



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 MARCH 2026.
Subject	WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED SPATIAL OPTIONS CONSULTATION
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning Email: hugo.ashton@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andrew Thomson – Planning Policy Manager Email: andrew.thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	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.
Annexes	Annex A – Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report (February 2026) Annex B – Updated Local Development Scheme – LDS (February 2026)
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the content of the report.2. Agree that the Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report attached at Annex A be published online.3. Agree that the updated Local Development Scheme attached at Annex B be published online and made available in hard copy format in agreed 'deposit' locations across the District.
Corporate priorities	The preparation of a new Local Plan for West Oxfordshire will help to support all of the Council's corporate priorities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The emerging draft Local Plan has been the subject of extensive public consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.</p> <p>Most recently, this included public consultation on preferred Spatial options from 3 November – 22 December 2025.</p> <p>The Council has now concluded the regulation 18 consultation for the plan making stage of the plan making process.</p> <p>All comments received through consultation will now inform the final drafting of policies and further evidence gathering and analysis to support the Draft Local Plan 2043</p> <p>The Council will move towards the formal publication of a full draft Local Plan in June 2026 which will be published for a statutory 6-week period of public consultation before being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will be aware that the District Council is producing a new Local Plan to replace the current Local Plan adopted in September 2018.

1.2 The purpose of this report is twofold:

- To consider the feedback received to the most recent Local Plan preferred Spatial options consultation in October/December 2025 (in respect of the plan period, settlement hierarchy, spatial strategy and preferred locations for development) as set out in the consultation summary report attached at Annex A.
- To consider the timetable for progressing the Local Plan through to formal publication under Regulation 19 and of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as set out in the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex B.

2. PREFERRED POLICY OPTIONS – OVERVIEW OF CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

2.1 The emerging draft Local Plan has been the subject of extensive stakeholder engagement, with four major public consultations undertaken between 2022 and 2025. The most recent consultation on Preferred Spatial Options place from 3 November to 22 December 2025.

2.2 The most recent spatial options included consultation on a revised settlement hierarchy, updated spatial strategy and a series of preferred locations to meet the districts housing and employment needs up to 2043.

2.3 The consultation comprised a combination of online digital material and a series of in-person events. It was very successful with over 2,200 responses to consultation questions from approximately 900 individuals and organisations.

2.4 A summary report of the consultation has been prepared and is attached at Annex A.

2.5 Whilst generally, the feedback was positive, a number of clear themes and areas of potential concern have emerged. Those issues of direct relevance to the Draft Plan consultation are briefly summarised below.

- **Plan Period**

Stakeholders expressed support for extended plan period to 2043 to ensure the Local Plan complies with National Policy.

- **Settlement Hierarchy**

Many stakeholders have questioned the proposed categorisation of settlements in the Local Plan with many requesting recategorisation of settlements on the basis of their size and function and the availability of services and facilities within those communities. A number of stakeholders have suggested the introduction of additional tiers into the hierarchy, to reflect environmental constraints such as their location within the Cotswolds National Landscape.

- **Spatial Strategy**

Although the proposed Spatial Strategy is largely supported, particularly the focus of development at principal settlements and in well-connected locations, widespread concern was expressed in relation to the availability and delivery of infrastructure across the district. Key elements of infrastructure that stakeholders remain concerned of include sewerage, education, healthcare, transport and energy. The strategy must include provision for infrastructure to be delivered in a timely manner.

Stakeholders reflected on the proposed scales of development (strategic, large, medium and small) included in the Local Plan. Many consider proposed development scales to be too restrictive, in that they could limit sustainable development proposals in the future, while others wish to see more clarity in terms of what proposed development scales could have in terms of cumulative development in communities.

- **Proposed Allocations**

Many stakeholders expressed concern about proposed allocations in the Local Plan due to the scale of proposed development and potential impacts on communities, including infrastructure, environment and heritage impacts. Widespread support was expressed by developers and agents about the number and scale of preferred locations for development.

2.6 As these are key aspects of the overall Local Plan, further work is now being undertaken to respond to these representations and to further develop policy and supporting evidence to, feed into the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan to be published in the summer.

3. LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE

- 3.1** The Council's most recently published Local Plan timetable is set out in its Local Development Scheme (LDS) published in October 2025. It was prepared on the basis that the Regulation 19 consultation would be undertaken in May 2026.
- 3.2** As a result of the decision to introduce the additional Regulation 18 stage of consultation on the preferred spatial options and due to the significant additional work required to analyse responses and undertake further evidence gathering in support of the Draft Local Plan, it has been decided to push back Regulation 19 consultation until June 2026.
- 3.3** A revised LDS has therefore been prepared and is attached at Annex B.
- 3.4** In terms of the Local Plan, the key dates to note are now as follows:
- Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan consultation - June 2026
 - Submission - December 2026
- 3.5** In preparing the updated LDS, Officers have also taken the opportunity to update the key dates in relation to the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP) and also the latest position regarding Neighbourhood Planning.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1** By way of next steps, Officers propose to publish the Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Summary Report (Annex A) online as soon as possible.
- 4.2** To publish the updated Local Development Scheme on the council's website.

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.

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 Local Plan is being 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. Independent legal advice will be sought as part of this process.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** The report presents no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The Local Plan 2043 is supported by an integrated health and equality impact assessment (HEIA).

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The climate and ecological emergencies form a central component of the emerging draft local plan and have been influential factors in the selection of preferred spatial options outlined in Annex B.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.