

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 22 October 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Andrew Thomson (Planning Policy Manager)

Other Councillors in attendance: Julian Cooper, Steve Cosier, Paul Marsh and David Melvin

407 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Duncan Enright.

408 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

409 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The agenda for the meeting was published before the previous meeting which took place on 15 October. The minutes of previous meeting would therefore be considered at the next meeting of the Executive.

410 Receipt of Announcements

There were no announcements.

411 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

412 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met on 15 October 2025 to consider the Local Plan Spatial Options. The Committee had made a number of recommendations which are included as an annex to these minutes. The Leader explained that these would be dealt with as part of item 7, and the Executive agreed.

Local Plan Spatial Options

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item. Councillor Ashton explained the approach the Executive would take in considering the item. The purpose of the report was to consider the Local Plan Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Paper which is proposed to be published for consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Councillor Ashton explained that there were four documents within this, and the purpose of the report was;

- To consider the feedback received to the most recent Local Plan preferred policy options consultation in June/August 2025 (in respect of the plan period, settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy) as set out in the consultation summary report attached at Annex A.
- To consider the Preferred Spatial Options consultation paper attached at Annex B.
- To consider the content of the West Eynsham SDA A40 Access Options Assessment attached at Annex C and note its relevance as a material planning consideration for future planning applications at the West Eynsham SDA and Salt Cross Garden Village.
- To consider the timetable for progressing the Local Plan through to formal publication under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as set out in the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex D

Annex A

Councillor Ashton explained that the Council had consulted on its proposed policy options and that the comments on the place based strategy raised a number of topics which were considered as part of Annex A. The key elements from the consultation related to the plan period and the amount of extra housing that could be supported.

The Executive asked officers whether the water cycle would be considered at the same time. The Forward Planning Manager confirmed that this would be the case and infrastructure would be tied in.

Annex B

Councillor Ashton introduced the Annex, which was the Council's draft preferred spatial options. In doing so, Councillor Ashton reminded members that under the Government's methodology, the Council's overall housing requirement was 905 new homes per year. However, without a local plan or 5 year housing land supply, the Council was unable to have a say on the type and location of the houses.

Councillor Ashton explained that the Council's strategy was focussed on a major settlements and transport corridors, with very limited development across rural villages. There was a tiering structure which was explained in the paper.

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It was also stated that the existing strategic development sites from the local plan were also being carried over.

Annexes C-D were briefly discussed.

Annex C (West Eynsham SDA Access Options Assessment) presents technical evidence on access routes from the West Eynsham Strategic Development Area to the A40, informing future planning applications and supporting infrastructure decisions for both West Eynsham and Salt Cross Garden Village.

The timetable for the Local Development Scheme in Annex D highlighted the timetable

- Preferred Spatial Options Consultation: November–December 2025
- Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan Consultation: May–June 2026
- Submission of the Draft Plan: September 2026

Matters raised from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Graham stated that the Executive valued the input from Overview and Scrutiny and found the contributions very constructive, positive, and helpful for improving the document.

Councillor Ashton explained the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, alongside further recommendations from the officers and Executive Members, the summary of which is included as an annex to these minutes.

The Leader explained that there was an amendment to recommendation 1 in the report – to add “and the further work underway to inform the Draft Local Plan including the Transport Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Water Cycle Study and Local Area Energy Plan.” So that the recommendation read “Note content of the report and the further work underway to inform the Draft Local Plan including the Transport Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Water Cycle Study and Local Area Energy Plan.”

And the Leader proposed an additional recommendation 7;
“7. Authorise officers to continue to engage with neighbouring authorities and relevant bodies under the duty to co-operate.”

The Leader explained that exhibiting a duty to co-operate had been an issue with other Councils’ emerging local plans and proposed adding the additional recommendation to illustrate the Council’s commitment to carrying out this duty.

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Councillor Ashton set out the next steps, as set out in the Local Development Scheme (Annex D of the report), and that the submission of the Regulation 19 documents would take place in September 2026.

Councillor Ashton also explained that the Sustainability Impact Assessment which had been distributed in the supplement was for information only but did not comprise part of the statutory requirement and would be superseded by the Sustainability Appraisal, which was a statutory document.

Other members in attendance at the meeting made the following comments;

- Proposed amendments to preferred policy paragraph three, and spatial options on page 80 of Annex B. As the Executive had not been sighted on these, the Leader invited the member who proposed the amendments to get in touch with the Executive Member for Planning directly. The Leader suggested that these constituted minor amendments which could be dealt with under the delegation to the Head of Planning in recommendation four of the report.
- That further information could be included in the report so that it could be better understood by parish councils and others. It was suggested that these constituted minor amendments which could be dealt with under the delegation to officers.
- Whether there was financial gain from parishes undertaking Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). The Executive Member confirmed that this was the case and that Parish and Town Councils were entitled to enhanced CIL if they had an NDP in place. The implication of them not deciding to undertake one due to the local plan being developed was discussed. The Executive Member stated that they were not discouraging parish councils but just ensuring they were being mindful that changes would be happening to the local plan because NDPs would need to be aligned with the Council's Local Plan.
- Welcomed the information within the proposed changes regarding the Carterton Area Strategy.
- One member asked whether the duty to co-operate also covered Councillors. The Executive Member and officers explained that this was an obligation of the Council which was carried out by officers.

Councillor Hugo Ashton proposed accepting the recommendations, as amended.

Councillor Andy Graham seconded the recommendations, as amended

Executive resolved to:

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1. Note content of the report and the further work underway to inform the Draft Local Plan including the Transport Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Water Cycle Study and Local Area Energy Plan.
2. Agree that the Preferred Policy Options Consultation Summary Report attached at Annex A be published online.
3. Agree that the Preferred Spatial Options paper attached at Annex B be published for the purposes of public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
4. Authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary minor amendments to the preferred spatial options paper in Page 5 Agenda Item 7 consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Head of Planning, prior to consultation taking place.
5. Agree that the West Eynsham SDA A40 Access Options Assessment (June 2025) attached at Annex C be published online.
6. Agree that the updated Local Development Scheme attached at Annex D be published online and made available in hard copy format in agreed 'deposit' locations across the District.
7. Authorise officers to continue to engage with neighbouring authorities and relevant bodies under the duty to co-operate.

The recommendations were agreed unanimously.

The Leader thanked councillors and officers for their work on developing the emerging local plan and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its input.

The Meeting closed at 3.06 pm

CHAIR