

Executive summary

Introduction

This Local Investment Plan (LIP) for Oxfordshire, finalised in March 2010, is the first formal document resulting from Oxfordshire's Single Conversation with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The 'Single Conversation' is the process through which local authorities, in collaboration with the HCA, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and other key partners, develop a LIP and a Local Investment Agreement (LIA). Oxfordshire was chosen as one of three pilot areas in the South East, the others being Kent, Thames Gateway and Portsmouth and Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).

While local authorities have a leading role in developing the Single Conversation, reflecting their responsibilities in setting out future ambitions and visions for their areas, other key stakeholders also need to be involved. This LIP has been prepared by the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (SPIP) and sets out a shared vision and priorities for delivering housing growth, economic development, regeneration, and infrastructure; in other words 'sustainable place making'.

This LIP outlines and integrates the plans of Cherwell, Oxford, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire District Councils, Oxfordshire County Council, the Highways Agency, Network Rail, the Environment Agency and the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust to deliver housing and economic growth and associated strategic infrastructure to 2030. Collectively, these plans will begin to meet the requirements of the South East Plan, the Regional Economic Strategy, the five Local Development Frameworks, Oxfordshire 2030, and the five District Sustainable Community Strategies.

Our opportunities and challenges

This LIP responds to the opportunities and challenges in housing growth and economic development that the members of the Oxfordshire SPIP are tackling individually and collectively.

Oxfordshire is renowned as a place of architectural and natural beauty. The internationally famous city of Oxford is at the heart, with a series of historic market towns serving communities across the county and including Abingdon; Banbury; Bicester; Henley; Thame; Wallingford; Wantage and Witney. Oxfordshire has many villages set in attractive countryside, including three areas of outstanding natural beauty: the Chilterns; the Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs.

Oxfordshire is also acknowledged internationally as a centre of excellence for learning and research, with the highest concentration of science and biotechnology industries in Western Europe. It plays a critical role in the regional, national and, in many respects, international economies.

Over the next 20 years, we expect significant population and development growth across Oxfordshire. All SPIP partners face difficulties in managing that growth in a way that meets economic, housing and regeneration pressures and provides sufficient infrastructure. At the same time, the environmental quality of the county and our impact on environmental sustainability are major considerations for us.

Economic prosperity and quality of environment make Oxfordshire an attractive place. But there are pockets of deprivation where residents have low wages, few skills and poor housing; where young people do not fulfil their potential at school; and where older people have poorer health and significantly shorter life expectancy. The LIP can play a vital part in tackling these issues.

Our priorities

This LIP has four overall strategic objectives – to:

- deliver new housing, including affordable homes
- support economic growth
- achieve regeneration and tackle deprivation, and
- contribute to meeting strategic infrastructure needs.

The LIP focuses mainly on our five-year county-wide development programme to meet these strategic objectives. All the schemes outlined in this document are priorities for Oxfordshire, given the pressing need for more homes and for the transport, employment, education and other infrastructure they will require.

From our five-year development programme we have derived a shortlist of the 17 housing schemes and 36 strategic infrastructure schemes we believe to be top priorities. Some of the housing schemes already have planning permission. Others are likely to be granted planning permission soon. Taken together, these 17 housing schemes could deliver over 17,000 new homes, 7,200 of which would be ‘affordable’ (contributing to a South East Plan 2006–2026 requirement for 55,000 new homes, of which 22,000 need to be affordable).

Many of the schemes in our overall five-year programme will come forward without public-sector intervention from the HCA or any other organisation. However, these shortlisted schemes are those we would like the HCA to treat as being the highest priorities for immediate public-sector investment. We will review this shortlist again once we know the nature and extent of future HCA funding, and may draw other or alternative schemes from the overall development programme onto this shortlist as a result.

Place making across Oxfordshire

We consider housing growth and strategic infrastructure investment as a whole in 11 key urban localities. We also consider housing growth and strategic infrastructure across all the rural areas as in effect a twelfth locality. The localities are:

- Abingdon and Faringdon
- Banbury
- Bicester and Upper Heyford
- Botley
- Didcot
- Oxford
- Science Vale UK
- Thames and Chinnor
- Wallingford and Cholsey
- Wantage, Grove and Harwell
- West Oxfordshire strategic sites
- Rural housing sites across Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire.



Next steps

The LIP is a living document. The SPIP will review it every 18 months to ensure it reflects the evolution of the five Local Development Frameworks and other local strategies as well as national and regional strategies. The SPIP will also need to review how far we proceed with short-term housing and infrastructure plans in light of continuing market difficulties.

The priorities identified in this LIP will inform the development of Oxfordshire's Local Investment Agreement (LIA) with the HCA. The SPIP and the HCA are working together to produce the LIA, which will detail future HCA funding commitments, by end of June 2010.

The LIP's overview of the public sector investment required to deliver affordable housing and infrastructure will provide a firm foundation for discussion with other national, regional and sub-regional agencies around how they might best support local development aspirations.

SPIP partners will also seek to engage other partners in this LIP. House builders, for example, both private and social, have a central role in delivering the housing growth in Oxfordshire and need to understand this LIP. We hope the document will lead to greater certainty and clarity among all stakeholders.

The LIP will support the SPIP in informing and testing the Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) as it progresses through crucial consultation stages. The LIP will also influence the economic development policies and actions that will emerge from the review of the Oxfordshire Economic Strategy. It will be vital in informing SPIP members' individual and collective thinking on the infrastructure required through S106 agreements, the new Community Infrastructure Levy or other ways of getting contributions from developments in the future.