to delivering sustainable development in Oxfordshire. In much the same way that local councils adopt corporate plans to guide their work, the Vision will help guide the approach to joint working and joint programmes between those councils and their partners.
- 3.2. The Strategic Vision is centred on people's well-being, with Oxfordshire a place where current and future generations thrive. Well-being of individuals is important, but the Strategic Vision also addresses well-being in the round in ways that make important connections because there are well-recognised intrinsic links between the environmental, social and economic dimensions of well-being and how these need to be underpinned by improved resilience. The ambition is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to shape healthy, sustainable, resilient communities.

- 3.3. The Strategic Vision defines the ambition for Oxfordshire as a set of outcomes, which if we are successful, will have been achieved by 2050. To help achieve the ambition the Vision defines what is meant by 'good growth', with the approach based on improvements in quality and circumstances for individuals and society. The aim is that growth in Oxfordshire will be inclusive, focussing on progress in improving health and well-being, transitioning to a low carbon future, addressing inequalities and prioritising the natural environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change. The Vision also includes a set of Guiding Principles (or inter-related ground rules) which together articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the next 30 years.
- 3.4. Delivery against a 30-year vision will require pragmatism and realism as the tools of our innovation and ambition develop. However, the Strategic Vision recognises that decisions, actions and investments are required now to place Oxfordshire on the pathway to delivery by 2050.
- 3.5. It is very likely that achieving the final, agreed outcomes by 2050 will require some trends to be reversed, while for some other trends, where progress is already being made, there will need to be an increase in the pace of change, making the most of the vital role place-making plays in delivering positive outcomes. Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed, will be an important part of the approach to delivering the Strategic Vision. It also provides a robust basis on which Oxfordshire's communities and stakeholders may hold the Growth Board to account. At this stage we have not attempted to define or agree targets or the indicators for monitoring delivery. Development of a robust framework for monitoring progress and continual improvement will form a key part of the next phase of work on the Strategic Vision, drawing on public and stakeholder engagement.

#### **4. TIMESCALES AND NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1. Work on the Strategic Vision is time-critical. It is intended to indirectly support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, as well as the Government's planned spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Work on a spatial framework is now gathering momentum and is expected to progress at pace; having an agreed Strategic Vision in place will provide Oxfordshire with a firm basis to influence any framework for the Arc.
- 4.2. Preparation of the Draft Strategic Vision is the beginning of a process. Because the Growth Board wants to be open about what it is trying to achieve, it is carrying out bespoke and wide public and stakeholder engagement, providing an early opportunity for people to share and shape its thinking through public discussion and debate. The programme of public and stakeholder engagement will run from 16 November 2020 to 3 January 2021.
- 4.3. Due to COVID-19, the Growth Board is using the Oxfordshire Open Thought digital engagement platform which has already proved very helpful in engaging on wide-ranging topics and long-term thinking. Engagement on the Strategic Vision will respond to that earlier conversation, and use Open Thought to seek support, build consensus and make improvements.
- 4.4. The Growth Board partners have important linkages with communities and grassroots networks in Oxfordshire. The views of the Growth Board partners will therefore be crucial in shaping the Strategic Vision as it evolves. The more consensus that can be built, the more it will be possible to develop and implement effective plans and programmes for Oxfordshire. The Growth Board is therefore asking that the Strategic Vision is considered by each local authority's Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet during the engagement period.
- 4.5. The Vision will be refined by the Growth Board taking account of the engagement and further work (informal sustainability advice for example). Early, pre-engagement comments made through the Growth Board Scrutiny Panel and Growth Board process will be picked up as part of the post-engagement re-drafting.

- 4.6. Subject to the feedback received and support generated, the Growth Board will seek endorsement of a revised Strategic Vision at its meeting scheduled for 23 March 2021.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The preparation and development of the Strategic Vision will be covered within existing budget and resource allocations. No additional financial commitments are required as part of this report .

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire has a clearly defined non-statutory status. Nevertheless, it may be prudent to seek legal advice following engagement but prior to agreement of the Vision, to ensure the agreed language of the Vision moving forward is helpful to, rather than in conflict with, the emerging next stage of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1. No specific risks have been identified in respect of this report.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1. The development of a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, which encompasses the shared ambitions of local councils and key organisations, provides a unique opportunity to bring together a clear and unambiguous statement about what it is we want to achieve in Oxfordshire. This bold and striving approach is being developed as part of a wider engagement process with Growth Board partners, councillors and residents. Cabinet will be asked to provide its feedback on the draft Strategic Vision, and delegate responsibility to agree final wording of a response to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader before 3 January 2021.

## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1. No background papers have been identified.

# Appendix 1: Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development - Engagement Draft

## Our Vision Statement for Oxfordshire

*Enhanced well-being sits at the heart of our ambition.*

*We want Oxfordshire to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are improved. To achieve this will require bold, innovative, collaborative and inclusive thinking with decisions and actions that deliver real and lasting change in ways that build resilience and enhance well-being.*

*To be well, we need the right environmental, social and economic conditions, underpinned by improved resilience, and built on a clear understanding that the different dimensions of well-being are intrinsically linked. By resilience we mean de-carbonisation, tackling climate change and mitigating its impacts, securing a biodiverse natural environment, building community connectedness, better health, and improved educational attainment and skills that will support the jobs of the future. Our ambition is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to accommodate growth sustainably, and shape healthy, resilient communities in which it is possible for all residents to thrive.*

*If we are successful, these are the outcomes that will have been achieved in Oxfordshire by 2050:*

- We will be the first generation to leave Oxfordshire's natural environment in a better state than that in which we found it. The natural environment will be more biodiverse, supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.*
- Oxfordshire will already be carbon neutral, and will be moving towards a carbon negative future, in which the County is removing more carbon than it emits each year.*
- The population will be healthier and happier, inequalities will have been reduced, young people will feel excited about their future and the overall well-being of the population will have improved.*
- The economy of Oxfordshire will be successful and sustainable, making the most of all our people and with quality places where people want to live and work.*
- We will have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our residents.*
- Movement around Oxfordshire will be transformed, with greater connectivity and mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic well-being.*
- Our communities will be rooted and flourishing, with enhanced and lasting connectedness driven by individual and community action.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. Its beautiful countryside, from the Chilterns to the Cotswolds, with high quality landscapes and areas important for nature conservation, its rich and diverse built and historic environment formed from the fabric of its market towns and villages and the vibrant, diverse cultural offer and urban environment in the City of Oxford, and its proximity and connections with other places, are key reasons why people choose to live, work, visit and invest here. These strengths have formed the foundation of Oxfordshire's economic success. But there are also challenges. Oxfordshire is one of the fastest growing economies in the country, but it is also among the least equal, with significant and stubborn economic and social inequalities. And there are problems linked to congestion, housing affordability and the well-being of the natural and built environments. All these impact on Oxfordshire's residents and businesses.
- 1.2 Oxfordshire is facing significant changes. Some of these – such as climate change and the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic – are the result of trends that are being experienced by the global community. Other changes reflect Oxfordshire's status as an international centre of pioneering research and innovation based on a hive of knowledge-intensive economic activity at the universities and science, technology and business parks. Changes are being influenced by Oxfordshire's links with neighbouring areas such as the Thames Valley and Swindon, and more widely with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc which is now a key national economic priority for the Government.
- 1.3 Change is inevitable, but change is not inevitably detrimental. With change comes the opportunity for progress based on new ways of thinking. We have seen an important increase in emphasis on climate change internationally, nationally and locally, with legislation in 2019 to eradicate the UK contribution to climate change by 2050, and with climate change emergencies declared by all the Oxfordshire Councils. We now have a better understanding that every decision made as a result of emerging plans and strategies for Oxfordshire has the potential to, and very probably will, impact (positively or negatively) on local, national and global emissions in the short, medium and long-term, to way beyond plan end dates.
- 1.4 Most recently, the COVID-19 crisis has generated considerable uncertainty and brought into sharp focus important, complex and sometimes uncomfortable questions about the impact of the pandemic. But we have also seen how, although physically apart, people have come together to give care, support and friendship within their communities. It has also given us a glimpse of a world less dependent on personal travel and more reliant on digital connectivity. How can we capture the positive aspects of these changes as we move forward? The pandemic has forced us to think about how we should frame our choices as the country moves towards recovery, what our priorities should be and how to deliver positive outcomes.
- 1.5 We need to be pragmatic in responding to current circumstances, whilst recognising the importance of taking this opportunity to think strategically about how best to tackle long-term problems as we re-build and secure the future of our local economies. Others have referred to this process as 'building back better', in which traditional models of growth are re-thought, re-set and replaced with a more balanced approach based on a broader range of objectives. We should not avoid tackling issues now, but it is also important to establish a pathway for long-term change.

- 1.6 We know that within Oxfordshire there is a desire to see a different approach to place-shaping. Early in 2019 the partnership preparing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 started a formal conversation with the public and stakeholders about planning for Oxfordshire's long-term future. The public's response to that consultation gave us a very clear steer that there is an appetite for an approach that:
- is more ambitious, radical, innovative and creative
  - is more Oxfordshire-specific and reflective of local people's views
  - prioritises climate change, and
  - focusses on social, economic and environmental well-being, and not solely on a narrow definition of growth.
- 1.7 Similar thoughts were also reflected in the One Planet Living Oxfordshire Shared Vision<sup>1</sup>. Developed for a broadly-based Oxfordshire partnership, and drawing on input from some 100 stakeholders from across Oxfordshire, the One Planet approach sets out the sorts of big thinking and action that is required to achieve sustainable living based on a happier, healthier, greener future. And, the Oxfordshire Growth Board's Open Thought initiative<sup>2</sup> has added to the debate and pool of ideas by tapping into the wealth of knowledge to help find solutions to accommodate changes in how we will live and work, how we will connect with each other and how we will manage and respond to climate change.
- 1.8 Our bold economic ambitions<sup>3</sup> have been brought to life in an investment plan<sup>4</sup>. We can see from this how Oxfordshire is uniquely placed to embrace the dynamic potential of world-leading innovation and research and development to support economic recovery and growth for the benefit of local residents.
- 1.9 Innovative work on inclusive growth<sup>5</sup> has brought relevance and visibility to a need for us to actively recognise and address the inequalities in our success. It has highlighted a wide range of issues, including the need to tackle deprivation and disadvantage in Oxford and our other urban areas, improve educational attainment and to develop the skills required to access new employment opportunities and to improve physical and digital connectivity in our rural areas. If we are to deliver our vision and ambitions, these inequalities will need to be addressed so that growth is genuinely inclusive.
- 1.10 These conversations and thinking have shown that if we frame our ambition based on what is demonstrably achievable over the next thirty years, we could fall well short of what those who have contributed are looking to achieve. That would be a missed opportunity that fails to capitalise on Oxfordshire's scope for innovation over the longer-term. We therefore wish to determine in a positive, open and transparent way what our ambition for Oxfordshire should look like and how we can achieve it by drawing on new ways of thinking about sustainable development.
- 1.11 In doing so, we should not lose sight of the rich variety of places that make up Oxfordshire. We value the character of these different settings – our city, towns and villages and our natural and historic environments – and recognise that delivering our shared Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect particular circumstances. For example, activity to achieve ambitions for zero carbon and increased biodiversity will need different design solutions

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<sup>1</sup> One Planet Oxfordshire: Our Shared Vision, Bioregional, 2019

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.oxfordshireopenthought.org>

<sup>3</sup> Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan, 2020

<sup>5</sup> Led by Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership under Oxfordshire's 'Social Contract' and by the City of Oxford



in the high-density environments of the city and urban areas than in rural settings. This happens best through inclusive processes and a detailed understanding of places and communities to arrive at solutions that work for them.

- 1.12 We also recognise that positive change will evolve and take time: it is not linear and not smooth. This Vision sets our ambition high: while we are realistic in understanding this will evolve over time and must be couched against dynamic economic, political and social forces beyond our direct control, we want to challenge the norm and the lowest common denominator to provide the best possible future for our residents.

## 2. Purpose & Status of the Strategic Vision

- 2.1 This Strategic Vision has been prepared by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Growth Board comprises the six councils of Oxfordshire<sup>6</sup> and key strategic partners<sup>7</sup>. It facilitates collaborative working on economic development, strategic planning and growth, and oversees the projects agreed in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, seeking agreement on local priorities.
- 2.2 The Strategic Vision cuts across many sectors and is designed to inform a range of strategies, plans and programmes. It represents our common and shared ambition but is not intended to replace or set the vision for any of our communities or partner organisations.
- 2.3 Not all the ambitions and outcomes will be within the sphere of influence of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. That plan will deliver parts of the Vision, but as a statutory planning document, it cannot address all aspects involved in delivering this Vision. Local plans, infrastructure plans, economic strategies and associated plans and programmes will also have important roles to play. There is also a role for the individual to help deliver our ambitions, as our own actions can support or detract from delivering the Vision.
- 2.4 We want our plans, strategies and programmes, including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, to be ambition-led and outcome focussed. Our Strategic Vision will be transformative, centred on people's well-being, addressing climate change, as well as on the health and quality of our natural environment. The Strategic Vision is intended to facilitate a step-change in our approach to planning for and delivering sustainable development for Oxfordshire.
- 2.5 The Strategic Vision is high-level, overarching and long-term. While the outcomes and priorities are unlikely to alter over the short to medium-term, our approach needs to be resilient to change over time. Our Strategic Vision is positive and optimistic. It recognises that although there is a high level of uncertainty over a 30-year period, particularly around external factors including climate and technological change, new opportunities to balance environmental, social and economic needs to deliver sustainable development in different and better ways will emerge. This will position Oxfordshire to challenge and capitalise on the scope for innovation over the longer-term.
- 2.6 Delivery against a 30-year vision will require pragmatism and realism as the tools of our innovation and ambition develop. However, this pragmatism should be seen to support delivery against our vision and not as an excuse to under-perform.

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<sup>6</sup> Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council

<sup>7</sup> Oxfordshire LEP, Oxfordshire Skills Board, Oxford Brookes University, University of Oxford, Homes England, DEFRA, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Environment Agency, Network Rail and Highways England

- 2.7 Our Vision should be read by partners within and beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it. Of particular significance is the Government's announcement in March 2020 of its backing for a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire will look to influence any framework for the Arc based on this Strategic Vision to help achieve our collective ambition.
- 2.8 The Strategic Vision forms part of the informal interface between national and local policy, helping to deliver national objectives such as those for 'clean growth' which aim to make the most of low carbon opportunities locally while meeting national and international commitments to tackle climate change<sup>8</sup>. It also supports delivery of national health priorities<sup>9</sup>. These identify the importance of prevention and reducing health inequalities and recognise that embedding healthy place-shaping principles within plans ensures that future developments are designed to support prevention and physical and mental well-being.
- 2.9 This Strategic Vision is part of the existing portfolio approach to plan and strategy development in Oxfordshire. Its role is to establish an overarching ambition that informs the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 amongst other relevant plans, strategies and programmes that reflect wider considerations such as health and well-being and infrastructure that impact on place-making in Oxfordshire. By providing clear strategic leadership and direction, we aim to increase confidence in the delivery of long-term spatial priorities.
- 2.10 This is the beginning of a process. We want to be open about what we are trying to achieve so we are carrying out bespoke public and stakeholder engagement providing an early opportunity for people to share and shape our thinking through public discussion and debate.

### 3. Oxfordshire's Challenges & Opportunities

- 3.1 The starting point for developing ambition-led plans and strategies is agreement about what they are seeking to achieve or change and what strategic challenges will need to be addressed. We have identified six key strategic challenges facing Oxfordshire:
- Health & Social Inequalities
  - Our Natural & Built Environment
  - Climate Change & Energy
  - Housing Affordability & Access to Affordable Housing
  - Economic Growth
  - Transport & Digital Connectivity.
- 3.2 Many factors impact on our lives and well-being, and there are strong and complex relationships between these challenges: from the links between the well-being of the natural and built environments and the well-being of individuals, communities and the economy; to the relationships between social and economic inequalities and health; to the linkages between connectivity and climate change, the natural environment, economic productivity, physical and mental health, and community connectedness.

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<sup>8</sup> The Clean Growth Strategy – Leading the way to a low carbon future, HM Government, 2018

<sup>9</sup> NHS Long Term Plan, 2019

## 4. Strategic Influencers

- 4.1 A key role for this Strategic Vision will be to help align long-term spatial, economic and infrastructure investment priorities across Oxfordshire. There are already other plans, strategies, policies and investment programmes (in existence or emerging), as well as legislative requirements, that will influence place-shaping in Oxfordshire, including where development in Oxfordshire should take place and where investment should be focussed. Oxfordshire will be shaped by these 'strategic influencers' to varying degrees over the next 30 years. We have 'mapped' the main strategic influencers and summarised their key messages for Oxfordshire. This information is set out in [Annex 1](#).
- 4.2 The strategic influencers will continue to evolve – some will change, and other new influencers will emerge as plans and strategies for Oxfordshire are developed, national policy changes and sub-national frameworks take shape. Some parts of this evolving context of strategic influencers will be more within the control of the partnership organisations than others. But in most cases, the relationship is a two, rather than one-way, process and there is an opportunity to influence and shape the priorities, plans, strategies and investment decisions of others, particularly in the longer-term – a means of 'influencing the influencers'. Our Strategic Vision can help maximise the benefits of decisions made by others, as well as helping to mitigate the impact of decisions outside the partnership's control.

## 5. Defining Our Ambition

- 5.1 Enhanced well-being sits at the heart of our ambition. We want Oxfordshire to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are improved. To achieve this will require bold, innovative, collaborative and inclusive thinking with decisions and actions that deliver real and lasting change in ways that build resilience and enhance well-being.
- 5.2 The well-being of individuals is important, and the actions we take to address our own well-being are key to cumulative and collective success. But we have also taken the opportunity to think about well-being in the round and in ways that make important connections, recognising that different dimensions of well-being are intrinsically linked. To be well physically and mentally, we need the right environmental, social and economic conditions underpinned by improved resilience. By resilience we mean de-carbonisation, tackling climate change and mitigating its impacts, securing a biodiverse natural environment, building community connectedness, better health, and improved educational attainment and skills that will support the jobs of the future. Our ambition is to **utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire** to shape healthy, sustainable, resilient communities in which it is possible for all residents to thrive.
- 5.3 If we are successful, these are the **outcomes** that will have been achieved in Oxfordshire by 2050 – this is what better will look like. Although the outcomes are long-term, decisions, actions and investment are required now to place Oxfordshire on the pathway to delivery by 2050.

## Outcomes for Oxfordshire

- We will be the first generation to leave Oxfordshire's natural environment in a better state than that in which we found it. The natural environment will be more biodiverse, supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.
- Oxfordshire will already be carbon neutral, and will be moving towards a carbon negative future, in which the County is removing more carbon than it emits each year.
- The population will be healthier and happier, inequalities will have been reduced, young people will feel excited about their future and the overall well-being of the population will have improved.
- The economy of Oxfordshire will be successful and sustainable, making the most of all our people and with quality places where people want to live and work.
- We will have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our residents.
- Movement around Oxfordshire will be transformed, with greater connectivity and mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic well-being.
- Our communities will be rooted and flourishing, with enhanced and lasting connectedness driven by individual and community action.

## 6. Achieving our Ambition

6.1 Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's future is driven by improvements to people's well-being. This is reflected in our definition of what 'good growth' will look like in Oxfordshire.

6.2 National planning policies require Oxfordshire to plan positively for growth in ways that achieve the three overarching objectives of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Growth can be defined narrowly in terms of expansion in numbers of homes and jobs and economic output. But growth can also encompass progress based on improvements in quality and circumstances for individuals and society.

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**We want current and future generations in Oxfordshire to share in: improvements in health and well-being; better access to truly affordable and high-quality housing; cleaner air and water; better jobs and access to education and training; enhanced green space; and protection from extreme weather and other impacts of climate change.**

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6.3 We think this is a better approach to achieving transformative and long-term sustainable development. This is how Oxfordshire will approach growth. It will be inclusive, focussing on progress in improving health and well-being, transitioning to a low carbon future, addressing inequalities and prioritising our natural environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change.

**'Good growth' in Oxfordshire** will:

- Be **sustainable**, focusing development in ways that enhance quality of place and at locations which enable people to live and work nearby, avoiding unnecessary travel in the first instance, but using opportunities to increase movement by sustainable and active modes of travel when needed.
- Be **healthy and inclusive**, with all development addressing inequalities and contributing positively to the overall health and well-being of Oxfordshire's communities, environment and economy.
- Be **clean and green**, placing the County at the leading edge of UK and global de-carbonisation efforts by maximising all opportunities to significantly reduce Oxfordshire's carbon footprint, and increasing natural capital across the County.
- Embrace **innovation** based on our technology sectors and knowledge-intensive activity, and develop new innovative solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, energy, sustainable design and improved public services.
- Facilitate **efficient** use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land, with priority given to supporting a high-productivity economy.
- Build **resilience** to change, with growth planned in a way that can accommodate changes in technology, and in the way that people live and work, changing demographics, and global impacts, particularly climate and economic changes.
- Expect **high-quality** development which will have a positive impact on communities in terms of design, energy efficiency and public realm, utilises low impact building and construction methods and materials, and is properly supported by the necessary infrastructure. Everything we build or design in Oxfordshire will be fit for purpose in the world of 2050.

- 6.4 Our definition of 'good growth' forms the basis for a set of **Guiding Principles**. Taken together, our outcomes, the definition of 'good growth' and the guiding principles, form the foundation for our overarching approach to sustainable development for Oxfordshire, and for developing our plans, strategies and programmes.

**Guiding Principle 1: We will reduce the impacts of climate change**

We will reduce the impacts of climate change by making climate action a top priority in our decisions. We will maximise opportunities through our plans, strategies and programmes, to build long-lasting resilience to climate change, demonstrating leadership in carbon reduction and supporting emerging transformative technologies and sectors. Our aim is that Oxfordshire will be carbon neutral by 2040, or earlier if possible, and by 2050 will be moving towards a carbon negative future.

## **Guiding Principle 2: We will improve our overall health and well-being and reduce inequalities**

We will place overall health and physical and mental well-being at the forefront of our decision-making. We will seek to deliver a net increase in the health and well-being of our communities in all our place-shaping decisions and activities, reducing inequalities and helping to enhance the overall quality of life, health and happiness of existing and future residents. This will include providing homes to meet people's needs, jobs to support livelihoods, enhanced access to green spaces, better access to sustainable, inclusive and resilient active and low carbon transport and improvements in air quality. We have access to some of the greatest health care facilities and minds in the world in Oxfordshire and through working closely with the universities and health organisations, we will ensure we are leading on prevention and healthy place-shaping.

## **Guiding Principle 3: We will enhance our natural capital assets**

We will enhance our natural capital assets through our plans, strategies and programmes, recognising the significant contribution natural capital makes to our quality of place, the health and well-being of our communities, and their value in building resilience to climate change, reducing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and boosting economic productivity. We will value Oxfordshire's countryside, our parks and open spaces, the River Thames and our other rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes, ponds and wetlands. We will protect where necessary, and seek new opportunities to add to and enhance our highly valued countryside, landscape and the greenspaces and environmental assets within the urban areas that provide valued recreation space and vital green lungs. Natural capital is a key reason why many people choose to live here, many businesses choose to locate here, and tourists choose to visit here.

## **Guiding Principle 4: We will reflect our distinctive and diverse qualities**

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes reflect the unique and distinctive qualities of places within Oxfordshire, maximising opportunities to deliver the development needed, embracing innovation whilst enhancing our valuable assets and recognising the diversity of our city, towns and villages, the quality of the historic, natural and built environment and the importance of local identity. While we are the most rural county in the South East, the vast majority of our population lives in our city, towns and villages. The diversity of our settlements, the synergy between urban and rural and the benefits both bring are critical to our success.

## **Guiding Principle 5: We will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations**

New homes will add to the vitality and vibrancy of our communities whilst positively contributing to our collective well-being. We will tackle the significant challenge of housing affordability in Oxfordshire by delivering more truly affordable homes. And we will deliver homes that allow people to live healthily, happily and independently in their old age. The emphasis will be on place-shaping: new homes will be high quality and low carbon, resilient to the impacts of climate change, meet people's needs, form part of connected communities and improve the local environment.

## **Guiding Principle 6: We will embrace technological changes**

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes are sufficiently flexible to embrace the potential offered from new and evolving technology in creating better opportunities and outcomes for people, in addressing inequalities, and in its impact on mobility, communications, energy and water supply, models of construction and increasing economic productivity.

**Guiding Principle 7: We will create the conditions to support an inclusive, successful and sustainable economy based on world-leading innovation**

We will work collaboratively with economic partners to ensure that our spatial priorities and economic priorities are aligned to deliver good, inclusive economic growth that supports people's health and well-being. We will ensure there is improved physical and digital connectivity, and that the right type of premises, land and infrastructure are provided to facilitate a high productivity economy and to meet the needs of our priority sectors. Inequalities in employment opportunities, and in access to education, skills and training will be addressed, building a skilled population with better opportunities for all.

**Guiding Principle 8: We will expect high-quality development**

We will expect all new development to be of the highest quality and design standards, with particular support given to innovative building solutions and sustainable construction methods, and development that improves the overall built environment and promotes good physical and mental health.

**Guiding Principle 9: We will maximise the benefits of strong collaboration**

We will build stronger collaboration with our partners to secure a plan-led approach to good growth, delivering strategic development opportunities that are aligned with our shared ambition and long-term investment priorities, particularly where these provide opportunities to enhance our strategic connectivity. And, we will create the conditions where people feel involved and empowered, embedding a culture of meaningful involvement and enabling communities to inform and shape local decisions.

**Guiding Principle 10: We will help people to help each other by supporting communities and individuals to achieve positive change for themselves**

We will help communities to be more cohesive and better able to adapt to change, based on accessible and quality key services and infrastructure, good digital connectivity and strong community networks. Communities will be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and well-being.

**Guiding Principle 11: We will proactively and positively engage and collaborate beyond Oxfordshire**

We will foster links with neighbouring areas to facilitate the delivery of good growth through mutually beneficial relationships. Key to this will be ensuring that the Oxfordshire Plan's strategic priorities are fully aligned and integrated with regional and sub-regional priorities including the emerging Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

- 6.5 All the Guiding Principles articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the next 30 years and all will shape our overarching approach. Individual Guiding Principles have not been weighted. Rather, because we are seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic well-being in ways which build resilience, and because most of our Guiding Principles are relevant to more than one of our goals, the Guiding Principles form an inter-related set of equally important ground rules.

## 7. Next Steps – Delivering the Strategic Vision

7.1 This Strategic Vision has been prepared by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board which is ultimately responsible for it. Delivering the Vision will require long-term collective commitment and investment by the partners that make up the Growth Board but also, crucially, by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partnerships.

7.2 As a first step in delivering the Strategic Vision, it is proposed several work streams are taken forward:

- Engaging with partners and communities
- Measuring what matters
- Developing plans & strategies and investment priorities.

### Engaging with Partners & Communities

7.3 Because we want to be open about what we are trying to achieve, one of the first actions will be to carry out bespoke public and stakeholder engagement late in 2020. This will provide partners and our communities with an early opportunity to challenge and shape the thinking we have done on our ambition, principles and shared outcomes. This engagement does not form part of any statutory process and is additional to consultations on other plans, strategies and programmes.

### Measuring What Matters

7.4 The ambition, outcomes and priorities set out in the Strategic Vision have been explicitly designed for the long-term. They are unlikely to change over the short to medium-term and it is not anticipated that there will be a need for frequent reviews. To achieve the outcomes we have identified by 2050 will require some trends to be reversed, while for some other trends, where progress is already being made, there will need to be an increase in the pace of change. And, we will need to make the most of the vital role place-making plays in delivering positive outcomes.

7.5 Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision. It also provides a robust basis on which Oxfordshire's communities and stakeholders may hold the Growth Board to account. We will measure what matters, based on the strategic outcomes and the definition of Good Growth set out in the Strategic Vision. At this stage we have not attempted to define or agree targets or the indicators for monitoring delivery. Development of a robust monitoring framework, with agreed targets and indicators, will form a key part of the next phase of work on the Strategic Vision, drawing on the public and stakeholder engagement we will be carrying out.

### Developing Plans, Strategies and Investment Priorities

7.6 Our well-being goals are ambitious. Achieving them will require all those who make future decisions about investment, and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire, to maximise impact by working collaboratively based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions.

7.7 The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire will be delivered by a wide range of plans, strategies and programmes. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is one important example, but there are many others. At an Oxfordshire-wide level they include the Joint Health & Well-Being Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), the Local Industrial Strategy, and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, while sub-nationally the spatial framework for the



Oxford-Cambridge Arc and England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy will have important roles to play.

- 7.8 It is vital that we have an agreed set of long-term, strategic economic, infrastructure and environment investment priorities aligned to the outcomes we are committed to. This will help us to ensure that we are investing in the right infrastructure and other assets in a timely way, maximising the benefits of that investment, and avoiding unnecessary expenditure. It will also better position Oxfordshire to influence the priorities of other relevant organisations.
- 7.9 Oxfordshire's Growth Board will seek that those preparing relevant strategic-level plans, strategies and programmes consider how their policies, proposals and investment decisions deliver against this Strategic Vision, and future responses to these plans, strategies and programmes from the Growth Board will take these into account.

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## Annex 1: Strategic Influencers

**A1.1** The following graphic 'maps' the main strategic influencers. Most have been, or are being, developed at an Oxfordshire-wide level, or relate to sub-national geographic areas, or are UK-wide. Many have a direct relationship with government policy or legislative requirements. We have not attempted to present an exhaustive set of influencers. Rather, we have captured those which we consider to be the most significant and most relevant at the strategic level, whilst acknowledging that some of these will have a greater impact than others.

**A1.2** The key messages from the strategic influencers are summarised in the following table.

Key Messages	Strategic Influencers
There is a commitment to maximise the potential of existing urban areas to 2031 to deliver 100,000 new homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Housing &amp; Growth Deal</li> <li>▪ Local Plans</li> <li>▪ National Planning Policy Framework (2019)</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> </ul>
Development should enhance the natural environment, improve access to the countryside and increase its natural capital, recognising its valuable role in supporting clean growth and improvements to health and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Green Future: 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</li> <li>▪ Local Plans</li> <li>▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire's Draft Nature Recovery Network</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health &amp; Well-Being Strategy</li> </ul>
Strategic transport investment priorities should aim to enhance Oxfordshire's strategic connectivity value.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050</li> <li>▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> </ul>
Long-term strategic investment decisions should be responsive to climate, demographic and technological change, building resilience in the economy, transport infrastructure and the physical and natural environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clean Growth Strategy</li> <li>▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health &amp; Well-Being Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> <li>▪ UK Industrial Strategy</li> </ul>

Key Messages	Strategic Influencers
<p>The priority is to invest in strategic infrastructure that supports economic growth, particularly in the areas that have potential to support a transition to a low carbon economy, facilitate mobility changes away from the private car and where there is potential to support key sectors (especially in the science, technology and innovation sectors).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition</li> <li>▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> <li>▪ UK Industrial Strategy</li> </ul>
<p>Economic growth should be driven by innovation and higher productivity, should be 'clean', should focus on supporting clusters and corridors of economic activity and should reflect Oxfordshire's national and international role and profile. Economic growth should be more inclusive, with the benefits shared more equitably so that they reach all communities, including socially disadvantaged groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition</li> <li>▪ England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> <li>▪ UK Industrial Strategy</li> </ul>
<p>Improvements to health and well-being should be at the heart of all decisions around place-making and infrastructure investment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local Plans</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health &amp; Well-Being Strategy</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Local Transport &amp; Connectivity Plan</li> </ul>
<p>Delivering the right type of housing, which is built to a high quality and design and is affordable, is as important as increasing overall supply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local Plans</li> <li>▪ Oxfordshire Joint Health &amp; Well-Being Strategy</li> </ul>

