	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	**Cabinet: Wednesday 21 April 2021**
Report Number	**Agenda Item No. 9**
Subject	**Agreeing the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: 01993 861000; Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report introduces a final version of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision) attached as Appendix 1. Cabinet will recall that it previously considered and supported a version endorsed by the Growth Board (the Board) for consultation The report updates Cabinet on the consultation process, results and briefly summarise the main changes to the Vision, with the detail provided in the appendices. Finally, the report presents a final version of the Vision for consideration and agreement.
Appendices	Appendix 1 - Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire Appendix 2 - Growth Board Report on Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire Appendix 3 - Strategic Vision Consultation summary
Recommendations	(a) That the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire be approved; and (b) That Officers be requested to consider how to embed the Vision's ambitions for Oxfordshire in future plans and strategies of the Council.
Corporate priorities	The Growth Board brings together all of the Principal Councils in Oxfordshire, together with other key partners, to work cooperatively on strategic issues. As such it is relevant to all of the key priorities identified in the Council Plan.
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	The Growth Board carried out a public consultation on the Strategic Vision and the final version includes changes in response to comments made.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Cabinet will recall that it received a report in December 2020 detailing the Board's ambition to develop a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision).

1.2. The report detailed the background behind the decision to develop the Vision and advised that whilst the genesis of the Vision was the need to develop an overarching framework for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OxPlan), the wish was for the Vision to have a wider remit and serve as an overarching Vision 'umbrella' under which both the Board and partners could develop the future plans and strategies for their communities that articulate and plan for the future of Oxfordshire.

2. MAIN POINTS

Consultation on the Vision

2.1. The Vision approved by Councils and the Board last year was for consultation and engagement, both with key growth board partners and wider public and stakeholders.

2.2. Accordingly, comprehensive consultation and engagement process were held over November and December of 2020. This consultation included a report and presentation to Cabinet in December 2020 and a member workshop.

2.3. The results of the consultation were positive, especially as it was held during the pandemic that limited engagement options to online engagement and specific meetings. The report attached at Appendix 2 and consultation summary at Appendix 3 provides detail on the responses.

2.4. Of particular note is the innovative work done by OxPlan officers to engage with young people through the use of social media and college based workshops, as a consequence of the stated wish of the Board that the Vision should be influenced by younger age groups for whom it will have the greatest impact longer term.

2.5. Overall, the results of the consultation were supportive of the draft Vision, both as a concept and a document. Of the comments received most were constructive and positive.

2.6. Of those that responded there was broad support for the range of ambitions highlighted in the Vision. Inevitably perhaps in a document that is attempting such a wide reach there were responders who felt that their interests, whilst included did not have the weight or profile that they should whilst others commented that the document needed to be more Oxfordshire specific.

2.7. The Vision has developed because of this consultation exercise. Officers have reflected upon the responses and without changing the overall balance of the document have offered additional phraseology to highlight the importance of, for example the need to address inequalities, the role of the of Oxfordshire and its place as a national and international centre of excellence. Issues such as the need for inclusive growth have also been strengthened in the revised text and finally various changes to make the document more Oxfordshire specific have been included such as references to our rural landscape, countryside and the importance of the rural economy.

2.8. Finally, the Board proposed that alongside the public consultation, officers would commission consultants to reflect upon the draft Vision and offer informal sustainability advice, specifically whether the draft Vision was consistent, both within the document and when compared to the OxPlan and whether there were any gaps in the sustainability issues identified. This commission was completed, and all relevant comments incorporated in the attached final version of the Vision.

Timescales for the Vision

2.9.   The timing of the Vision's agreement, both by the Board and partners is of great importance. This is because Vision has an important role to play in shaping the first phase of the Oxplan as it heads towards consultation in the summer. To play this role, endorsement by the Board was required in March and subsequent agreement by all partners needs to be in place before this consultation begins in the summer.

Next steps for the Vision

2.10. Upon agreement of the Vision by the Board and partners, officers will turn their attention to the development of a communications plan by relevant officers drawn from across the Growth Board organisations to launch the Vision.

2.11. Officers will then need to consider how to embed the Vision in plans and strategies beyond the OxPlan 2050, both within the Board and wider stakeholders. Two proposals are:

- That the Vision becomes a reference point for all future plans and strategies and all reports to the Board will be expected to formally set out in summary form how the recommendations in the report will support the ambitions of the Vision.
- For council and other Board partners that they individually agree the Vision, thereby giving it the profile required within their respective organisations and then consider how to embed the Vison in their plans and strategies

2.12. A third action will then be consideration of how the Board will measure progress against the ambitions of the Vision. Growth Board Officers intend to develop a business case for this next phase of the project over the summer of 2021. This will include agreement of how we measure success, appropriate reporting of these and when it would be appropriate to review and update the Vision, something that was supported in the engagement process.

Conclusions

2.13. 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.

2.14. Following the consultation exercise, both the officers and members who have reflected upon the consultation and revised the Vision believe that the Vision has improved because of the consultation. The document now has a bolder more ambitious narrative that articulates in a balanced way what our collective ambitions for what Oxfordshire should be in 2050, both societally, economically and as a place to live work and to thrive.

2.15. The Growth Board considered the revised Vision at its meeting on 22 March. The Board endorsed the Vision and asked that each partner considered agreeing to the Vision.

2.16. Accordingly, Cabinet are requested to consider and agree the Vision as attached at Appendix 1 to this Cabinet report

3.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1.   None.

4.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1.   The Oxfordshire Growth Board is a Statutory Joint Committee. As such, agreement to the Strategic Vision is an executive function which falls to the respective local authority Cabinets to agree.

5. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

5.1. Cabinet could chose not to approve the Strategic Vision.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE

6.1. The Strategic Vision recognises that climate changes is an important issue for Oxfordshire. It therefore provides high level support for the actions being taken in West Oxfordshire.

OXFORDSHIRE
GROWTH BOARD

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development

Our Vision for Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire is a unique location: what we do here matters, not just for the benefit of our residents and communities, but also for the wellbeing of the UK and communities across the globe.

We are at the frontier in addressing and solving the most pressing challenges facing humanity. We want Oxfordshire to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are improved.

To achieve this will require bold, collaborative, and inclusive thinking to deliver real and lasting change in ways that build resilience and enhance environmental, social, and economic wellbeing. We will draw on our world class economy, our spirit of discovery and Oxfordshire's global reputation to power this change through the adoption of clean and sustainable technology.

Our aim is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to realise sustainable growth, and shape healthy, resilient communities in which it is possible for all residents to thrive and which can be an exemplar for the rest of the UK and other locations internationally. If we are successful, by 2050 Oxfordshire will:

- have achieved carbon neutral status, and be accelerating towards a carbon negative future, removing more carbon than it emits each year. Energy production will be sustainable.

- be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than that in which we found it. The natural environment will be more biodiverse, support social, economic and ecological resilience and have the capacity to adapt to change.

- have a healthier and happier population with better physical and mental health. Young people will feel confident, positive and excited about their future and people will spend more of their later life active, in good health and with care available in their communities to meet their changing needs.

- be a globally competitive economy which is sustainable, diverse and inclusive, generating high quality, productive and knowledge-based employment for our communities. It will utilise the county's strengths and resources, including its world-class universities and world-leading research, innovation and technology assets. There will be improved educational attainment and a skills system aligned to the needs of business and communities, helping to provide the conditions in which all Oxfordshire's people can benefit and thrive.

- **be a more equal place, supported by inclusive growth that gives everyone a fair chance in life to prosper. Deprivation and disadvantage will have been tackled wherever it manifests itself in our urban and rural areas, and discrimination will have been removed.**

- **enjoy a built and historic environment which is rich and diverse, comprising high quality places where people want to live, work, visit and invest. Our rich and distinctive internationally recognised heritage assets, visitor economy and vibrant cultural offer will have been further enhanced and there will be improved access to them.**

- **have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our growing economy, young people, residents and future generations.**

- **have transformed movement and connectivity within the County and beyond. There will be greater digital connectivity and physical mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic wellbeing, with an emphasis on sustainable travel, including walking and cycling.**

- **have flourishing, diverse and vibrant communities rooted in pride with our local, national and international connections and a strong sense of civic identity. Individuals and families will support each other in partnership with sustainable public services, a thriving voluntary and community sector and be connected to dynamic and socially responsible businesses.**

This Strategic Vision has been prepared by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Growth Board comprises the six councils of Oxfordshire and key strategic partners. It facilitates collaborative efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

The six Oxfordshire Councils are Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council & Oxfordshire County Council.

The Growth Board's key strategic partners are Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxfordshire Skills Board, Oxford Universities, Homes England, DEFRA, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Network Rail & Highways England.

1. Introduction

1.1 Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It has beautiful countryside, high quality landscapes and areas important for nature conservation, and rich and diverse built and historic environments formed from the fabric of its market towns and villages and the vibrant, diverse cultural offer and historic environment of the City of Oxford.

1.2 It is home to a cross-section of world leading institutions and global innovators which help power an extraordinary and unique economy of national and international significance. It is at the frontier in tackling the most difficult challenges facing humanity: from the isolation of penicillin and advancement in surgical technologies which save lives, the revolution in human communications through the creation of lithium-ion batteries, to the development and manufacturing of a vaccine for the world in the fight against COVID-19, and identifying solutions focused on the long-term societal challenges created by climate change.

1.3 These characteristics, together with its proximity and connections with other places, are key reasons why people choose to live, work, visit and invest here.

1.4 But there are also challenges. Oxfordshire is one of the fastest growing economies in the UK, powered by its dynamic and innovative businesses which are pioneering across a range of sectors, but it is a County with significant and persistent inequalities. There are also challenges linked to congestion, housing affordability and the natural and built environments. All these impact on Oxfordshire's residents and businesses.

1.5 Oxfordshire is facing significant changes. Some of these are the results of global trends such as climate change and the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other changes reflect Oxfordshire's status as an international centre of world leading research and innovation with a hive of knowledge-intensive economic activity at the universities and science, technology and business parks. And, we form part of the network of places that together form the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – a key national economic priority.

1.6 We also now have a better understanding that decisions made as a result of emerging plans and strategies for Oxfordshire have the potential to, and very probably will, impact (positively or negatively) on local, national and global emissions in the short, medium and long-term. The pandemic has shown how people in Oxfordshire come together to support one another in their communities, has demonstrated the importance to people's health, of easy access to nature and high quality green space. It has given us a glimpse of a world less dependent on personal travel and one more reliant on digital connectivity.

1.7 Recognising these opportunities and challenges leads us to want to ensure that Oxfordshire's plans, strategies and programmes are ambition-led and outcome focussed. Accordingly, we believe it is timely for Oxfordshire to set out its common and shared Vision for the future based on our unique, special assets and heritage.

1.8 Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire sets out what the county should look like and how we can achieve it. The outcomes we are seeking are set out on the

first two pages of this document. They will form the basis against which we measure progress. We hope this Strategic Vision will be read by residents and partners within and beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

1.9 We know from public consultations and stakeholder engagement that within Oxfordshire there is an appetite to see a different approach to place-shaping: one that is more ambitious, radical, innovative and creative[1], embracing social, economic and environmental wellbeing to achieve a happier, healthier, greener future[2]. We have bold and dynamic economic ambitions[3] brought to life in an investment plan[4], and innovative work on inclusive growth[5] has highlighted a need to actively recognise and address the inequalities of our success and ensure all communities have a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire.

1.10 This Strategic Vision has been shaped by public discussion and debate. Engagement with our communities and stakeholders revealed strong and wide support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire and for the broad intent of the ambitions set out in an engagement draft document. We have used the detailed feedback we received to further refine and strengthen our Vision.

1.11 This Strategic Vision is intended to be transformative. Addressing climate change and the health and quality of our natural environment, our globally significant economy will improve the wellbeing of our communities; an exemplar to the rest of the UK and other international locations. It considers wellbeing in the round based on an understanding that the different dimensions of wellbeing are intrinsically linked.

1.12 We want to facilitate a step-change in our approach to planning for and delivering sustainable development for Oxfordshire, challenging the norm and drawing on new ways of thinking to provide the best possible future for our residents. For this reason, our Strategic Vision is positive and optimistic, and we have set our ambition high.

1.13 Our Strategic Vision is high-level. We fully recognise 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 local circumstances, as well as the nationally significant role Oxfordshire plays in the success of the UK.

1.14 Activity to achieve ambitions for zero-carbon and increased biodiversity will need different design solutions in the high-density environments of the city and urban areas than in rural settings. This happens best through inclusive

---

[1] Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Part One) Consultation Report, June 2019
[2] One Planet Oxfordshire: Our Shared Vision, Bioregional, 2019
[3] Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy, 2019
[4] Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan, 2020
[5] Led by Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership under Oxfordshire's 'Social Contract' and by the City of Oxford

processes and a detailed understanding of places and communities to arrive at solutions that work for them.

1.15   This Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the vison for any of our communities or partner organisations but instead provide a balanced framework through which these can be developed.

1.16   This Strategic Vision is overarching. It cuts across many sectors and is designed to inform a range of plans, strategies and programmes. It complements the plans and strategies already in place and agreed by our partner organisations and the Growth Board. It also forms part of the informal interface between national and local policy, helping to deliver national objectives and priorities, as well as helping to maximise the benefits to Oxfordshire of decisions made by others.

1.17   Finally, the Strategic Vision recognises that positive change will evolve and take time. Some of what we are seeking to achieve is beyond our direct control. This Strategic Vision is a pathway for long-term change towards a more sustainable future. While our priorities are unlikely to alter over the short to medium-term, our approach needs to be resilient to change over time. 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 align 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.   Achieving our Strategic Vision through Good Growth

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

2.2   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 circumstances for individuals and society and in the quality of our environmental assets and natural resources. Rather than seeing economic, social and environmental objectives as competing demands that need to be balanced, our approach for Oxfordshire is to align and integrate these priorities, so that economic progress benefits business, society and the environment. The economy, environment, connectivity, community assets, housing and public services are all key factors in giving Oxfordshire's residents – current and future – the best opportunity to prosper and thrive.

2.3   We think this is more in line with sustainable development principles and thinking and a better approach to achieving transformative and long-term sustainable development. This is how we will approach growth, delivering change that is distinctively 'Oxfordshire'. Good growth will focus on progress in improving health and wellbeing, look to decouple growth from the consumption

of finite resources and transition to a low carbon future, address inequalities and prioritise our natural and built environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change. We also want this good growth to be genuinely inclusive which means inequality – a pervasive determinant of wellbeing – must be addressed wherever it exists in our diverse county. We will need to tackle deprivation and disadvantage in whatever form throughout the county, be it in the City of Oxford, our towns or in our rural areas.

2.4   Oxfordshire's economy represents a crucial and unique attribute. The County's position as a global innovation hub brings important opportunities both to local communities and to the future of the UK. We recognise the positive benefits that economic prosperity can bring and the critical interdependencies between a flourishing economy and successful outcomes for local communities, public services and the environment.

2.5   Economic prosperity is an important part of the roadmap to achieving our ambition for Oxfordshire and business a key strategic partner. Business creates employment opportunities for our residents, including our young people. Business also creates the wealth which sustains and supports public services, and the technological innovation that can be increasingly transformational in shaping places and building sustainable communities. Finally, because so much of Oxfordshire is rural, we must not lose sight of the particularly important role the agricultural sector can play in helping deliver our biodiversity and climate ambitions and in advancing new technologies and innovation in sustainable farming.

'Good Growth' in Oxfordshire will:

- 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.

- Be **sustainable**, focusing development in ways that enhance quality of place and at locations which enable people to live and work nearby, improving digital connectivity and avoiding unnecessary travel in the first instance, but using opportunities to increase movement by sustainable and active modes of travel when needed.

- Embrace **innovation** based on our technology sectors and knowledge-intensive activity, and develop new innovative solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, resource management, sustainable design and improved public services.

- Be **healthy and inclusive**, with all development addressing inequalities and contributing positively to the overall health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's communities, environment and economy.

- Facilitate **environmental improvements** and make **efficient** use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land.

- Enhance and expand access to the county's internationally significant **historic environment** and **cultural** and **heritage assets**.

- Support diverse, accessible employment, generating a highly productive and **inclusive economy** based on our world-class research, innovation and technology.

- Build **resilience** to change, with growth planned in ways that: build on strengths and assets to support communities during periods of change; support economic diversity and can accommodate changes in technology; recognise changes in the way that people live and work and changing demographics; and respond to global impacts, particularly from climate and economic changes.

- Expect **high-quality** development which will have a positive impact on communities in terms of design, energy and water efficiency and public realm, utilises low impact building and construction methods and materials, and is properly supported by the necessary infrastructure including excellent digital connectivity. Everything we build or design in Oxfordshire will be fit for purpose in the world of 2050, respond to different circumstances, contribute to Oxfordshire's sense of distinctiveness and rich variety, and support connected communities.

2.6   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 long-term sustainable development for Oxfordshire, and for developing our plans, strategies and programmes.

Guiding Principle 1: We will reverse 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 reverse the impacts of climate change, demonstrating leadership in carbon reduction, developing nature-based solutions to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, championing more sustainable ways to improve connectivity 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 create the conditions to support a world leading and innovation rich economy which is clean, prosperous, diverse, inclusive, successful and sustainable

We will work collaboratively with partners to ensure that our spatial, infrastructure and economic priorities are strategically aligned to deliver a globally leading economy, for the benefit of our communities which is pioneering, diverse and high in productivity and which meets the needs of our priority sectors, including our world-leading universities and delivers successful outcomes for the environment, communities and our public services. We will ensure there is improved physical and digital connectivity, and that the right type of premises, land and infrastructure are provided in the right places for businesses to thrive. Inequalities in employment opportunity and access to education, skills and training will be addressed, and life-long learning will be a priority. The aim will be to build a skilled population which has a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire, ensuring that growth is inclusive and supports the health and wellbeing of local communities, whether current or future generations.

Guiding Principle 3: We will improve our overall health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

We will place overall health and physical and mental wellbeing at the forefront of our decision-making. We will seek to deliver a net increase in the health and wellbeing of people 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, recognising the diverse needs within our communities. This will include providing public services to support excellent physical and mental health outcomes, homes to meet all people's needs, jobs to support livelihoods, enhanced access to public and private 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 4: We will enhance our natural environment

Key sources of natural capital in Oxfordshire include biodiversity, water, soils, landscape character and tranquillity. Natural capital contributes to a wide range of social, economic and environmental services. It is a key reason why many people choose to live here, many businesses choose to locate here, and tourists choose to visit here. We will grow our natural capital through our plans, strategies and programmes, recognising the significant contribution natural capital makes to our quality of place, the health and wellbeing 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 important habitats and species, our agricultural land, our parks and open spaces, the River Thames and our other rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, wetlands and aquifers. We will protect and restore our valuable habitats and species and improve resilience by creating ecological networks. We will improve the quality of our waterways and water bodies and reduce levels of water stress in Oxfordshire. 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, including those areas within our city and towns that provide valued recreation space and vital green lungs.

Guiding Principle 5: We will reflect our distinctive and diverse communities and places

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 while enhancing our valuable assets and recognising the diversity of our city, towns and villages, the quality of the historic, natural and built environment, our rich internationally significant cultural and heritage assets, the importance of local identity and the needs of our diverse communities. While we are the most rural county in the South East, most 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 6: We will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations

We will promote the development of new homes that will add to the vitality and vibrancy of our communities while positively contributing to our collective wellbeing. We will tackle the significant challenge of housing affordability in Oxfordshire by delivering more truly affordable homes both for rent and home ownership, 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.

Guiding Principle 7: We will embrace technological changes

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes are sufficiently agile 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, waste management, models of construction and increasing economic productivity.

Guiding Principle 8: We will expect high-quality development

We will expect all new development to be of the highest sustainable design and construction standards, with particular support given to resilience to climate change, innovative building solutions, sustainable use of natural resources and construction methods, and development that improves the overall built environment and embeds healthy place-shaping principles, promoting good physical and mental wellbeing. New development will contribute to connected communities and improve the local environment.

Guiding Principle 9: 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, excellent digital connectivity and strong community networks. Communities will be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and wellbeing.

Guiding Principle 10: We will maximise the benefits of strong collaboration within Oxfordshire

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 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 our strategic priorities inform regional and sub-regional priorities, including the emerging Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

2.7 All the Guiding Principles articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the period to 2050 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 wellbeing in ways which build resilience, and because most of our Guiding Principles are relevant to more than one of our outcomes, the Guiding Principles form an inter-related set of equally important ground rules.

3. Next Steps – Delivering the Strategic Vision

3.1 The collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board has developed this Strategic Vision. However, 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.

3.2 As a first step in delivering the Strategic Vision, we have identified two work streams:

- Measuring what matters
- Developing plans, strategies and investment priorities.

Measuring What Matters

3.3 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 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.

3.4 Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed to achieve continual improvement, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision. It will also provide 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.

Developing Plans, Strategies and Investment Priorities

3.5 Our wellbeing 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.

3.6 The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire will be delivered by a wide range of plans, strategies and programmes. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050[6] is one important example, but not all the outcomes will be within the sphere of influence of the Oxfordshire Plan. 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, responding to different local circumstances and, in some cases, reflecting wider considerations such as economic growth, health and wellbeing and infrastructure that impact on place-making in Oxfordshire. At an Oxfordshire-wide level they include the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), the Local Industrial Strategy, Oxfordshire Investment Plan and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, while sub-nationally the spatial

---

[6] The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan being prepared by the local authorities in Oxfordshire.

framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy will have important roles to play.
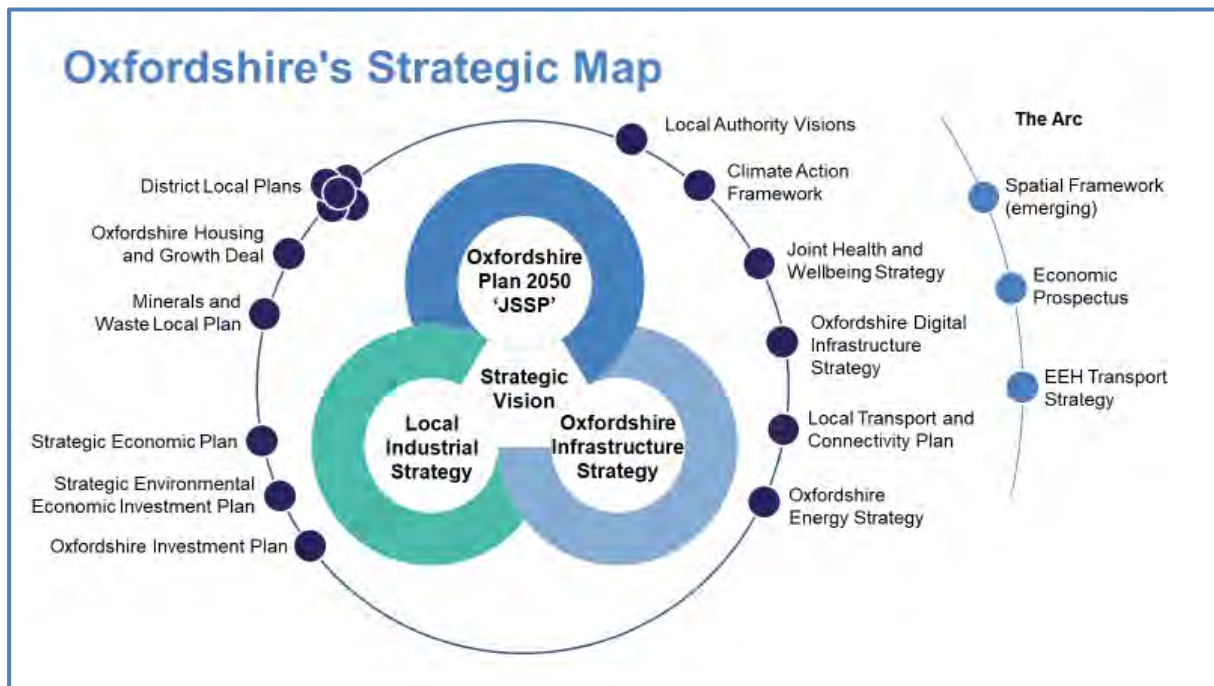
3.7 There is also an important role for residents and business leaders to help deliver this Strategic Vision.

3.8 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. By providing clear strategic leadership and direction through this Vision, we aim to increase public confidence in the delivery of long-term priorities.

3.9 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. Future responses to these plans, strategies and programmes from the Growth Board will take these into account.

Annex 1: Strategic Influencers

A1.1   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.

A1.2   Most of the strategic influencers 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, while acknowledging that some of these will have a greater impact than others.

A1.3   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.

A1.4   They key messages from the strategic influencers are summarised in the following table.

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
There is a commitment to deliver homes in sustainable and high-quality developments, including maximising the potential of existing urban areas.	- Housing & Growth Deal - Local Plans - National Planning Policy Framework (2019) - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
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 wellbeing.	- Green Future: 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment - Local Plans - Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition - Oxfordshire's Draft Nature Recovery Network - Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - Oxfordshire Energy Strategy - Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy
Strategic transport investment priorities should aim to enhance Oxfordshire's strategic connectivity value.	- England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 - Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition - Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan
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.	- Government's Clean Growth Strategy - England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 - Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy - Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - Oxfordshire Investment Plan - Oxfordshire Energy Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan - UK Industrial Strategy
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).	- Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition - England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 - Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - Oxfordshire Investment Plan - Oxfordshire Energy Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan - UK Industrial Strategy

(Appendix 1 - Strategic Vision)

Key Messages for Oxfordshire from Existing Plans & Strategies	Strategic Influencers
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.	- Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government Ambition - England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy 2050 - Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy - Oxfordshire Investment Plan - Oxfordshire Energy Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan - UK Industrial Strategy
Improvements to health and wellbeing should be at the heart of all decisions around place-making and infrastructure investment.	- Local Plans - Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy - Oxfordshire Local Transport & Connectivity Plan
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.	- Local Plans - Oxfordshire Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy

OXFORDSHIRE
G R O W T H   B O A R D

To: **Oxfordshire Growth Board**

Title: **Oxfordshire Strategic Vision**

Date: **22 March 2021**

Author: **Paul Staines – Interim Head of Programme**

Executive Summary and Purpose:

This report presents the Growth Board with a final version of the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's Long-Term Sustainable Development (the Vision) - attached as Appendix 1. This follows the Board's endorsement of an earlier draft for public engagement.

The report reminds the Board of the purpose of the Vision and provides a thematic summary of the consultation and our response - with a detailed engagement report provided in Appendix 2.

Finally, the report proposes the next steps to embed the Vision, subject to endorsement, in any future plans and strategies and measure against progress.

Recommendations:

That the Oxfordshire Growth Board:

(i) *Endorses the Revised Strategic Vision attached as Appendix 1.*

(ii) *Asks all members of the Growth Board to consider their respective organisations agreeing the Vision as the basis for informing future plan and strategy development.*

(iii) *Request officers to develop a communications strategy for the Vision and a suitable approach to measuring success in delivering the Vision.*

Appendix 1:

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development

Appendix 2

Strategic Vision Engagement Summary

Introduction

1. The Board will recall that they received a report in October 2020 introducing the Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire (the Vision).

2. This draft Vision was prepared in response to feedback to the Board and partners via consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan that plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire needed to demonstrate an approach to planning for growth that was ambitious, outcome focussed and that aligned the priorities of Oxfordshire. Specifically, feedback suggested that there was an appetite for an approach that:

    *   is more Oxfordshire-specific and reflects local people's opinions and priorities.
    *   prioritises climate change.
    *   focusses on social, economic, and environmental well-being, not solely on a narrow definition of growth.

3. This feedback echoed the sentiments that recently led to revised Growth Board Terms of Reference and a belief that the Board could articulate Oxfordshire's common and shared ambition in a long-term Vision for our county.

4. The Strategic Vision will establish this common and shared ambition and provide an overarching framework for future plans and strategies – but it is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. The Board fully recognises that delivering the Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect circumstances.

5. The Board will recall that when it endorsed the draft Vision for consultation it recognised that whilst the genesis of the Vision was a recognition that an overarching strategic framework was considered important to guide the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (the OxPlan), the Vision's relevance and use goes well beyond the OxPlan.

6. Accordingly, the Board agreed that to be most helpful both to the OxPlan and other emerging plans and strategies, the Vision should be considered on its own merit – first through endorsement by the Oxfordshire Growth Board after a period of public engagement and then agreed by our individual organisations across the Growth Board.

7. The Board also noted that the timing of the Vision's endorsement is important. There are several reasons for this:

    *   For the Strategic Vision to play its role in supporting the OxPlan, agreement will need to be no later than Spring 2021- ahead of the pre-election purdah period before the May elections. This will then allow the Vision to play its appropriate role in helping shape the next stage of OxPlan ahead of the Regulation 18 consultations timetabled for Summer 2021.

    *   The OxPlan is also supported by two other emerging strategies that need to be in place by the time the OxPlan heads to Examination. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Both also will need to draw upon the Vision as the framework for their conclusions as they head towards consultation later this year.

- The Government has recently announced detail of its ambitions to develop a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire will want to be well-positioned to influence the Framework as it gathers momentum and the Vision will provide a framework for our contribution to this emerging work.

8. The Board will also recall advice from officers that alongside the public consultation, officers would commission consultants to reflect upon the draft Vision and offer informal sustainability advice, specifically whether the draft Vision was consistent, both within the document and when compared to the OxPlan and whether there were any gaps in the sustainability issues identified. This commission was completed, and officers have incorporated all relevant comments in the attached final version of the Vision.

Public Engagement on the Vision

9. Following endorsement by the Board of a draft Vision for public engagement, a period of public and stakeholder engagement ran from mid-November 2020 to early in 2021.

10. Due to concerns with COVID-19 and recognising a need to reach as wide a cross-section of respondents as possible, it was agreed that the focus of the consultation would be the Oxfordshire Open Thought digital engagement platform, a platform that has already proved very helpful in engaging on wide-ranging topics and long-term thinking for the OxPlan.

11. Officers were broadly pleased with the engagement that this platform generated, summarised as:

- There were 1,265 users accessing the website and 3,759 page-views during the engagement period.

- There was good response from several key stakeholders outside of those represented on the Growth Board, for example CPRE.

- Overall, we received 113 responses through the platform, a number of these being from organisations with multiple representation, together with 28 email responses, including 9 member organisations of the Growth Board.

12. A detailed breakdown is provided in Appendix Two.

13. One aspect of the consultation to highlight is the work on engaging with young people following a Board request that officers prioritise their engagement. Officers responded to this by focusing upon this easily accessible digital engagement platform bolstered by giving wide publicity to the Vision engagement on social media.

14. In addition, officers arranged several workshops in conjunction with local colleges of further education and Oxford Brookes University. These workshops were well attended and engendered good engagement. Again, Appendix Two provides detail on these.

Engagement Summary

15. Whilst the engagement report contained in Appendix Two provides full detail on the engagement, this report provides the Board with a broad flavour of what

officers consider to be the main themes and how these have influenced the revised draft.

General comments

16. Overall, officers believe that the Board can be pleased with the supportive responses to our engagement exercise. Respondents commented that the Vision was both welcome as a "good starting point" and essential for clarifying what the collective ambitions for Oxfordshire should be. Very few responses suggested that the establishment of the Vision would be detrimental and many recognised that it was a genuine attempt to frame required growth in a constructive and sustainable way.

17. Many also considered that the document achieved the balance that the Board is aiming for across the priorities, albeit with some noting what they considered to be the inherent tensions between them.

18. Consequently, the Board will note that although changes to the Vision have been made in response to the engagement, as detailed below and in Appendix 2, large parts of the document were supported and remain unchanged or have merely benefitted from clearer or more concise language.

Document structure

19. In considering the layout and structure of the vision, there were some comments that the Vision was too lengthy and repetitive, though this conflicted with the view also expressed that the document required greater detail, referencing and specificity.

20. Officers reflected on this feedback and in response the revised Vision has a slightly different structure which officers believe is more logical. The Board will note that the Vision now comprises three components - these being:

   - A statement of what the Vision for Oxfordshire is – these are the outcomes that Oxfordshire is seeking to achieve
   - A statement of what constitutes the 'Good Growth' that will deliver the Vision
   - A set of principles that will guide Oxfordshire in achieving 'Good Growth'.

21. Officers have also edited the Vision to make it more readable and succinct and consequently it is some 15% shorter than the original draft.

The components and overall balance of the Vision

22. As stated earlier, overall, the ambitions of the document received broad support with many respondents noting that they were hard to disagree with and had captured the correct priorities.

23. Where respondents did not agree with the consultation draft these broadly fell into two categories.

   - That the document has not provided enough balance in certain areas – most notably climate change, carbon reduction, the positioning of the economy as a driver for social and economic wellbeing and increased emphasis for tackling inequalities.
   - That the document was not ambitious enough- for example, our ambition for carbon reduction.

24. In response to these comments the Vision has seen revisions to the text designed to clarify and enhance key messages without losing the overall balance. Thus, in the revised Vision enhanced language has raised the profile of the importance of Oxfordshire as a place both nationally and internationally as well as reinforcing messages on, for example mental health, active travel, the need for digital connectivity, the heritage of Oxfordshire and the need for affordable housing.

25. We have also added a new Vision Outcome for a more equal place supported by inclusive growth, reflecting the point about equality and a statement about the role of Oxfordshire's economy in creating prosperity and furthering social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.

26. Officers believe that these revisions have strengthened the Vision and provided appropriate profile for several key components, whilst maintaining the overall balance of the document.

Creating a Vision that is Oxfordshire Specific

27. Many respondents commented that although they agreed with the Vision, it could, they felt, relate more to Oxfordshire rather than just a series of generic statements. Consequently, officers have revised the draft to make it more Oxfordshire specific, examples include highlighting aspects of the Oxfordshire economy, natural assets and heritage that makes Oxfordshire unique. We also sought to highlight both the urban city and rural aspects of the county, including the importance of the rural economy in the most rural county in the South East.

How to measure achievement of the Vision

28. Finally, several respondents, whilst supportive, questioned how we will implement the Vision, what success would look like and how we will measure it. This issue is the subject of officer consideration and highlighted in the next steps section of this report below.

Next steps

29. Upon endorsement of the Vision, officers will turn their attention to the development of a communications plan by relevant officers drawn from across the Growth Board organisations to launching the Vision.

30. The Board will then need to consider how to embed the Vision in plans and strategies, both within the Board and wider stakeholders. Two proposals are:

    - That the Vision becomes a reference point for all future plans and strategies, and all reports to the Board will be expected to formally set out in summary form how the recommendations in the report will support the ambitions of the Vision.

    - For wider stakeholders, in the first instance the ask the Board to recommend to its partner organisations that they individually consider and agree the Vision, thereby giving it the profile required within their respective organisations.

31. The next steps will then be consideration of how we will measure progress against the ambitions of the Vision. Officers intend to develop a business case for this next phase of the project over the summer of 2021.This will include agreement of how we measure success, appropriate reporting of these and when it would be appropriate to review and update the Vision, something that was supported in the engagement process. (Appendix 2 - Growth Board Report)

Legal Implications

32. Although the Vision is explicitly non statutory, the Board will recall that in the October report introducing the Vision, officers suggested that the relationship between the Vision and OxPlan may require legal opinion to ensure that it strengthens our approach to strategic plan-making. Once the Board endorses the Vision officers leading the OxPlan will consider whether commissioning this advice is appropriate and report any conclusion through reports on the Oxplan.

Financial Implications

33. The Vision has been prepared and consulted upon from existing resources. Officers will reflect upon any resource implications of developing the Vision further as outlined in the next steps section and report as appropriate.

Conclusions

34. The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire marks a significant development for Oxfordshire as a comprehensive articulation of what future growth in Oxfordshire should look like based on enhanced social, environmental and economic wellbeing. It is hoped that this balanced statement of ambition reflecting the priorities of the county will become the cornerstone of all future plans and strategies for Oxfordshire.

35. The report asks the Growth Board to agree the recommendations set out at the start of this report.

Background Papers

None

Report Author:

Paul Staines Interim Head of Programme- Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

Contact:

Paul.staines@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire Strategic Vision
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED

February 2021

Contents

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides a summary of the responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision public engagement exercise which began on 16 November 2020 and ended on 4 January 2021. The purpose of the engagement exercise was to gather the views of members of the public, councillors, stakeholders and partner organisations concerning the content of the Draft Vision, enabling a wide range of voices to influence and shape a revised document.

2. In total, 113 responses were received to an online public survey carried out through [Oxfordshire Open Thought](), together with 28 email responses, including 9 member organisations of the Growth Board. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person engagement activities were unable to take place. However, virtual workshops were held with the City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, and 76 follow up responses were received after those events. A further workshop was held with Oxford Brookes students.

BACKGROUND

3. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee[1] of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. Its role is to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits. It does this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders.

4. 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 planning for the future of Oxfordshire. 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.

5. 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. 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. The Vision should also be read by partners beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

---

[1] *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.*

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

6. The Vision has a specific role and a clearly defined non-statutory status, as is the status of its engagement exercise. While the Draft Vision is 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. 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. A copy of the Growth Board's pre-engagement report and draft of the Strategic Vision can be found [here](#), first considered on 30 October 2020.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

<u>Design</u>
7. When considering the design of the engagement process, it was important to create something highly accessible that was able to gauge the sentiment of the public towards the draft Vision while allowing room for comments, challenges and suggested amendments. In order to focus responses on the key elements of the Vision, the draft text was broken down into more digestible sections, particularly highlighting "our ambition", "our desired outcomes", "definitions of good growth", "our guiding principles". A simple form was designed with a consistent 'agree, challenge, comment' format towards each section.

8. One objective of the engagement was to explore 'how far and how fast' people wanted to proceed with each of the outcomes and consider how to prioritise outcomes given the likelihood of competing commitments. As such, open questions allowed respondents to suggest how success could be measured, what targets could/should be set and how quickly they could/should be reached. Respondents were then given a ranking system between 1 and 3 for each outcome as to how high they should be prioritised, before a final open question allowing any further comments and a tool for uploading any additional statements or evidence.
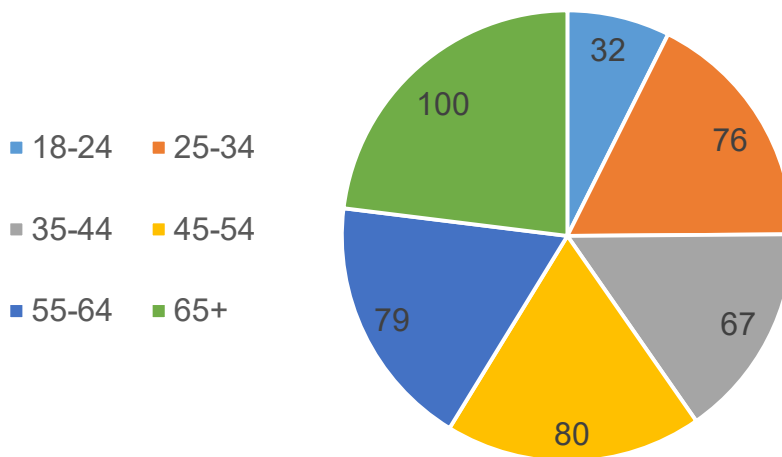
<u>Delivery</u>
9. Following its previous success in not only generating significant engagement, but also appealing to younger harder-to-reach-demographics, it was decided the Oxfordshire Open Thought platform – a bright, accessible user-friendly website - would be the most effective and efficient way to deliver the engagement exercise. The draft Vision was deconstructed into easily digestible sections and presented in a dynamic fashion that was both simple to navigate and attention-grabbing. Hyperlinks were positioned at regular intervals on the website that took the user directly to the online form allowing respondents to give their views at any point of the Vision content.

10. The draft Vision content went live on Monday 16 November 2020. A direct mailout with a link to the site was sent to all subscribers on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 mailing list (approx. 1,400 people). A press release was published on the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 websites. There was a co-ordinated comprehensive six-week social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn – posts were shared by key partners to increase reach. The engagement was promoted internally via newsletters and senior council officers. Briefings were given to Oxfordshire's local authorities and key strategic partners such as the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The deadline for submissions was Monday 4 January 2021.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

11. Throughout the process, there has been an ongoing commitment to engage with young people, recognising they will be the ones who benefit from our planning most in the future. As such, two college engagement sessions were held – one with business students from Oxford City College and one with student representatives from Abingdon and Witney College, while another session was held with Oxford Brookes students. An online survey was also sent out via Voice of Oxfordshire Youth to its members for complete in their own time.

Analytics

12. Across the Open Thought platform, there was plenty of interest shown in the draft Strategic Vision with 1,265 users accessing the website and 3,759 page views during the engagement period (Monday 16 November 2020 to Monday 4 January 2021). Users spent on average 2.5 minutes on the site. 113 responses were received via Open Thought. Below are breakdowns of age and gender based on those recorded via Google Analytics – 34% and 35% of overall respondents respectively – rather than those who submitted a response.

User age
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

32
76
67
80
79
100

User gender
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)

- male
- female

147
292

4

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)
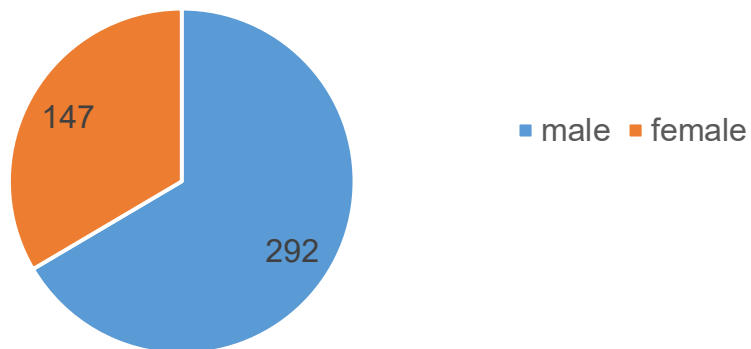
13. Analytics demonstrate the effectiveness of direct mail to subscribers, with the majority of users coming from this source, while social media was also vital in bringing people to the site [please note "email" is not direct mailing].As well as those submissions received via Open Thought, some 28 were sent directly via email.

Users by acquisition

Legend: Direct | Social | Organic Search | Referral | Email

Values shown: 32, 1, 118, 174, 968
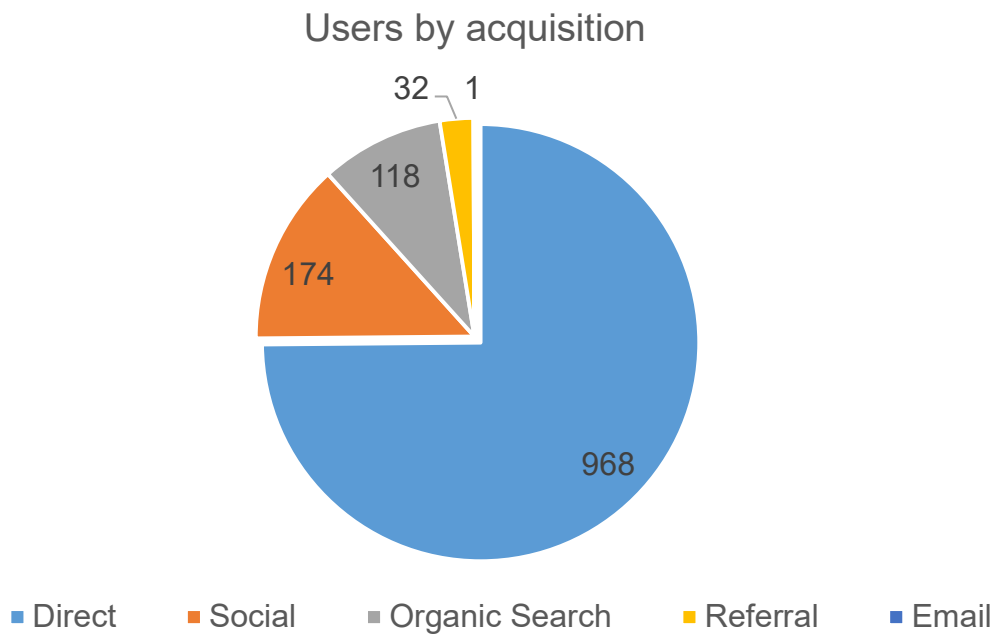
PART 2: STATUS AND INTENT OF THE VISION

14. This engagement exercise set out to ask respondents about their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. Whilst terminology and the strength of sentiment differed between respondents, a significant majority offered strong and broad support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. Across each of the specific engagement sections related to Outcomes, Guiding Principles and Good Growth, there was also wide-ranging support. Within the support offered however, there were some specific caveats or conditional red lines, which often concerned redistributing the weight or emphasis given to specific themes within the document (e.g. climate change, economic development and tackling inequalities). Several responses identified great value in long-term strategic planning through the Vision, particularly concerning the need to plan for net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and to support wider spatial planning including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Many welcomed the Draft Vision as a positive step in planning for Oxfordshire's future.

15. Some felt that the document should be more ambitious in specific areas, while noting that the broad intent was right. A significant number of respondents however said there was an appropriate balance through the document. Some commented that the Vision was overdue and welcomed the document as a "good starting point" and essential for clarifying what the collective ambitions for Oxfordshire should be. Indeed, respondents who offered stronger criticisms of the document acknowledged that the overall ambitions were hard to disagree with. Their concern often related to the challenges associated with measuring and evaluating the delivery of high-level strategic intentions. They accompanied this critique with suggestions that the Vision should either provide more detail about how it will deliver and measure success or be clearer from the outset about the status of the document and

how it will be used. Some also commented that the vision was too lengthy and repetitive, though this conflicted with the view that the document required greater detail, referencing and specificity.

16. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall intent of the vision are set out below.

- *We believe it (the Vision) can play an important role in helping to articulate the vision of the Growth Board partners to local communities, residents and businesses.*
- *We fully support the draft Strategic Vision and endorse its high ambitions for the future of Oxfordshire.*
- *The Principles are coached[sic] in such vague but positive terms that it is impossible not to support their pious and laudatory intentions.*
- *Yes, we are in general agreement that the outcomes you have identified are the correct ones as high-level objectives, I can support them. At a practical, day to day level, I remain to be convinced.*
- *(We) support the intent of the draft vision as an expression of the collective ambition of partners to enhance the well-being of people in Oxfordshire.*
- *The targets you have set out are pretty good already. The challenge will be making these strategic and ambitious goals effective at a grassroots level.*
- *The Vision is balanced between environment, wellbeing and growth/infrastructure, and should stay that way.*
- *In general, I agree with the desired outcomes.*

17. Some respondents recommended that the Vision should have a clear and unambiguous statement about its intent and status, and its relationship with other key strategies and plans. The requirement for such clarity was implicit in some responses, as a small number of respondents misunderstood the broad intent of the Vision. For example, some thought the Vision should identify housing numbers and areas for development, which is not the intention for this work.

18. Respondents highlighted that without clarity there will be inherent tensions between this Vision and other strategies across partner organisations. The Growth Board's Scrutiny Panel similarly recommended that careful consideration is given to continuity between this Vision and other policies and plans, and other respondents echoed this sentiment. The relationship of this vision with the Oxford 2050 Vision (Oxford City Council), University Sustainability Strategies and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, for example, were all suggested to need recognition in the document, as a way of better explaining the Vision's status. An accompanying communications strategy was also suggested as a way of widening local understanding of the Vision's role.

19. Notwithstanding the need for clarity, some respondents went further to suggest that the Draft Vision had the potential to conflict with other existing plans and strategies. Some suggested the Vision should identify how it will manage conflict when it arises between the ambitions of the Growth Board partnership, and individual member organisations. Similarly, several submissions sought to understand how the Vision will manage conflict when the Guiding Principles, or outcomes of the Vision, might conflict in specific circumstances. Some suggested, for example, that not giving priority to carbon neutrality over ambitions for economic development and housing development might hinder that outcome, though others disagreed.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

20. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Vision's purpose and usability are set out below.

- *The high-level outcomes identified address the three tenets of sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF. The challenge is of course delivering these outcomes simultaneously, and determining, where conflicts arise, which outcome (or outcomes) should take priority.*
- *(There is a need for) clarity about the relationship between the Vision and Oxfordshire Plan 2050.*
- *Economic growth and combating climate change are uneasy bedfellows.*
- *There will be inherent tensions and choices to be made in balancing the aspirations in the document, for example, achieving economic ambition set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and supporting significant housing growth whilst enhancing the natural environment and achieving carbon reduction.*
- *There is a need for a strong communication strategy and consideration needs to be given to how that will evolve over time.*
- *The document says nothing about what happens when these principles are in conflict, and how that conflict will be resolved, to ensure that the Vision is resilient. The same point applies where the Vision may be in conflict with existing plans and strategies that exist across Oxfordshire.*

PART 3: STRATEGIC VISION OUTCOMES

21. The Open Thought engagement exercise asked contributors to give their views on whether the outcomes in the Vision were the right ones for Oxfordshire. While respondents gave mixed and competing views on the extent to which specific outcomes should be emphasised or prioritised over one another, there was broad support for the seven outcomes. Many commented that the Vision had struck the right balance in seeking to deliver long term sustainable forms of development and create the environmental, social and economic conditions in which Oxfordshire can thrive. There was a strong sense from some contributors that certain outcomes should take priority over others, most often tackling climate change, though there was no universal view on which outcomes should take priority. This section of the report summarises feedback under three thematic areas which elicited the greatest level of response: Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality, Inequalities, and Transport and Digital Connectivity.

22. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall outcomes identified in the Vision are set out below.

- *We have to create neighbourhoods and towns which are inclusive, have access to services and open space. Never has environmental, social and economic wellbeing been more important. It is essential that we create places which properly intertwine those three aspects*
- *Some of the outcomes are obviously the right ones, but not all. Others leave important questions unanswered. This is why I have had to say no, I do not agree with them].*
- *Your strong emphasis on improving the ecology, strengthening local communities, decreasing inequalities and combating climate change with local solutions is ambitious and necessary.*
- *The outcomes outlined in the engagement draft of the Vision statement rightly reflect the need for enhanced wellbeing, carbon neutrality and preserving the natural environment.*

Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality

23. The strongest theme to emerge among these responses concerned the importance of planning for a sustainable future in which Oxfordshire reaches carbon neutrality as soon as possible, while simultaneously making systemic changes to how we live and work in order to protect and enhance the natural environment, reduce waste and increase bio-diversity. The strength of conviction and sentiments expressed with regards to climate change and environmental sustainability and renewal were significant. Contributors welcomed the prominence of these issues within the Vision, while some felt it needed more emphasis and ambition in this area. Respondents often noted that environmental sustainability and recovery was integral to the success of other outcomes within the Vision, particularly relating to health and wellbeing. Some pointed to the value of employing circular economics - keeping resources in use as long as possible - as a means of reducing waste, reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable living.

24. Numerous submissions referred to the importance of meeting HM Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050 as a minimum, and as many also called for much earlier local targets, as soon as 2025. Respondents explained that this was not a choice, but more an absolute necessity to preserve Oxfordshire's future. The responses also illustrated confusion and misunderstanding about what Oxfordshire's specific ambitions were relating to carbon neutrality. Those seeking emphasis said there should be greater references to withdrawing carbon from the atmosphere (sequestration) and planning for a carbon negative future. Some commented that tackling climate change should not be perceived as stifling economic development, and instead advocated that it provides an avenue for economic growth and innovation through zero carbon technology. Some however expressed that the economic ambitions within the vision were incompatible or fractious with the environmental ambitions.

25. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality are set out below.

   - *If we don't tackle the ecological and climate crises then everything else becomes, at best, a lot worse.*
   - *Emphasis should be given to reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, banning fossil fuels and removing atmospheric carbon dioxide by, among other measures, natural sequestration.*
   - *It is refreshing to see natural capital being taken seriously.*
   - *It is considered that climate change is of the utmost importance… It is critical that we give people the opportunity to change the way we live.*
   - *The key statement in all the notes for me is that of looking to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state for our children than how we found it.*
   - *Becoming carbon neutral is no longer optional given the context of climate chaos.*
   - *The natural environment is not a luxury… These objectives, particularly, those relating to the countryside and carbon neutrality, play strongly to that end.*
   - *Natural capital should quite rightly be part of the approach to tackling climate change.*
   - *We should be more ambitious, looking at bio abundance and net carbon reduction.*
   - *Not tackling climate change equals disaster. At the same time, measures that reduce climate change can also create a healthier, more pleasant environment and way of life for all. The vision recognises this.*

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

Economic, Health and Social Inequalities

26. Another strong theme from the feedback concerned the need for the Vision to give greater emphasise to the need to tackle economic, health and social inequalities. Some respondents expressed how large inequality gaps were stifling opportunities for people in accessing suitable housing, education and employment, and to predetermining a series of poor quality of life outcomes. One recent example given concerned the inability of some families to access appropriate online learning facilities for their children during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was also a strong desire to ensure that economic development happens in a way that is fair and inclusive of everyone.

27. Many responses highlighted that inequalities were universal across Oxfordshire in both rural and urban settings, while specific localities experienced this to a greater extent than others. Areas of deprivation, poverty and homelessness were all highlighted as areas of serious concern. Some highlighted that inequalities were an influential factor in determining health and wellbeing outcomes, and it should therefore take higher priority within the document, given how acute these challenges are for Oxfordshire. Amid these submissions was a broad desire to see the removal of discrimination within society and to improve equality for all.

28. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning inequalities are set out below.

   - *There is a correct and important stress on environment climate activity. However, poverty and inequality should be given a higher profile as they are the key drivers of public health. Digital connectivity is also vitally important.*
   - *Inequality, as a factor which is so pervasive and determinative of achieving the overall outcome of enhancing well-being, requires greater emphasis throughout the vision.*
   - *Whatever targets you set you should aim to address issues of inequality more rapidly than the others.*
   - *We would wish to see greater emphasis on economic development and tackling inequalities throughout the document.*
   - *Include more emphasis on ensuring no one in our communities is left behind.*
   - *Gross inequality of income and wealth and of worsening inequity is putting many households at the margins of our society in terms of quality of life.*
   - *Inclusivity is key. I want to see Oxfordshire be inclusive to everyone.*
   - *The document should also include reference to effective social care being vital to reduce inequalities.*

Transport and Digital Connectivity

29. A final key theme in the feedback related to the importance of planning for a more connected society. Specifically, complementing responses concerning climate change, many asked for the Vision to increase emphasis on reducing the demand for personal car use, while simultaneously encouraging zero carbon and active forms of transport. Respondents made numerous references to the importance of digital connectivity in bringing people, businesses and communities together, particularly considering the shift to virtual meetings and social events as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, there were several explicit requests to give digital connectivity a higher profile within the Vision.

30. Some commenters expressed that the Vision needed a high-level strategic approach to ensure that developers built houses close to sites of employment, and that the Vision

should encourage working from home opportunities. The emphasis was principally about reducing the demand on physical transport infrastructure and boosting digital capacity and capability. Respondents mentioned that access to key services should be available through virtual means, and there should be improvements to access to the natural environment. Some also considered the development of autonomous and electric vehicles to be important for the future, though this was at odds with requests to reduce personal car use.

31. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning transport and digital connectivity are set out below.

- *In light of the opportunities arising from the response to and recovery from COVID 19 and local efforts to encourage more active travel as a means of reducing congestion and carbon emissions whilst improving health and well-being, the Vision should include greater emphasis on creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling.*
- *I don't agree that physical connectivity and mobility is what we should be highlighting - what about digital connectivity and the ability to both live and work in diverse and flourishing communities?*
- *(We) support improvements in digital connectivity which enable an increasing proportion of activities to be undertaken virtually, reducing the costs and adverse effects of physical transport.*
- *The importance of digital connectivity should be emphasised. The rural areas in particular need better access to fibre to enable businesses to flourish and to better enable home working thus reducing car usage, which is high in the county in part due to the rural nature of the county.*
- *(A) highly relevant example is the delivery of better public transport and active transport options to facilitate the move away from private transport as the dominant mode.*

PART 4: A DEFINITION OF GOOD GROWTH

32. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the definition of Good Growth contained within the Draft Vision. Most indicated that they agreed with the definition provided often with specific minor amendments or changes in emphasis. Contributors welcomed the definition as a positive step towards better defining what they saw as a complex and sometimes contentious concept. Many responses said the definition achieved a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Most respondents described the definition in positive terms by most respondents such as "common sense, laudable and reasonable," while a minority of views suggested that it "lacked detail, should be abandoned or is too vague."

33. The strongest theme emerging from the responses concerned the importance of preserving and improving the natural environment. Many respondents emphasised that growth must not have a negative impact on the environment, and that it should be used as a vehicle to improve the environment through, for example, biodiversity net gain (leaving habitats in an better state in which they are now). Accordingly, while some felt that the principles of sustainability were suitably engrained in the definition, others requested more emphasis on the importance of sustainable development and protecting the natural environment, such as ambitions for zero-carbon homes. Some submissions also said that quality of life and equality should have a greater emphasis within the definition. Another key theme was the importance of circular economics (maximising the service life of local resources), as explained earlier in this report. Many suggested that the Vision should embrace circular

economics as a way of mitigating environmental impacts and increasing economic inclusivity within Oxfordshire, with some providing links to studies and books on the subject.

34. There were also recurring themes, which are covered in more detail elsewhere in this summary. For example, several submissions explained that it was difficult to object to the definition because it offered a broad and positive view of growth, though a lack of measures to effectively evaluate how this growth is achieved was criticised. Some suggested that the definition of Good Growth or the concept of growth more generally created tension and friction between the Vision's outcomes, particularly with regards to carbon reduction and environmental enhancement. A few said the two were incompatible altogether. Among alternative terms to substitute for growth were prosperity and sustainable development. There were also suggestions that the Vision should take a similar approach in defining sustainability and resilient communities.

35. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the definition of Good Growth are set out below.

- *The definition implies a balance between economic growth and a positive social impact which seems a very laudable objective.*
- *The definition of good growth covers the 'triple bottom line' of positive economic, environmental and social outcomes.*
- *Yes, I agree. Good growth has to be genuinely socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable embodying the principles of the circular economy.*
- *We have to move away from the emphasis of growth meaning more of the same, as in more material, consumption-based growth. We need growth to be associated with thriving - thriving communities with thriving people.*
- *I'd like to see a circular economic model which links in with your sustainability objectives but doesn't fully embrace them.*
- *It strikes the right balance while addressing a sustainable balance and growth.*
- *Whilst growth provides the opportunity to improve the living standards of all, ideally those most disadvantaged, doing it at the expense of the natural environment benefits nobody*

PART 5: STRATEGIC VISION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

36. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the 11 Guiding Principals set out in the Draft Vision, and for their wider views on their appropriateness for Oxfordshire. Respondents noted that the guiding principles were wide ranging and agreeable, and most responses indicated that they were the 'right' ones. However, as with the support offered to other sections of the Vision, there were often caveats and requests for emphasis. Many strongly supported the guiding principles, and in some cases, respondents said they aligned with the ambitions of other organisations responding to the engagement exercise. Some were more brief in suggesting that the principles "seem right" or "sound good."

37. Contributors spoke of the need to balance the principles in a pragmatic way to ensure that the Vision did not pursue one at the expense of another. There were also suggestions for additional or stronger guiding principles related to transport, sustainability and the natural environment. Some asked that the Vision used more active language to promote delivery against the principles, and this was most often linked to the natural environment. For example, one person said, "*there should be a principle to be active in promoting nature recovery not just valuing the 'natural capital' we have already."* Another added that "*the Guiding Principles should seek not only to enhance Oxfordshire's natural capital assets, but*

also to grow them." The emphasis was to be bolder and more ambitions in the language used throughout the principles. As a cross cutting theme in the responses, several contributors said it was hard to quantify and measure achievements against these principles because of their abstract or broad nature. This summary covers the issue of measurability and evaluation later.

38. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Guiding Principles are set out below.

- *They reflect current and contemporary concerns on a wide scale, but can also be addressed and personalised on a small scale which makes them inclusive and facilitates greater involvement and ownership.*
- *Seem reasonably well balanced, would like even greater focus on solving the biodiversity and climate crisis.*
- *We particularly support the guiding principles that expect high-quality development and will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations.*
- *The references to wellbeing are supported, particularly the importance of mental wellbeing in Guiding Principle 2, given the current situation pertaining to the pandemic.*
- *They are well thought out and address the needs of the population whilst striking the balance of protecting the natural environment and resources.*
- *They offer a route to a happier and healthier lifestyle, that is sustainable both economically and environmentally.*
- *They reflect national and international concerns such as climate change, equality and diversity, mental health, community, economy and homelessness. They also interlink and connect with each other so there's cohesiveness.*

Examples of alternative guiding principles offered by respondents

- *We will safeguard and promote accessibility while diminishing the adverse effects of transport.*
- *We will reduce emissions within the county to net zero by 2030 - making efforts to reduce 'imported' emissions.*
- *We will manage the location and design of new developments including supporting facilities so as to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to promote the use of shared and active modes.*
- *We will continue to manage road space to give priority to the needs of sustainable modes.*
- *We expect to manage the introduction of autonomous vehicles so as to improve the overall efficiency and safety of traffic movement and reduce inequalities amongst people and places otherwise experiencing limited accessibility.*

PART 6: OXFORDSHIRE'S DIVERSITY AND THE NEED FOR SPECIFICITY

39. There was a strong and overarching feeling from respondents that the Vision needs to be more Oxfordshire specific. Responses highlighted that Oxfordshire is an inspiring, diverse and unique place in many respects, having world leading strengths, but also facing some significant place-based and socio-economic challenges. The county has wide-open spaces and dense urban areas, each home to sites of international importance. Respondents felt that the Vision needed to better reflect the diversity of the urban and rural environments, increasing specificity about Oxfordshire, its assets, and the diversity of its people and institutions.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

40. As one respondent summarised: "*Having a Strategic Vision for a place which reflects the particular characteristics of the place is more likely to be useful*." Another suggested that the Vision should still be identifiable as Oxfordshire when it removes all references to the county, as a test to ensure specificity. At the centre of these responses was an acknowledgement that a fuller understanding of the county's specific circumstances, strengths and challenges should lead to a more tailored and focussed Vision.

Rural and Urban Spaces

41. Several responses said the vision should include greater reference to the City of Oxford, as a dense urban area with a unique historic core, rich natural environment and vibrant cultural offer. The city also has greater ethnic diversity among its population than neighbouring districts, as well as a significant student population, who attend world leading research institutions, which in turn employ a significant proportion of the county's population. Submissions highlighted that the Vision celebrate this and ensure it has a role in shaping a more specific place-based vision for Oxfordshire.

42. A similar balance was given in responses asking for the Vision to celebrate the rural character of the county and distinguish its importance. As one respondent explained: "*As Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South-East Region, it would be helpful to recognise the challenge this provides in terms of our rural population's accessibility to services and facilities*." Other contributors similarly echoed this view. Across rural and urban spaces, some respondents also wanted the Vision to recognise the unique historic assets that exist within the county, and their relationship with the natural environment and local economy.

Businesses and education

43. Some representations drew out the importance of local businesses and education institutions, their diversity, and in many cases, world leading significance; recent successes with the Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine being one of many examples. Comments highlighted a relative absence of references in this regard. Responses were unequivocal that the Vision should specifically refer to, and situate, Oxfordshire as a place of global significance. Some respondents were clear however that a focus on world leading innovation should not imply exclusivity. Respondents highlighted that these assets make Oxfordshire incredibly unique, important to the national economy, and a place to be celebrated. One submission pointed out the capacity for local businesses and institutions to help Oxfordshire meet the ambitions of the vision.

Challenges and Opportunities

44. Contributors explained that drawing out Oxfordshire's diversity and assets would help to better contextualise the acute challenges and opportunities that exist for the county. Accordingly, this would support a stronger and more robust rationale for the Vision's outcomes. There were several strong responses asking for increased emphasis on providing high quality, efficient and affordable homes, in the right places for residents; a challenge that is more critical for Oxfordshire than in many other areas. Some expressed that this challenge was particularly sharp for younger people and older people, and that the vision should focus on addressing the challenges for future generations.

45. Respondents raised the strain placed on road infrastructure and the need to reduce congestion as a specific challenge for the area, together with the emissions and wider disbenefits generated from personal car use among a large commuter population. Again, respondents expressed this to be a more significant challenge for Oxfordshire than in other areas. Many emphasised however this issue provided a real opportunity to rethink our approach to movement, travel and connectivity in Oxfordshire. This included creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling, reduce travel times, and prioritise public transport while discouraging car use. At the same time, responses highlighted challenges relating to broadband access and speeds for both rural and urban communities, stifling opportunities to develop a better digitally connected society and economy.

46. As a strong theme explored elsewhere in this summary, comments repeatedly referenced economic, health and social (including education) inequalities as serious challenges for Oxfordshire's future, which often linked to challenges with housing affordability and availability. Respondents expressed wealth and health disparities across the county were severe and called for greater economic inclusivity and access to opportunities for all. In addition, comments often referenced inequality of access to green open spaces, leisure facilities, and Oxfordshire's unique natural and cultural heritage assets. Respondents highlighted several other thematic challenges were as Oxfordshire-specific by respondents, included funding for public services, caring for and housing an ageing population and utility stress.

47. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement asking for the Vision to be more Oxfordshire specific are set out below.

- *I am surprised at how little attention is given to the role of the City of Oxford. It clearly has a functional economic area surrounding it that is long established and of national importance. The new Plan should seek to build on that success, not ignore it.*
- *There is no mention of the historic environment, the county's architectural and archaeological heritage, the vernacular architectures of our towns and villages.*
- *Oxfordshire is an important and productive farming area yet is not mentioned even once in the document… the rural economy is ignored.*
- *The outcomes are positive in principle but come across as quite generic and could be more spatially specific and related to strategic issues that Oxfordshire faces.*
- *The present draft is not embracing and building clearly on Oxfordshire's unique national and international assets and is, therefore, indistinguishable from any other area… Equally, the draft omits in any meaningful way Oxfordshire's position as a global innovation hub and the opportunities this brings.*
- *The most important outcome is to deliver homes in sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of residents.*
- *The document must include more references to Oxfordshire's educational assets such as its world class universities and the schools in the county.*
- *(I) would like to see more specific reference to 'diversity' in all senses.*
- *We are very concerned that the present draft does not reference nor acknowledge businesses.*

PART 7: DELIVERY AND EVALUATION

48. The Open Thought platform asked contributors how they would want to see progress measured against the outcomes identified in the Vision, and the speed at which to meet targets. There was a strength of feeling that success against the Vision's ambitions would

be difficult to quantify and evaluate because of their broad and abstract nature in some instances. Several comments suggested how this might be done.

49. There was a slight balance in favour of taking a quantitative approach to measuring success. For example, many asked for key metrics and performance indicators. Some however said that a qualitative approach would be best, based on measuring public opinion. Despite the challenges identified in evaluating the Draft Vision, respondents gave were numerous examples given of quantitative metrics that the Vision could use, and that it could review on an annual basis. There was an emphasis on using measures that were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely), already established within the county, and recognised as universal indicators globally.

50. Some asked for a more nuanced approach to measuring success. Many advocated that the best way to measure success would be through asking residents directly for their views. Specifically, a few suggested that citizen assemblies, focus groups and neighbourhood forums would be a good way of understanding local satisfaction against the Vision's ambitions. Commenters expressed matters of wellbeing and happiness to be complex and multifaceted issues which through key performance indicators might not reasonably measure. One respondent suggested monitoring how the Vison has influenced wider plans and strategies to measure progress, and another said progress should be categorised under the parameters of human, environmental and economic welfare.

51. Typical examples of the responses received concerning delivery and evaluation of the Vision are set out below.

- *It will be very difficult to quantitively measure but qualitatively you will know by the satisfaction of new residents and if people are travelling sustainably.*
- *There is a need for a qualitative assessment of happiness of communities.*
- *Index the number of homes with solar panels, the number of electric car charging points, air quality, broadband speed, school class sizes, child poverty / food back usage, and average commute times.*
- *The Vision should be measured qualitatively through neighbourhood and citizens' assemblies.*
- *We should include a metric on the impact on future generations.*
- *Digital connectivity is urgent and could be easily measured.*
- *Defra metrics e.g. farmland and woodland bird index, butterfly index, extent of priority habitats in good condition or re-created.*
- *Publishing KPIs that are evaluated and reviewed on a 5-year rolling basis.*
- *Set clear goals i.e. annual carbon emissions measured against targets, put resources into properly quantifying biodiversity values (i.e. species diversity and abundance) and measure annually against net gain targets.*

PART 8: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Colleges

52. Alongside Open Thought, officers made special effort to engage with young people on the Strategic Vision. Working with staff from City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, officers devised a targeted and tailored workshop that sought to inform young people on the Vision and gauge their thoughts on the document. Students at City of Oxford College took part in the 45-minute workshop, held virtually with on December 11. Abingdon and Witney College students participated on January 19. A remote survey version of the session was also distributed to members of Voice of Oxfordshire Youth – a countywide

forum of young people aged 11 – 18 and up to 25 with additional needs. In total, 76 young people responded.

<u>Outcomes</u>

53. The workshop asked young people how much they agreed with each of the seven outcomes. There was broad support for all of the outcomes, with having a "happier, healthier and more equal" society and "greater connectivity and mobility" scoring the highest. The session then asked students to rank the outcomes in terms of importance. Improving our natural environment ranked highest, with creating a healthier, happier and more equal society second highest. Creating a strong sense of community and greater connectivity and mobility ranked least important. When asked if there was anything young people believed was missing from the outcomes, many responded that mental health needed to be a prominent part of our outcome looking at health. This included the provision of support and education around mental health issues. They also mentioned more job opportunities and housing availability for young people.

Which outcomes are most important to you? (Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

COVID-19

54. This section asked students to consider some of impacts the pandemic has had on their lives and how the Vision might reflect this. Firstly, the workshop asked young people what they missed most during lockdown. Friends and family featured prominently, as did social activities including attending college, going on holiday, shopping and simply going out. Officers then asked respondents if there was anything they value more since lockdown started. The students frequently mentioned family, along with exercise, nature, walks and going to college. When asked if they felt more or less connected during lockdown, the majority felt less connected (47%) with 30% feeling more connected and the rest feeling no difference. When asked what changes they have made during lockdown they may continue with in the future, most mentioned some form of exercise or self-care such as learning new skills and hobbies or enjoying activities that made them feel better.

What three things do you value more since lockdown? *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

Success

55. This section sought to better understand how young people might consider any vision as successful in the future and what sort of metrics officers could use to measure that. Asked what happiness meant to the respondents, most mentioned love, health, stability, family, friends, and positivity. The exercise then asked what wellbeing meant to them. Mental health, positivity, stability p particularly financial, love, and exercise were the most used terms. When asked what success meant to them, respondents mostly said happiness, financially stable, and a good job.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

In a word, tell us what happiness means to you. *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

How far and how fast

56. The final section looked at how far and fast we should consider each outcome. The workshop tasked respondents with distributing "virtual money" to each outcome as they saw fit, with only a limited amount available. Most wanted to put resources into improving our natural environment and making society healthier, happier and more equal. The students also gave the virtual money to having energy efficient homes and reducing carbon emissions, while creating a strong sense of community attracted the least resources. Officers then asked the groups how quickly the Vision should seek to achieve each outcome. They said improving our natural environment and having well-designed energy efficient affordable homes were the outcomes that should be achieved quickest, followed by reducing carbon emissions and creating a healthier, happier and more equal society.

Bearing in mind your previous answer, how quickly should we aim to reach each outcome? *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

57. Final thoughts submitted by the young people reiterated the need for more mental health support, creating a more equal society through eradicating homelessness and poverty and everyone being able to access the same opportunities, and providing stability in the future. Respondents appreciated that they had the opportunity to give their views and hoped officers would considered their views as part of revising the final Vision.

58. The impact of Covid was clear in young people's responses. The biggest message was that mental health needed to be a central part of the Vision. This included provided more support for mental health, more education around mental health, and ensuring access to green spaces and the ability to exercise to help improve mental health. Linked to this was the over-riding feeling that young people wanted stability in the future, understandable given the huge disruption in their lives. The Vision provides an opportunity to offer them the positivity they crave for their futures, with the promise of a stable job, access to affordable housing and being able to socialise with friends and family.

University

59. In addition to the college sessions, officers held a special virtual workshop with students from Oxford Brookes University on November 5. The students came from two courses: BA Planning and Property and BA Urban Design, Planning and Development. They were all third-year undergraduates doing the Strategic Planning & Policy module and in total about 50 students joined the session.

60. Officers asked the students to discuss and feedback on the following questions:
    1. Are these the right outcomes for Oxfordshire?
    2. What needs to be done to achieve these outcomes?
    3. What should our targets look like – how far & how fast?

61. The overall priorities were creating places that allow healthy lifestyles (in the widest sense and including because it reduces demands on public services), an economy that provides good job prospects, and a green economy with a reduction in carbon emissions and congestion.

62. Students thought high-quality community green space was really important, along with quality public space in the built environment. Some mentioned the importance of mental wellbeing and mindfulness in this context. The students also linked green infrastructure with physical exercise, biodiversity and food production (allotments, private gardens). The right mix of housing in terms of tenure, type and size was important, with affordable housing a priority, along with a need for homes for the elderly. The need to improve space standards was strongly emphasised.

63. Respondents thought smaller communities were better in terms of creating a sense of community. Homes needed to be fit-for-purpose for the long-term (e.g in terms of climate change and adaptability as people's need change). There were lots of references to the importance of community assets. The students thought it important that planning of places and services was long-term, co-ordinated, clean and green. In terms of reducing carbon emissions, the students suggested there was more scope to reduce reliance on the private car and/or to use electric vehicles, improve fast broadband, and use principles from the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

PART 9: LIMITATIONS AND LEARNINGS

The draft Strategic Vision is a high-level overarching document considering the kind of place that Oxfordshire should be over the next 30 years. Context is also vital when considering the number of responses. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has seen huge shifts in lifestyle and uncertainty over both people's short and long-term future. In such circumstances, the initial challenge is cutting through the Covid coverage to make people aware of the draft Vision and the engagement exercise. There is clearly also difficulty in asking them to consider a wide-ranging document that looks decades into the future while many are struggling to simply get by day-by-day.

64. A combination of pandemic restrictions, timeframes and efficiency meant officers hosted and promoted the engagement exercise online. This unfortunately results in excluding those who are either not able to get online or who are not comfortable using IT. Statistically these are likely to be older people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the responses received.

65. While direct emails were the largest source of users to the Open Thought site, analytics show about 45% of all subscribers opened the email inviting them to take part in the draft Strategic Vision engagement, and about 17% clicked on the link to take them to the site. Future work is needed in establishing what can be done to increase both of these rates to further the reach of our engagement.

66. Similarly, there were 1,839 views of the online form on the Open Thought website, and 708 starts, but 115 responses (including two tests) meaning a response rate of 16%. Timeframes meant extensive testing and refinement of the form was not possible, however there is clear room for improvement in future engagement exercises to increase the response rate.

67. There were a handful of respondents who appeared to confuse questions and responses, as well as a small number who it seems attributed low scores to outcomes they wanted to prioritise the most, rather than a high score. These anomalies are negligible in regards to altering the wider interpretation of responses in the engagement, but quantitative measurements have not been included in the report as a result. They will also be considered in the evaluation of the online form.

PART 10: CONCLUSIONS

68. The Strategic Vision engagement exercise set out to ask the public and partners for their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The feedback demonstrates strong support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. This includes support for the Outcomes, Guiding Principles and definition of 'Good Growth.' There were however a range of suggestions for increasing emphasis and ambition, most often in respect of tackling climate change, protecting the environment and tackling inequalities.

69. Respondents wanted to see the Vision take a more tailored approach to the challenges and opportunities facing Oxfordshire, and for it to make more of the unique people, places and assets within the county. A significant number of responses indicated concern over how the Vision would be evaluated and delivered, most often because the Vision's intent was considered broad and wide ranging, and therefore difficult to measure. Finally, many said

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)

that there needs to be greater clarity about the Vision's status, and its relationship with other organisational strategies and plans; particularly where tensions might arise between the two. A small minority of responses had more fundamental critiques of the Vision, most often related to deliverability and the perceived tensions between delivering good growth and the environmental ambitions within the document.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

(Appendix 3 - Engagement Summary)