



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Name and date of Committee	<b>CABINET – 17 August 2022</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item 7</b>
Subject	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2041 Initial Issues and Scoping Consultation</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer for West Oxfordshire District Council Tel: 01993 861658 Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To inform Members of the need to update the West Oxfordshire Local Plan through an initial Issues and Scoping Consultation.  To agree a programme of engagement to inform the revision of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	<i>a) That Cabinet note the intention to review the West Oxfordshire Local Plan commencing with an initial Issues and Scoping Consultation</i> <i>b) That Cabinet agree to a programme of engagement that will help to inform the scope of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan alongside the West Oxfordshire Council Plan.</i>
Corporate priorities	The development of a revised Local Plan and Council Plan for West Oxfordshire will generate a new set of corporate priorities for the activity of West Oxfordshire District Council.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	A programme of engagement is proposed to give a wide range of stakeholders the opportunity to inform and influence the priorities of the revised Local Plan and Council Plan to ensure that they reflect the issues of most importance to those living and working in West Oxfordshire. It is proposed that this will include:  a) A digital public consultation open to all b) A Town and Parish Council Forum

	c) A stakeholder event for a range of organisations active in the District who may be potential partners for delivering the priorities of the revised Council Plan
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## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. In May 2022 a new administration was voted into power at West Oxfordshire District Council. Following this recent change in political administration, the District Council is updating both its Local Plan and Council Plan and is seeking early views from local residents and businesses on potential areas of focus.
- 1.2. This early engagement will help to ensure that both the Local Plan and the Council Plan address the issues of most importance and relevance to West Oxfordshire.
- 1.3. The purpose of a Local Plan is to set out a vision and framework for the future development of an area, enabling needs and opportunities to be identified and decisions made on key issues such as how much development takes place and where, what infrastructure is needed and how positive outcomes such as environmental enhancements can best be achieved.
- 1.4. The Council Plan is a strategic document setting out a direction of travel for the District Council and sitting at the heart of a range of other strategies including the Local Plan. Through the preparation of the new Council Plan, a set of priorities for action will be defined to ensure that all action taken by the Council, either through service delivery or working with others, makes a positive contribution to the communities, environment and economy of West Oxfordshire.
- 1.5. The Local Plan is being reviewed for a number of reasons but particularly because we want to strengthen it and be more ambitious in tackling climate change and improving health and well-being. The Council Plan is being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects the priorities of the Council's new political administration.
- 1.6. The new administration (made up of a cross party coalition, the West Oxfordshire Alliance) recently published an early set of priorities highlighting particular issues they seek to address during their tenure. These initial priorities have been used to inform a number of potential 'areas of focus' for revising the Local Plan and Council Plan. It is important to note that these are initial suggestions only and will be worked up in more detail depending on the feedback received during the consultations. The potential areas of focus include:
  1. Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
  2. Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
  3. A rich natural and built environment
  4. Attractive, accessible and thriving places
  5. Meeting the housing needs of all
  6. A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy
- 1.7. A review of the Local Plan and Council Plan provides an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including the general public, Town and Parish Councils and organisations who are active in West Oxfordshire from the public, private and community/

voluntary sectors. This will enable the current priorities and areas of focus in the Local and Council Plans to be tested to ensure they correctly reflect the challenges facing the District today and the areas in which the new administration would like to focus.

## **2. PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

- 2.1.** We propose an initial stage consultation, feedback from which will be used to shape the content of both the new Local Plan and the Council Plan.
- 2.2.** Consultation questions have been prepared which are purposefully short and punchy. The consultation will have a strong digital focus to reach as broad and diverse an audience as possible.
- 2.3.** By using a new digital platform CommonPlace (funded by the government's PropTech fund) the consultation will be accessible, visual and interactive. The consultation will be designed to generate a strong steer on those issues that matter the most to the public and to enable the Council to sense check whether the emerging draft priorities are correct in emphasis.
- 2.4.** To give the democratically elected representatives of the District's communities the opportunity to input in person, a Town and Parish Forum will be held. This will be a facilitated discussion to obtain the views of Town and Parish Councils about issues particularly relevant to their local communities. As with the digital public consultation, this is an opportunity to get an insight into local priorities and to also explore the potential for joint working between the District Council and the Town or Parish Council to address locally important issues.
- 2.5.** A stakeholder engagement event will also be held for a range of organisations active in the District with remits that relate to West Oxfordshire's environment, economy and/or the community. This will provide an opportunity for the Council to benefit from their local insight and expertise, to identify where common interests lie and the potential for joint working.

## **3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE**

- 3.1.** The new Local Plan will cover the 20-year period 2021 – 2041 to ensure that it covers a period of more than 15-years from the assumed date of adoption (2024).
- 3.2.** The new Council Plan will cover the 4-year period 2022 – 2026 and will be drafted following this initial consultation, with a view to being formally adopted by the Council in October 2022.
- 3.3.** In terms of the timetable for preparing the new Local Plan, we are being purposefully ambitious, with the following key milestones expected to apply:
  - Plan preparation (August 2022 – August 2023)
  - Formal publication (September 2023)
  - Submission for independent examination (December 2023)
- 3.4.** To achieve these timetables, three engagement activities are proposed as follows:
  - Joint Council Plan and Local Plan Digital Consultation: August/September 2022
  - Town and Parish Forum: August 2022
  - Stakeholder Event: August 2022

- 3.5.** The outputs of the engagement programme will be analysed and these, together with contextual data on the profile of the District, will inform the development of the Local Plan and Council Plan.

#### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1.** There are no legal implications arising directly from this Report.

#### **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1.** All actions will be subject to the Council's corporate risk management approach and will, therefore, be tested in terms of risk likelihood, potential impact and identification of mitigation steps.

#### **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1.** The pursuit of an updated Local Plan and Council Plan should have a positive effect in terms of its equalities impact. It will be appropriate to complete an informed Equalities Impact Assessment as the work is further specified following development of priorities in the Plans.

#### **7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1.** Addressing the climate and ecological crisis have been identified as a priority of Cabinet and will therefore be represented as an area of focus in the proposed consultation on the revised Local Plan and Council Plan

#### **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 8.1.** No specific alternative options have been identified at this point. In respect of the Local Plan, more specific options and alternatives will be further considered as the plan progresses towards formal publication in 2023.

#### **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 9.1.** None.