



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 8 July 2021</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item 8</b>
Subject	<b>Oxfordshire Plan Consultation Document</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Jeff Haine, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning Email: Jeff.Haine@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	<p>To consider the approval of the Oxfordshire Plan consultation document which sets out a range of planning policy options and a series of spatial strategy options for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>When complete the Oxfordshire Plan will provide a high-level spatial planning framework for Oxfordshire up to 2050 and will be a statutory planning document supplementing Local Plans. The Plan aims to be transformational and occupies new policy areas, such as on climate change, environmental betterment, health impacts and zero carbon transport. It has now reached the Regulation 18 part 2 stage.</p>
Annexes	Annex A - Evidence Reports being published alongside the consultation document at Reg 18 part 2 stage Annex B – Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation Document
Recommendation/s	<p><i>That the Committee decides whether to express a view on the following recommendations to Cabinet:</i></p> <p>a) <i>To approve the Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation document for public consultation as attached; and</i></p> <p>b) <i>To authorise the Chief Executive to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the documents, and to agree the final publication style, in liaison with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and subject to agreement with their counterparts in the other four partner Local Planning Authorities.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	Climate Action: Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone.

	<p>A Vibrant District Economy: Securing future economic success through supporting existing local businesses and attracting new businesses to deliver the economic ambitions of the Local Industrial Strategy.</p> <p>Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities.</p> <p>Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population: Securing the provision of market and affordable housing of a high quality for a wide range of house holders making their home in West Oxfordshire.</p>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Considerable consultation and engagement has already taken place during earlier stages of the Oxfordshire Plan. This is summarised in the report.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

### **I.1 The Partnership**

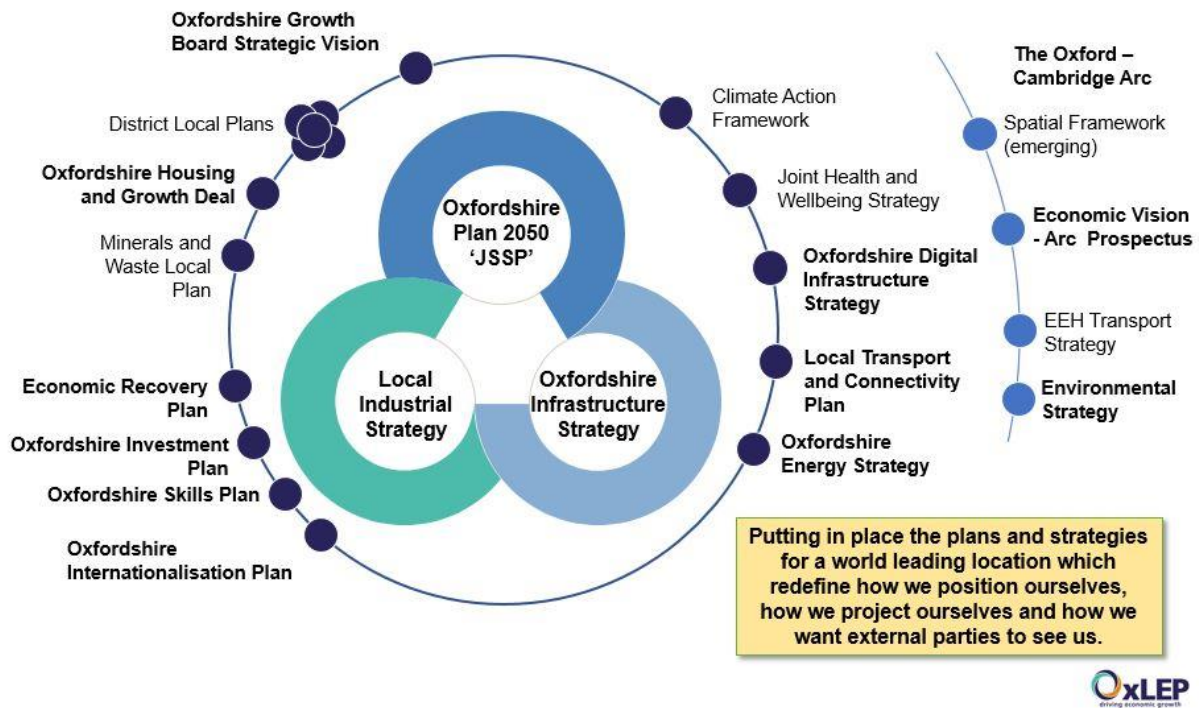
- 1.1.1 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) is being produced by the five local planning authorities in Oxfordshire, working in close partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and OxLEP throughout. The city and district councils formally approve each key stage.
- 1.1.2 A core team was established to co-ordinate the production of the OP2050 working closely with officers at the councils.
- 1.1.3 Development of the consultation document and evidence base has involved the Growth Board's Oxfordshire Plan Members Advisory Group, the Oxfordshire Heads of Planning Group, a technical Liaison Group and specialist officer input throughout the plan-making process.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

### **2.1. Progress to date**

- 2.1.1 The 2018 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal included a commitment by the Oxfordshire Councils to prepare a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (The Oxfordshire Plan) alongside Government investment of £215m for affordable housing and infrastructure improvements.
- 2.1.2 The first major consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan (covering Plan vision, objectives, aspirations and possible spatial typologies) took place in February and March 2019 (Regulation 18 Part 1), and then a vision for the Oxfordshire Plan was developed in response to the consultation responses.
- 2.1.3 An extensive evidence base was commissioned, and Sustainability Appraisal scoping & ongoing testing has been undertaken.
- 2.1.4 The team also undertook number of further consultation steps including initiating a 'Call for Ideas' (promoted development sites and other project proposals), stakeholder events and engagement with young people.
- 2.1.5 The relationship was considered with other plans & strategies and strategic influencers such as the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Oxfordshire's Infrastructure Strategy (OX SIS), Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).
- 2.1.6 Considered the nature of 'Good Growth' in Oxfordshire.
- 2.1.7 Developed Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for the Growth Board, intended to provide a strategic framework for a number of Oxfordshire-wide documents, to enable the closer coordination of planning, transport, infrastructure and economic development, amongst others. It sits alongside the Oxfordshire Plan's vision and was prepared & approved by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board & has been agreed by all Oxfordshire councils.

# Oxfordshire's Strategic Map – Reimagining Our Role



2.1.8 The core team has also undertaken Duty to Co-operate scoping and continuous engagement with neighboring Councils. This has included the Oxford City Council and District Councils & County Council & LEP, together with authorities adjoining Oxfordshire including Thames Valley, Bucks and Swindon. It has also included the 'prescribed bodies', such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England & NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups.

2.1.9 The team have also updated the Local Development Scheme which sets out the key forward dates, prepared a detailed Equalities Statement and a new Statement of Community Involvement, which sets out the basis for engagement with the community, particularly the 'remote and online' arrangements in the time of Covid.

## 2.2 Structure of the Consultation document

2.2.1 The Oxfordshire Plan consultation document comprises:

- Introduction and context
- Plan Vision and Objectives
- Plan Themes and Policies
- Strategic Spatial Options

## 2.3 Developing the Plan

2.3.1 The Oxfordshire Plan is being prepared as a Development Plan under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 (as amended). Once adopted the Oxfordshire Plan will form part of the Development Plan of each District and where appropriate will carry weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals for development, alongside the adopted Local Plan.

- 2.3.2 The development of the Oxfordshire Plan follows the Local Plan regulations (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended).
- 2.3.3 We are now at the Regulation 18 stage, with significant discretion on content so long as our proposals are backed by evidence and the Sustainability Appraisal has played a major role in shaping the detail. The Regulation 18 is a consultation stage at which different options can be tested. The Regulation 19 stage (the draft Plan) is where the Plan takes shape with policy detail.
- 2.3.4 A consultation document has been prepared that takes a series of proposals from the Planning Authorities as its foundation. It has been expanded into a full draft consultation document following discussion with Councillors representing each Council on the Advisory Group and officers. The draft consultation document seeks to ensure the content is strategic, setting the framework for Oxfordshire over 30 years (twice the operational length of a normal Local Plan) and shaping future growth, policies and setting the content for new Local Plans.
- 2.3.5 The consultation document sets out to show how joint action at an Oxfordshire level, where issues impact on more than one District, can add to what is already in place in the adopted Local Plans. The document consults on options that have the potential to set a framework for Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, with options on policy criteria with some matters more appropriately left to Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.3.6 At the Regulation 18 stage we are concerned with considering options on policies and spatial distribution and have sought to present such in the consultation document as 'preferred options' with 'alternative options' where appropriate. This is not the final plan but shows the direction of travel. The Plan sets out how we intend to progress from Regulation 18 to the Regulation 19 stage. Several local plans have been adopted since the Regulation 18 part 1 consultation in February 2019, so the Regulation 18 part 2 takes into account the development already planned in all the adopted Local Plans.

## **2.4 Scope of the Oxfordshire Plan**

- 2.4.1 As agreed through the 2018 Oxfordshire Growth and Housing Deal, the Oxfordshire Plan is being prepared as a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan covering 2020-2050.
- 2.4.2 The Oxfordshire Plan aims to be a different sort of plan. The Plan aims to be ambitious and transformational and occupies new policy areas; some require explanation in the plan at this stage; especially on climate change and environmental enhancement. The plan seeks to achieve cleaner, greener growth & higher quality development as a result of the proposed strategy and associated policies.
- 2.4.3 The consultation document describes 32 Policy Options that will be tested at the Regulation 18 stage. The document sets out why options are included, what the challenge is and why the response is proposed.
- 2.4.4 Possible policies for the Plan were identified following Reg 18 part 1, which the partnership considered. These have been subsequently expanded through consideration of evidence, such as the Sustainability Appraisal, into new policy proposals judged appropriate for consideration at the Oxfordshire level.
- 2.4.5 The proposed policy content covers strategic, Oxfordshire-wide policy options where issues related to more than one District. The document aims to set a long-term, overarching and high-level spatial planning framework for Oxfordshire for the period up to 2050.
- 2.4.6 Policies are in some case establishing an enabling/framework, others are more detailed. Others will be used in formulation of more detailed Local Plan policies.

2.4.7 Our development approach is set out under 5 themes that will create a County wide long-term framework. 32 strategic policies are proposed across five themes:

- **Theme One:** Addressing climate change.
- **Theme Two:** Improving environmental quality.
- **Theme Three:** Creating strong and healthy communities.
- **Theme Four:** Planning for sustainable travel and connectivity.
- **Theme Five:** Creating jobs and providing homes.

2.4.8 Under these themes county-wide policies are being proposed, including policies on climate change, environmental net gain, health impact assessment and urban renewal due to the retail changes impacting on our town and city centres, business site intensification and high design standards for new development.

2.4.9 The Plan is closely aligned with the development of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the OXIS infrastructure assessment. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will accompany the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan will be based on update of OXIS. This will complete before the Regulation 19 stage.

2.4.10 The plan will also have a Monitoring Framework at the Regulation 19 stage that is aligned with the OXIS monitoring framework.

2.4.11 The options consulted upon at Regulation 18 part 2 will be turned into final proposals by the Regulation 19 stage.

## 2.5 Strategic Spatial Options

2.5.1 Finally, the Plan will also establish housing and economic growth requirements to 2050 and broad locations for growth. This document proposes consulting on the options for the distribution of growth through spatial options.

2.5.2 Five spatial strategy options have been identified. These are to be tested through the Regulation 18 part 2 consultation. The process for moving from Regulation 18 to Regulation 19 is set out.

2.5.3 The five spatial strategy options identified are:

- **Option 1:** Focus on opportunities at larger settlements and planned growth locations.
- **Option 2:** Focus on Oxford-led growth.
- **Option 3:** Focus on opportunities in sustainable transport corridors & at strategic transport hubs.
- **Option 4:** Focus on strengthening business locations.
- **Option 5:** Focus on supporting rural communities.

2.5.4 The adopted local plans already establish the distribution of significant growth to 2031/35/36 and are taken account of in the spatial strategy and proposed spatial options.

2.5.5 At this stage we are not identifying individual options that can necessarily accommodate all of Oxfordshire's growth over next 30 years, nor identifying any one of options taken in isolation as the eventual long-term spatial strategy. At the next stage when a draft Plan is published (Regulation 19) broad locations for growth will be identified, with Local Plans being the mechanism for final site allocations. The eventual long-term spatial strategy is anticipated to draw from all of the five strategic spatial options at this next stage.

## **2.6 Level of new growth**

- 2.6.1 We have undertaken an assessment of the growth needs of Oxfordshire up to 2050, the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA), which will be published alongside the Regulation 18 part 2 consultation document given its important role as an evidence document. It sets out three scenarios for housing need. One that is based on the Government's standard methodology, a mid-range option, and a higher one that factors in additional economic growth.
- 2.6.2 The decision on which level of growth will be taken around Christmas 2021 to inform the Regulation 19 stage draft plan. In setting the level of planned housing provision, the OGNA will be one of the factors considered alongside a number of others.
- 2.6.3 Our strategy seeks to take account of the five District Local Plans that have been adopted in Oxfordshire and take account of the growth already committed in each District, totalling circa 75,000 houses. The consultation document clarifies that the housing need assessment is just a starting point, the current Local Plan growth up to 2031/35/36 has to be taken into account and leaves a smaller 'residual' figure of new development to be planned for in the Oxfordshire Plan.

## **2.7 The relationship with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc**

- 2.7.1 The consultation document also includes a section on the relationship with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. Our aspiration is for our work on the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan to strongly inform and influence government's thinking on the Arc Spatial Framework.
- 2.7.2 MHCLG have announced the development of a Spatial Framework for the Arc, to take place in stages:
- Policy Statement – February 2021 (MHCLG announced a focus on brownfield land, new settlements and climate change)
  - Vision consultation – Summer 2021
  - Options consultation - Spring 2022
  - Draft Framework consultation – Autumn 2022
- 2.7.3 The Oxfordshire Plan will help ensure that Oxfordshire has a strong voice in the development of the Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework and that our interests are taken into account.
- 2.7.4 Decisions on the development of the Arc will also feed into the site assessment that is to be undertaken as part of the work to prepare the Regulation 19 draft Plan.

## **2.8 Regulations and Legal Advice**

- 2.8.1 Legal support and advice has been received throughout the key stages of the process, as with the preparation of a Local Plan.
- 2.8.2 The Plan follows the Local Plan regulations and will be part of the Development Plan for each District. We are at Regulation 18 stage and have significant discretion about consultation document content, so long as it is backed by evidence. Regulation 18 is a testing/consultation stage.
- 2.8.3 The development of the consultation document is also informed by a significant evidence base, especially the Sustainability Appraisal.

## **2.9 Accompanying documents**

2.9.1 A number of accompanying documents have been provided to be available to Councillors when considering the Regulation 18 part 2 Consultation Document and whether to approve it for consultation. These include:

- An updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- A report on Duty to Cooperate.
- Statement of Common Ground (NPPF requirement, para 27)
- Equalities Statement

2.9.2 There are also three independent studies that are being made available to inform the decision to proceed to consultation:

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- The Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA)

2.9.3 The Annex shows the extensive evidence base, additional reports and studies that will be published as part of the evidence base at the start of the consultation period.

2.9.4 This includes an updated Local Development Scheme that sets out all the forward dates for the completion of the Oxfordshire Plan.

## **2.10 Consultation Period**

2.10.1 The consultation is to commence on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021 for ten weeks, up to 8<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

2.10.2 At the Regulation 18 part 2 stage we have discretion as to the length of time the consultation period.

2.10.3 As noted earlier the purpose of this consultation is to seek public views and test the options presented throughout the consultation document. Councillors are requested to engage with the consultation process once it commences rather than seeking to answer the questions posed before the consultation begins.

2.10.4 We have planned for the engagement process to be online given the Covid uncertainties.

## **2.11 Website**

2.11.1 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has a website <https://oxfordshireplan.org/> where the Regulation 18 part 2 consultation documents will sit. The website will be the key tool for the engagement during the consultation period.

2.11.2 The website will contain:

- Overview text about the Oxfordshire Plan, stage reached and consultation purpose.
- A consultation response form, including a series of questions included.
- A summary leaflet.
- A downloadable Regulation 18 part 2 consultation document.
- The ability to access the key accompanying documents that the Councils will receive.
- Link to the supporting evidence including the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- Link to the OGNA report
- Link to secondary evidence such as the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the OXIS which supports the Oxfordshire Plan but which is being consulted upon separately.
- Text confirming that the County Minerals and Waste Plan is separate.



- A download form for proposals to be submitted by site promoters.

## 2.12 Online events for which dates are being confirmed.

- District-based webinars: 2 per district, 1st to take place in 3rd week of August (from 16th), 2nd to take place in 3rd week of September (commencing 20th)
- CPRE webinar date confirmed as 19<sup>th</sup> August.
- A number of specialist webinars covering Environment and Developers. Each of these is to take place in the week commencing Tuesday 31st August.
- OxLEP Business events: 2 events, one w/c 19th July and one in mid-September
- Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce: July 6<sup>th</sup>

## 2.13 The future timetable

2.13.1 The scale of the work undertaken at the Regulation 18 part 2 stage puts the plan-making process in a good position to meet the future timetable that was agreed with MHCLG in February 2021.

2.13.2 We plan to reach:

Stage	Timeline
Scrutiny Meetings	8th to 15th July 2021
Cabinet/ Executive Meetings	19th to 22nd July 2021
<i>Second</i> Regulation 18 Consultation ( <i>on options</i> )	30 <sup>th</sup> July - September 2021
Regulation 19 Consultation ( <i>draft plan</i> )	May - June 2022
Submission	September 2022
Examination	November/December 2022
Inspectors Report	February/March 2023
Adoption	May/June 2023
Monitoring	<i>From adoption onwards</i>

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1. None directly for West Oxfordshire District Council at this stage. The consultation has been funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

## 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. Legal support and advice has been received throughout the key stages of the process, as with the preparation of a Local Plan.

- 4.2. The Plan follows the Local Plan regulations and will be part of the Development Plan for each District. We are at Regulation 18 stage and have significant discretion about consultation document content, so long as it is backed by evidence. Regulation 18 is a testing/consultation stage.
- 4.3. The development of the consultation document is also informed by a significant evidence base, especially the Sustainability Appraisal.

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1. This is a consultation document and there are no significant risks from approving the consultation. If the consultation did not happen there could be reputational risks as a consequence of not delivering on the commitment in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1. A separate Equalities Statement has been prepared.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. One of the key themes in the consultation document is addressing climate change, and policy options are included to tackle this.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1. Cabinet could choose not to approve the consultation document.

**Annex A: Evidence Reports being published alongside the consultation document at Reg 18 part 2 stage.**

<b><i>Accompanying Overview Report</i></b>
The Reg 18 (Part 2) Consultation Document
Statement of Community Involvement
Duty to Co-operate Statement
Statement of Common Ground
Equalities Statement
Published separately: Local Development Scheme update
<b><i>Key Evidence</i></b>
Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA)
<b><i>Secondary Evidence</i></b>
Transport and Connectivity
Water Cycle Study (Phase 1) incorporating SFRA
Health Impact Assessment
Climate Change Report
Natural Capital Work
Nature Recovery Network
Circular Economy
Settlement Potential (incl. Urban Capacity)
Infrastructure OxIS phase 1