



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 22 JULY 2024
Subject	WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2041
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable Officer	Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: <a href="mailto:chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk">chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report Author	Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: <a href="mailto:chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk">chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Purpose	To provide an update on the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, and to agree a revised timetable for taking the plan through to adoption.
Annex	Annex A – Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update – July 2024
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the content of the report;</li><li>2. Approve the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex A, including the following key milestones for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Regulation 18 preferred option consultation – October 2024</li><li>- Regulation 19 pre-submission draft publication – March 2025</li><li>- Submission for examination – June 2025</li></ul></li></ol>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li><li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li><li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 is currently at the Regulation 18 'plan preparation' stage, with two major public consultations having been carried out in autumn 2022 and autumn 2023.</p> <p>This has been interspersed with focused engagement with a number of key stakeholders.</p> <p>The original intention had been to undertake further Regulation 18 consultation on a series of preferred options in June 2024. However, a number of reasons have been identified for deferring the consultation until October 2024 as per the timetable set out in this report.</p> <p>Beyond that, a statutory 6-week consultation will take place at the Regulation 19 'publication' stage which is now expected to be in March 2025.</p> <p>All consultation will take place in accordance with the Council's approved Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).</p>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** Members will be aware that the District Council is in the process of producing a new Local Plan, which, when adopted, will replace the current Local Plan adopted in September 2018.
- 1.2** The purpose of this report is to explain the progress made since the last consultation took place in autumn 2023 and why it is necessary to agree a revised timetable for taking the Local Plan forward to adoption.

## **2. PROGRESS TO DATE**

- 2.1** The current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 was adopted in September 2018. A review was undertaken in September 2023 when the plan became five years' old and concluded that many of the policies, including those relating to housing provision, need to be updated to ensure they reflect current national policy and are based on up-to-date evidence.
- 2.2** Work on a new Local Plan covering the period to 2041 is now well underway with two major public consultations having taken place under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This is the stage when the Council scopes the content of the plan and tests different options with a view to identifying a preferred approach.
- 2.3** Both consultations attracted a good level of interest and summary reports outlining the main issues raised have been published [online](#) and made available at a number of locations across the District.
- 2.4** Focused discussions have also taken place with a number of other key stakeholders including representatives of the Cotswolds National Landscape, Historic England, the Environment Agency and the agricultural sector along with landowners/developers and a number of Town and Parish Councils.
- 2.5** To complement the consultation feedback received, a number of evidence base studies have been commissioned to help inform the development of the new Local Plan including, but not limited to:
  - Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
  - Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)
  - Viability
  - Housing Needs Assessment
  - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
  - Economic Needs Assessment
  - Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)
  - Health and Equality Impact Assessment
  - Carterton Strategic Study

- 2.6 An important part of the evidence base is the District Council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) the purpose of which is to identify a future supply of land that is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development uses.
- 2.7 A methodology for the HELAA has now been prepared in accordance with the Government's Planning Practice Guidance and joint methodology which was agreed between the Oxfordshire local planning authorities in November 2021. The intention is to prepare the HELAA from July – September 2024 including engagement with key stakeholders such as Town and Parish Councils.
- 2.8 In addition to those studies outlined above, a number of others are in the process of being scoped out and commissioned as the proposed content of the new Local Plan takes shape and there is greater clarity on key issues such as the number of new homes and amount of employment space to be planned for.

### 3. REVISED LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

- 3.1 The current timetable for taking the Local Plan through to adoption is set out in the Council's approved [Local Development Scheme](#) (LDS) published in February 2024.
- 3.2 The approved LDS envisaged further Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging Local Plan taking place in June 2024. However, since the LDS was approved there have been a number of changes in circumstance and in light of these, Officers have concluded that it would be preferable to defer the consultation until October this year.
- 3.3 The reasons for this include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Potential changes to national planning policy as a result of the General Election;
  - There would be greater clarity on any potential implications arising from the Oxford City Local Plan 2040 with the Inspector's preliminary findings on housing need expected to be published in July 2024;
  - Greater clarity on the scope of the A40 improvements being progressed by Oxfordshire County Council under the Homes from Infrastructure (HIF2) project;
  - It would enable the next stage of consultation to include preferred draft site allocations (e.g. for housing and employment) rather than just a broad distribution of growth by location which had been the original intention;
  - This will ensure greater certainty and provide the opportunity for stakeholders to comment on specific sites before the formal Regulation 19 publication stage. It would also mean that the District Council is only required to demonstrate a 4-year housing land supply in accordance with national policy<sup>1</sup>;
  - It will provide more time for key evidence (e.g. housing and economic needs) to effectively feed into the emerging draft plan; and
  - It would avoid consultation taking place over the summer holiday period.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 226 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2023

**3.4** The key milestones for taking the new Local Plan forward are therefore now expected to be as follows:

- Regulation 18 preferred option consultation – October 2024
- Regulation 19 pre-submission draft publication – March 2025
- Submission for examination – June 2025
- Examination and adoption – Autumn/Winter 2025/26

**3.5** It is important to note that between these specific stages, Officers will continue to engage with key stakeholders on a focused basis including the other Oxfordshire local planning authorities and other relevant bodies in accordance with the Duty to Co-Operate.

**3.6** An updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) reflecting the timings outlined above is attached at Annex A.

**3.7** In updating the LDS, Officers have also taken the opportunity to update other aspects including the anticipated timing of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP).

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

**4.1** Taking a new Local Plan forward to submission, examination and adoption is a challenging task and it is important that it is done in such a manner that the plan stands the best chance of being found to be sound when considered by a Planning Inspector.

**4.2** A number of good reasons have been identified for deferring the next planned stage of consultation as outlined in the report. Whilst this represents a small degree of slippage in the currently agreed programme, it is considered that ultimately, the approach being taken will help to increase the likelihood of the draft plan passing successfully through examination.

**4.3** Subject to the approval of Members, the updated LDS will be published online and made physically available at a number of locations across the District.

**4.4** Officers will continue to draft the Regulation 18 preferred options consultation paper taking account of consultation feedback received to date and emerging evidence on key issues such as housing and economic needs and infrastructure provision as well as Sustainability Appraisal, including the consideration of all reasonable alternatives.

**4.5** It is anticipated that the consultation paper will set out a series of preferred policy options based on the following broad headings:

- Strategic policies to address the key strategic priorities for West Oxfordshire on a District-wide basis including any relevant cross-boundary issues;
- Area and settlement-specific policies including draft site allocations; and
- Development management policies.

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1** The District Council could choose not to progress with an update of the Local Plan. However, local authorities are required to keep plans up to date, typically reviewing them every 5-years or so.
- 5.2** The Regulation 10A review of the current Local Plan carried out in September 2023 highlighted a number of policies which require updating, including those relating to housing provision.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** The preparation and adoption of a new Local Plan has significant financial implications with provision for this having been made through the District Council's budget setting process.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** The report raises no direct legal implications. The Local Plan must be prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and when considered at examination, the appointed Planning Inspector will determine whether or not the District Council has fulfilled those requirements.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1** The report presents no significant risks.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 9.1** The intention is that a Health and Equalities Impact Assessment of the Local Plan will accompany the next stage of public consultation in October 2024.

## **10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1** The climate and ecological emergencies form a central component of the emerging Local Plan.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1** None.