



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 16 NOVEMBER 2022
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM 9
Subject	OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2040 – PREFERRED OPTIONS
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development; Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Tel: 01993 861686; Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To agree the District Council's response to Oxford City Council's Preferred Option Local Plan consultation.
Annexes	Annex A – Suggested draft response to the Preferred Option consultation
Recommendation/s	That Cabinet resolves to: <i>a) Note the content of the report;</i> <i>b) Agree that the draft response attached at Annex A be submitted to Oxford City Council</i>
Corporate priorities	This report and the proposed response attached at Annex A relate to the emerging Local Plan of Oxford City Council and are therefore not directly related to the corporate priorities set out in the West Oxfordshire Council Plan. However, a number of the themes around which the emerging Oxford Local Plan is based (healthy communities, resilience to climate change, inclusivity and equality etc.) do reflect many of the priorities of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Oxford Local Plan 2040 Preferred Option consultation is open for 6 weeks between Monday 3 October 2022 and Monday 14 November 2022. Further consultation will take place as the Local Plan moves forward to the formal publication and submission stages.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.** This report is presented to Members to consider and agree a response to the Oxford Local Plan Preferred Option consultation. This is an important step in the preparation of Oxford's new Local Plan because they are essentially setting out a preference for certain options and the reasons why other options have been discounted.
- 1.2.** The responses received at this stage will feed directly into later stages of publication and submission so feedback will help shape the Plan as it progresses.

2. OXFORD LOCAL PLAN 2040

- 2.1.** Oxford City Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan which will shape how Oxford develops to 2040 and will replace the existing Local Plan which runs to 2036.
- 2.2.** The Local Plan 2040 will set out the planning strategy for meeting the needs of the city and once adopted, will be used in determining planning applications for a wide range of development.
- 2.3.** The Preferred Options document which is currently subject to consultation contains a series of proposed policy options which cover a range of topics including housing, economy, communities, design and heritage. It also includes a development sites and infrastructure chapter, which sets out proposed sites that may require a site allocation in the plan.
- 2.4.** This Preferred Options document is an important step in policy development which transitions from the issues presented at the previous Issues stage to the draft plan which will be consulted upon next year.

3. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- 3.1.** The Preferred Options Plan is considered to be well written and presented in the main although it could be made more succinct in areas.
- 3.2.** The proposed policies are based on six key themes, which stem from the environment, social and economy. The objectives of the plan set out in more detail how the plan will seek to achieve the vision for the city and there is also three overarching threads including addressing climate change, reducing inequalities and the 15 minute city concept, which we support in principle. The strategic spatial policies are based on these objectives and overarching threads.
- 3.3.** The Plan sets out a preferred approach for each policy alongside other options with an explanation of the pros and cons for each approach and this is considered to be very informative.
- 3.4.** However, we consider that the plan needs to have a much stronger emphasis on the relationship between Oxford and the rest of the County. Oxford is a key service centre and there are very strong relationships between the City and the rest of the County in terms of the economy and travel movements. As such, the issues facing the City cannot be considered properly in isolation.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1.** A key issue in considering the Oxford Local Plan, which will have a direct impact on the neighbouring authorities within Oxfordshire, is the level of identified housing need for the City and the extent and apportionment of any need which is unable to be met within the City's administrative boundaries.
- 4.2.** Oxford City Council consider that circumstances are likely to exist in Oxfordshire that justify using an alternative method to calculate housing need rather than by using the standard method as set out in National Planning Policy Guidance due to Oxford's role in the local and national economy. However, in the absence of further agreed evidence of need, that statement is considered to be premature. It is considered critical that Oxfordshire authorities work in partnership to identify the most appropriate level of housing need including any uplift from the standard method.
- 4.3.** Instead, the Plan proposes to apply a capacity-based/constraint-based housing requirement of 9,147 dwellings over the plan period 2020 – 2040 which equates to around 450 new homes per annum. This is only marginally higher than long-term trends in the City and Officers consider that a more ambitious approach must be pursued, otherwise a high proportion of identified housing needs will need to be met elsewhere.
- 4.4.** The suggested draft response at Annex A therefore suggests that a hybrid option be pursued which recognises the extent of identified housing need for Oxford, commits to meeting it as fully as possible/reasonable and sets out an appropriate housing requirement for the City to be met through the plan along with the extent of unmet need that is expected to be accommodated elsewhere.
- 4.5.** Further discussions with neighbouring authorities will be needed to reach an agreed position on the level of identified housing need for Oxford, including affordable housing, and the extent and apportionment of any need which is unable to be met within the City's administrative boundaries.
- 4.6.** A number of other issues have also been highlighted within the draft response at Annex A such as the need for a stronger design focus, more detail on healthy place shaping and how this links in with the 15-minute city concept and the need for a much stronger focus on the economic and travel links between the city and the county, reflecting Oxford's role as a key service centre.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1.** Subject to the agreement of Members, the draft response attached at Annex A will be submitted to Oxford City Council for their consideration in taking their new Local Plan forward to the formal stages of publication and submission for examination.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1.** The report raises no financial implications.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1. The report raises no specific legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1. The report raises no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1. One of the chapters of the Local Plan Preferred Option document focuses on 'A more equal city with strong communities and opportunities for all'. It will be for Oxford City Council at examination in due course to demonstrate how they have met their obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1. No direct implications although many of the policy options set out in the Preferred Option document relate to the issue of climate change including resilience and the pursuit of net zero carbon.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

11.1. The Council could choose not to respond to the consultation.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None.

(END)