



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 19 APRIL 2023
Subject	WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2041
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Assistant Director Communities Email: andy.barge@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To summarise the outcome of the 'Your Voice Counts' Council Plan/Local Plan public consultation which ran from 24 August – 5 October 2022 and to agree a new timetable for taking the Local Plan through to submission and adoption.
Annexes	Annex A – Your Voice Counts Consultation Summary Report - April 2023 Annex B – Local Development Scheme (LDS) Update - April 2023
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: a) Note the content of the report; and b) Agree to approve the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex B.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No

Exempt	No
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The report provides an overview of the previous public consultation which took place from 24 August – 5 October 2022 the purpose of which was to help inform the scope of both the new Local Plan and Council Plan.</p> <p>The Local Plan will be subject to further public consultation with Town and Parish Councils and other key stakeholders as part of the Regulation 18 plan preparation stage. There will also be a statutory 6-week consultation at the formal Regulation 19 stage, prior to submission for examination. Anticipated dates for consultation are set out in the LDS update attached at Annex B.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

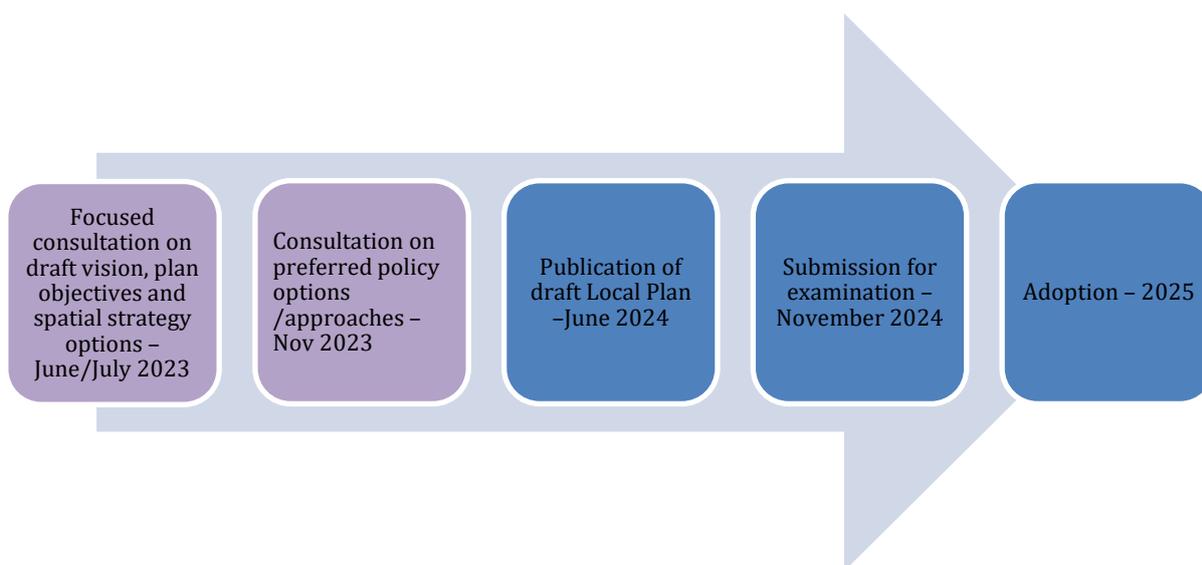
- 1.1** Members will be aware that the District Council has committed to a review of its current Local Plan which was adopted in September 2018. The new Local Plan will cover the 20-year period 2021 – 2041.
- 1.2** To kick off that process, an initial 6-week consultation - ‘Your Voice Counts’ - took place last year, the principal aim being to seek early feedback on potential plan content and priorities.
- 1.3** The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the consultation responses received and to set out a new timetable for taking the Local Plan forward to submission and adoption.

2. ‘YOUR VOICE COUNTS’

- 2.1** The ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation ran for a period of 6-weeks from 24 August – 5 October 2022. The consultation was a joint exercise, designed to inform both the new Local Plan and Council Plan.
- 2.2** The consultation had a strong digital focus using the District Council’s new commonplace engagement platform <https://yourvoicecounts.commonplace.is/>
- 2.3** This was supplemented by two face-to-face workshop events held with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholder groups on 5th September and 20th September 2022 respectively.
- 2.4** The primary purpose of the consultation was to seek initial feedback on 6 potential ‘areas of focus’:
 - Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
 - Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
 - An enhanced natural and built environment
 - Attractive, accessible and thriving places
 - Meeting the housing needs of all
 - A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy
- 2.5** Attached at Annex A is a summary report which provides an overview of the main issues raised through the consultation.
- 2.6** Officers intend to make the consultation summary report publicly available to ensure that all those who took part, and any others who are interested, have a good understanding of the main points raised. It will be used to directly inform the remaining stages of Local Plan preparation including further engagement with Town and Parish Councils and other key stakeholders as set out in Section 3 below.

3. LOCAL PLAN 2041 – THE ‘ROUTE MAP’ TO ADOPTION

- 3.1 The preparation of a Local Plan essentially falls into two main stages.
- 3.2 The first stage is the ‘Regulation 18’ *plan preparation* stage during which local authorities seek views on the general subject matter of their Local Plan i.e. what issues / topics the plan should focus on. Often this stage involves the consideration of different options and alternatives.
- 3.3 The second, formal stage is the ‘Regulation 19’ *publication* stage when the local authority publishes what it considers to be a ‘sound’ plan i.e. the version which it intends to submit for independent examination.
- 3.4 The initial ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation outlined above was the first step in the Regulation 18 plan preparation stage, seeking initial views on the potential content of the new Local Plan.
- 3.5 The valuable feedback received has given the Council a good understanding of local priorities and ambitions. This has already helped to shape the Council Plan (2023 – 2027) which was approved in January 2023 and will now help to inform the structure and content of the new Local Plan.
- 3.6 Looking forward, the route map to adoption of the new Local Plan is expected to comprise two more periods of stakeholder engagement during the Regulation 18 plan preparation stage followed by a statutory 6-week consultation at the formal Regulation 19 stage. The anticipated timing for these stages is illustrated below.



- 3.7 The focused consultation planned for June/July 2023 will draw on the previous ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation and set out a series of draft local plan objectives that once agreed, will help to guide the policies and land allocations that follow.

- 3.8** The consultation will also seek views on different ‘spatial strategy’ options for what the overall pattern of development might look like in West Oxfordshire in the period to 2041 (e.g. concentrated in certain settlements, more dispersed etc.).
- 3.9** The consultation will also include a ‘call for sites’ exercise through which respondents will be able to put forward ideas for specific parcels of land across the District. Officers already have a good baseline understanding of potential housing and employment sites with many of these already having been submitted directly to the Council for consideration or through the (now abandoned) Oxfordshire Plan 2050 process.
- 3.10** This further call for sites exercise will help to identify any additional housing and employment sites that haven’t yet been put forward as well as providing respondents with the opportunity to suggest sites for other important uses such as strategic green space and renewable energy provision.
- 3.11** Subsequent to this, a further stage of informal stakeholder engagement will take place in November 2023 when views will be invited on a range of preferred policy options/approaches. The purpose of this stage will be to start firming up on the likely policy content of the new Local Plan including why certain approaches may be preferred over others.
- 3.12** Subject to the outcome of these two further informal consultation stages, the Council should then be in a position to publish its final Regulation 19 pre-submission draft version of its new Local Plan in June 2024, with a view to submitting it for examination in November 2024. Depending on the progress of the examination, adoption would then follow sometime in the second half of 2025.
- 3.13** This overall timeline is reflected in the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) attached at Annex B. The LDS has also been updated to reflect the current position on a number of other planning policy documents including the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1** Subject to consideration of this report, the ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation summary report will be made available to all stakeholders and the updated LDS will be made publicly available.
- 4.2** It is anticipated that the proposed focused consultation on draft local plan objectives and spatial strategy options will be brought back before Members in June.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** The District Council could choose not to progress with an update of the Local Plan. However, local authorities are required to keep plans up to date, typically reviewing them every 5-years or so.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The preparation and adoption of a new Local Plan has significant financial implications with provision for this having been made through the District Council's budget setting process.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The report raises no direct legal implications. The Local Plan will be prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and when considered at examination, the appointed Planning Inspector will determine whether or not the District Council has fulfilled those requirements.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The report presents no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 The preparation of the new Local Plan will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The climate and ecological emergencies are anticipated to form a central component of the new Local Plan and the policies contained therein.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.