

FOREWORD

This Plan will be a step change in our approach to securing the best Oxfordshire for 2050. It will set the framework for future decision making on big issues like development, infrastructure and placemaking. The Plan will be aspirational and use the opportunity of growth as a positive to improve the quality of life for everyone.

We will engage with stakeholders and communities across Oxfordshire, and work through the plan making process collaboratively establishing a common purpose and vision for the county.

We recognise the many assets and strengths of Oxfordshire, it is a very desirable place in which to live, work, study, visit and invest. There are real opportunities for continuing our economic success, enhancing the quality of the built and natural environment, improving quality of life and reducing inequalities. With a long-term focus we hope to capture these opportunities and plan collectively for a sustainable future to the benefit of all in the county.

There are many steps in the process of developing this plan and we are looking to engage with all those interested in the future of Oxfordshire to help shape it. This consultation document is intended to start a conversation which we hope will develop and continue throughout the process and lead to a plan for Oxfordshire that we can be proud of. Please get involved in and sign up to be kept informed throughout.

The local authorities of Oxfordshire are working together to produce the Oxfordshire Plan. This project offers the chance to plan co-operatively, tackle complex issues that cross our individual boundaries, and draw up a strategic vision.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Oxfordshire Plan will cover the administrative county area of Oxfordshire. This will comprise the local planning authorities of:
 - Cherwell District Council
 - Oxford City Council
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - Vale of White Horse District Council
 - West Oxfordshire District Council
2. In 2018 the Oxfordshire authorities signed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal¹ with the government. In return for guaranteed funding for affordable housing, infrastructure and economic growth, the Oxfordshire authorities have committed to submit a Local Plan for each district, to plan for the delivery of 100,000 new homes to 2031 (through those Local Plans) and to produce the Oxfordshire Plan. The scope of the Oxfordshire Plan was developed in the Scoping Document² which was agreed by the partner authorities in October 2018.
3. The Growth Deal commits to an Oxfordshire Plan that covers the period to 2050. This is a significantly longer period than is typical with a Local Plan and is important in this strategic context. A significant amount of joint work across the Oxfordshire authorities has already taken place which has fed into the current and emerging round of Local Plans. These Local Plans cover the period from 2011 to 2031, 2034 or 2036. There is therefore a good deal of detail and certainty around that period as plans are well advanced. The latter period of the Oxfordshire Plan to 2050 will be based on a new evidence base produced specifically for the project. Future Local Plans will sit within the framework defined by the Oxfordshire Plan.

VISION FOR THE OXFORDSHIRE PLAN

4. In 2050 the people of Oxfordshire are living in sustainable communities with a high quality of life and strong sense of belonging. The integrity and richness of the county's historic character and natural environment are valued and conserved. A wide range of secure and good quality housing options are within reach for all. Existing and new communities are well integrated, attractive and desirable places to live; their design and layouts facilitate healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel options. Productivity has increased and residents are well-skilled and able to access a wide range of high-value job opportunities and share in wealth creation. The private and public sector continue to have the confidence to invest in the county. Oxfordshire has embraced the technological, demographic and lifestyle changes of recent decades and new developments are fit for the future and resilient to climate change. The wellbeing of residents and workers is enhanced through being part of this special place.

Discussion point 1 – Does the above draft vision meet your aspirations for the future of Oxfordshire? Are there any changes you would like to see to the vision?

¹ [Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal](#) (Nov 2017) MHCLG

² [Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Scoping Document \(Oct 2018\)](#)

OXFORDSHIRE CONTEXT

5. There are many complex and interlinked factors that make Oxfordshire a desirable place to live, work, study, visit and invest. The following section provides an outline of the main factors. In some cases these factors are real strengths and provide opportunities for the future, in others they are more challenging and in the most part they provide both opportunities and constraints.

Quality of life context

6. Oxfordshire is generally regarded as a high quality place to live. The attractive environment, accessible countryside, good employment prospects, high educational attainment, long life expectancy, safety and security, cultural richness and access to services and facilities are all factors which contribute to the quality of life in Oxfordshire.
7. Oxfordshire or individual Oxfordshire authorities frequently perform very highly in rankings that aim to measure quality of life. The Office of National Statistics collects data on people's self-assessed levels of life satisfaction, worth, happiness and anxiety³. In 2017/18 the average ranking of Oxfordshire's residents is 7.87 out of 10 for life satisfaction, compared to a South East average of 7.76 and an England average of 7.68.
8. There are areas of deprivation however, with notable differences in life opportunities and quality of life even within relatively small geographic areas. In those more deprived areas (which can be found in each of the districts of Oxfordshire) residents often have lower wages and skills, educational attainment is lower and health is poorer. There are usually combinations of factors causing such inequalities to exist between areas.

Economic context

9. Oxfordshire has a fast-growing economy focussed on innovation, technology and education. Science Vale UK has the highest concentration of science research facilities in Western Europe and Harwell Campus is home to the largest space cluster in Europe. Oxford University is the number one-ranked University in the World⁴ and it generates more technology spin-outs than any other UK university.
10. Oxfordshire has one of the strongest economies in the UK, it is one of only three net contributors to the treasury, delivering £21 billion per year to national output⁵. The ambition of the Local Industrial Strategy (currently being prepared by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)⁶ is to position Oxfordshire as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems by building on the region's world-leading science and technology clusters, by ensuring there is the business and research space needed to continue to be at the forefront of innovation.

³ [Quality of Life in the UK](#), 2018, Office of National Statistics

⁴ [Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2018](#)

⁵ [Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal - Outline Agreement](#) (Nov 2017) MHCLG

⁶ [Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy](#), OxLEP

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11. Oxfordshire's Labour Market Profile⁷ shows that it has high levels of employment with 81.6% of economically active people in employment and the largest employment sectors in Oxfordshire are wholesale and retail; professional scientific and technical; education; human health and social work; manufacturing; accommodation and food services. The level of educational attainment is higher in Oxfordshire than the national average with 50.7% of people having a level 4 or higher qualification (e.g. degree) with only 3.8% having no qualification. 63% of primary school pupils in Oxfordshire are meeting expected standards, with average scores in reading and below average in writing and maths. 46.3% of secondary school pupils in Oxfordshire achieved Grade 5 (high grade C/low B) or above in GCSE English and maths, above the England average⁸. Educational qualifications alone are only one indicator, more broadly skills levels and availability of people with the right skills to match the needs of local employers is as important.

Natural and built environment context

12. Oxfordshire has an attractive and diverse urban and rural landscape. The underlying geology criss-crossed by eight river systems including the Thames and its tributaries combined with a long history of agricultural use gives the County a gentle, yet complex, landscape character. In addition to extensive areas of farmland the county supports important wildlife habitats including woodlands, wetlands and riverside meadows and the means for active travel and recreation using the public rights of way and accessible countryside and greenspace network.

13. Many parts of the county are protected at national and international level for their nature conservation value. Oxfordshire has 7 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that fall partly or entirely within the county. These are Oxford Meadows, Cothill Fen, Little Wittenham, Aston Rowant, Chilterns Beechwoods, Hackpen Hill and Hartslock Wood. There are 111 Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Oxfordshire, covering 4,495 hectares, which are protected at national level representative of the country's best habitats. There are many other sites identified for their ecological and geological interest including 362 Local Wildlife Sites and 46 Local Geological Sites.

14. Oxfordshire has many protected and highly valued landscapes, including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Cotswolds AONB and the North Wessex Downs AONB. The county also has a wealth of built environment assets. The county's historic market towns, picturesque villages and Oxford's dreaming spires draw in visitors from around the world. There are around 13,000 listed buildings and structures in Oxfordshire and over 200 conservation areas. There is a world heritage site at Blenheim Palace and many designated and non-designated heritage assets throughout the county.

15. Oxfordshire's natural environment provides the setting for the city of Oxford and the county's towns and villages and provides places for leisure and recreation. The natural environment also provides a wide range of ecosystems services that benefit people including clean air, fresh water, surface water management and flood alleviation, food and forestry products, carbon capture and storage and the potential for renewable energy generation. There is a strong link between the natural environment and the health and well-being of people in Oxfordshire. The

⁷ [NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics 2017/18](#)

⁸ [Compare Schools Performance](#), DfE

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extent and condition of many of our environmental assets has been declining over the course of decades, with major challenges including climate change, air and water pollution, land contamination, fragmentation of habitats and a decline in biodiversity.

16. The Oxford Green Belt covers a significant area of the county. Green Belt is not a designation that recognises inherent biodiversity or landscape value in the same way as SSSI's or AONB's, but is designed to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
17. The future requirement for water in the Thames Water⁹ catchment area is likely to be very much greater than they are today due to an increasing population and to support economic growth. The impact of climate change means that there is a need to protect the environment and strengthen our resilience to more severe drought.

Housing context

18. Housing costs in Oxfordshire are high, with both purchasing and renting costs above average. Although incomes and disposable incomes are above average, the wage to house price ratio is still very poor, making Oxfordshire one of the least affordable parts of the Country in which to live. Affordability ratios are 12.3 in Oxford, 11.86 in South Oxfordshire, 11.24 in West Oxfordshire, 9.75 in Cherwell and 8.93 in the Vale of White Horse. This compares to a ratio of 7.9 in England as a whole and 10.3 in the South East¹⁰. The Centre for Cities Outlook¹¹ states Oxford as the least affordable city in the UK.
19. High house prices threaten quality of life and wellbeing in Oxfordshire with issues such as overcrowding and homelessness on the rise. There are also implications for local businesses and the economy with large employers in health and education and social care sectors having problems with staff recruitment and retention due to the high cost of living.
20. There are variations in house prices across the county with district market towns and villages providing relatively affordable housing compared to the city. Many people choose to commute from areas where housing is relatively affordable to higher paid jobs elsewhere causing congestion on Oxfordshire's constrained transport network with knock on implications for the environment, air pollution and quality of life.

Health and wellbeing context

21. The health of people in Oxfordshire and life expectancy¹² is generally better than the England average although there are significant issues. The population is ageing and the number of people living with chronic and complex diseases is increasing.¹³ There are also inequalities of health and

⁹ Thames Water's Water Resources Management Plan 2019

¹⁰ [House Price to Workplace Earnings Ratio](#) (April 2018) ONS

¹¹ [Centre for Cities Outlook 2017](#)

¹² In 2012-14 the at-birth life expectancy for men in Oxfordshire was 81 (compared to England average of 79.55); the female life expectancy in Oxfordshire was 84.1 (compared to England average of 83.2) [ONS](#)

¹³ [Oxfordshire's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(2017\) Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board](#)

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wellbeing across the county. Those in the most deprived areas of the county have poorer health and lower levels of life satisfaction and lower life expectancy.

22. In terms of living healthy lifestyles, statistics show that Oxfordshire's residents have higher levels of physical activity and lower levels of adult obesity and smoking than the England averages although there are clearly still issues to be addressed. Ease of access to healthcare provision varies across the county, in rural areas this can be difficult for less mobile residents.
23. The cluster of hospitals in Oxford link clinical practice strongly with university research, which means cutting-edge clinical practice is available to residents. Primary healthcare is under pressure across the whole country, including Oxfordshire. A growing and ageing population means that access to primary healthcare will be increasingly important. The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group published the Oxfordshire Primary Care Framework in 2017 sets out a model of primary and community care, to ensure it remains effective. It is focused on the roles general practice should play in the community, including supporting public health initiatives and promoting schemes which reduce variation in health inequalities.

Transport and connectivity context

24. Oxfordshire sits on the busy road and rail transport corridor between the south coast ports, the Midlands and the North. It benefits from transport connections to London and the West Midlands via the M40 and close proximity to the M4 providing connections to the West and London. The M40 carries the most traffic, particularly on the stretch between junctions 9 and 10, which links the A34 via the A43 to the M1 carrying over 100,000 vehicles per day. The A34 carries up to 70,000 vehicles per day, including a large proportion of lorries. The county relies heavily on the A34 for local journeys and the route forms part of the Oxford ring road. The A34 is particularly vulnerable to disruption, as there is a lack of alternative North-South routes for journeys both within and through the county. The A40 is a major through route linking Gloucester and London and intersects with three key radial routes to the North of Oxford, where it forms part of Oxford's ring road. The route suffers from serious delays between Witney and Oxford due to the volume of through traffic and commuter traffic which uses the route.
25. The Oxford-Cambridge Expressway linking Oxfordshire to Milton Keynes and onto Cambridgeshire is likely to further increase demand for through travel, so a long-term solution to congestion on the A34 is important. The route of the OxCam Expressway¹⁴ will have implications for local highway conditions as well as shaping the spatial strategy for the Oxfordshire Plan.
26. Within Oxford there is a very comprehensive bus network and this represents the mode of choice for 48%¹⁵ of people travelling to the city centre. There is a network of frequent bus services linking the county's towns with Oxford although bus provision linking smaller rural settlements to urban areas is very limited. With limited bus priority measures into Oxford, the reliability of inter-urban bus routes are affected by traffic congestion and so often the simpler choice for residents of the towns and rural areas and therefore the preference, is to travel by car. This is partially mitigated by the very popular Park & Ride schemes on the edge of Oxford,

¹⁴ [Oxford to Cambridge Expressway](#), Highways England

¹⁵ [Oxford City Centre Movement and Public Realm Study](#) (2018) Phil Jones Associates

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which have been developed since the 1970s in conjunction with restrictions on access to the city centre.

27. The rail network is very well used and provides frequent connections between several of Oxfordshire's main towns and beyond to London, Birmingham and Bristol. Recently the new link from Oxford Parkway to Marylebone opened up an alternative mainline link with London. A significant level of freight also passes through the county on route to the South coast ports. The network is operating close to capacity, so significant work to signals and dualling of lines is required to increase it. London Oxford Airport located at Kidlington offers primary regional and business aviation services.
28. Oxford is well known for its high levels of cycling and there are some cycle connections between other towns and areas of employment but this is far from comprehensive. Outside the city walking and cycling are not always seen as feasible or desirable modes of travel especially for commuting despite the health and environmental benefits they offer.
29. Localised effects are felt from emissions of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), which cause respiratory illness and can cause early deaths. Air quality is regularly monitored at many locations across Oxfordshire. At some locations air quality is at levels where legal intervention is required by Local Authorities. There are currently 13 AQMAs in Oxfordshire, where the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide is being exceeded (four in Cherwell, one covering the whole of Oxford city, three in South Oxfordshire, three in Vale of White Horse and two in West Oxfordshire). There are also Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in Oxfordshire which are particularly vulnerable to air pollution. Rail electrification should improve air quality adjacent to rail lines and around stations.
30. Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan 4¹⁶ aimed to ensure that the county's transport systems were fit to support population and economic growth. It is anticipated that the LTP will be reviewed and updated in line with the Oxfordshire Plan.
31. The Oxfordshire County Council led programme for improving broadband infrastructure has already achieved its December 2017 target of achieving 95% of premises having access to superfast broadband, and is set to out-turn 97% coverage by 2019.¹⁷ A barometer of how important this is to Oxfordshire is evidenced by very high adoption of fibre broadband in the county, where 50% of premises enabled by the Better Broadband programme have already taken up new fibre services. Early planning is now underway to find solutions for the remaining very rural premises, focussing on enhancing the fibre footprint to reach agricultural businesses, as well as enhancing the availability of cost effective very high speed fibre services for businesses and public sector across the county. Strategic convergence of mobile and fixed data networks is expected to develop commercially over the next five to ten years, as 5G mobile data standards are confirmed.

¹⁶ [Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 4](#) (2015) Oxfordshire County Council

¹⁷ [Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Stage 2](#) (Nov 2017)

ASPIRATIONS

32. When considering the future of Oxfordshire over such a long timeframe it is important to first make some important choices in terms of the aspirations of the plan based on an understanding of where we are today and what is proposed in current and emerging Local Plans. At this stage of the process in producing the Oxfordshire Plan we are keen to explore those aspirations to ensure that the underlying assumptions for the policies are sound and reflect the needs and desires of the communities of the people of the county.
33. Each of these aspirations would offer real benefits to future generations if embraced in the plan. Some of them however if taken to the extreme, or taken in isolation, would also likely result in real issues or have knock-on impacts for other elements of the plan.
34. These are not simple either /or choices. They interlink and in some cases, are interdependent on each other. As with all complex planning issues there are choices to be made and balances that need to be struck. It is likely that different degrees of these aspirations, in combination, will be required and difficult decisions need to be made between them.
35. We are keen to explore these issues with you so that together we can decide where the appropriate balances may lie. The discussion on aspirations will lead to some objectives for the plan; below draft objectives are suggested and we welcome views on those.

Aspiration 1: Support economic growth

36. Oxfordshire's economy is vibrant and dynamic, even through difficult economic times, local businesses have continued to emerge and grow and our employment rates are good. We have strengths in a range of sciences and research and development sectors which provide large numbers of high value jobs. The government has recognised these strengths and sees Oxfordshire as a key contributor to their industrial strategy for the future. The Local Industrial Strategy¹⁸ is a response to this and establishes a plan for building on our current strengths and taking opportunities that are presenting themselves to Oxfordshire businesses.
37. It is clearly desirable that future generations of Oxfordshire residents will be able to access high value, quality jobs in the future. Decisions taken in the Oxfordshire Plan will have an important impact on the opportunities for economic growth and investor confidence in the county. Maximising the creation of wealth in the county will help address infrastructure challenges and tackle inequalities. The Oxfordshire Plan needs to recognise the strengths and ambitions of the government and of local businesses and will have a role in helping to achieve some of those.
38. The implication of this aspiration is that the Oxfordshire Plan makes provision for growth in order to help support the local economy and maintain Oxfordshire's role in the national economy. Even without the Oxfordshire Plan, additional economic capacity will need to be provided in the period to 2050 as national policy states that plans need to "set out a clear

¹⁸ [Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy](#), OxLEP

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economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies”¹⁹.

39. The vitality of town centres have been negatively affected by the development in the 1990s-2000s of out-of-town shopping centres with free parking, the diverse range of goods available at supermarkets and online retailing. Some of our market towns have seen new town centre shopping developments come forward in the last 10 years and the Oxfordshire Plan should build on this to continue to bring activity and spend back to town centres to support local businesses and foster vibrant communities.
40. As with housing numbers, it is for Oxfordshire to determine (in the light of the evidence available) the appropriate level of economic growth over the plan period.

Draft Objective 1 – To establish the right conditions to sustain and strengthen the role of Oxfordshire in the UK economy by building on our key strengths and assets

Draft Objective 2 – To create a prosperous, successful and enterprising economy with benefits felt by all

Aspiration 2: Improve housing availability and affordability

41. Oxfordshire has very real issues of housing availability and affordability with local people who grew up in the county finding it increasingly difficult to establish themselves in their local area. Key service providers (such as the NHS and schools) and a wide range of employers report difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff due to living costs, and affordability issues mean that for some parts the community both home ownership and renting has become out of reach.
42. A clear aspiration for the Oxfordshire Plan is to try and address these issues, to try and ensure that a wide range of housing options are available and accessible to those who want to live and work here; whether that be due to local family ties, because they are employed in key roles in the county or because they recognise what a special place Oxfordshire is.
43. The implication of this aspiration is that the Plan makes provision for the delivery of additional housing beyond the 100,000 provided in current and emerging Local Plans. Even without the Oxfordshire Plan, additional housing will need to be provided in the period up to 2050 and national policy is that plans need to make provision for the housing needs of their area.²⁰

Draft Objective 3 – To meet the county’s identified housing needs, particularly affordable housing and support our selected economic aspirations

Draft Objective 4 – To ensure that a range of housing options are available that will cater for a variety of needs and are built for adaptability, energy efficiency and to a high quality

¹⁹ Paragraph 81, [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2018) MHCLG

²⁰ Signpost to supporting evidence on housing needs

Aspiration 3: Strong and healthy communities

44. Oxfordshire is a very diverse county with areas of deprivation in amongst areas where residents have a higher quality of life. There are many aspects that effect inequalities including skills, employment, security of housing and health. These factors link and combine to result in people facing different life opportunities. Disparities are also emerging between the generations (in particular linked to housing) and to some extent between urban and rural communities (in particular linked to digital and public transport connectivity).
45. There is a clear benefit to ensure that all residents of Oxfordshire have a good quality of life and that they are able to access jobs and secure housing. This will enable everyone to fully play part and make their contribution in making the county a sustainable community with the services it needs. The Plan could provide an opportunity to ensure a long-term and co-ordinated approach to healthy place-making across Oxfordshire. Lessons can be taken from the good practice of the Healthy New Towns projects in Barton and Bicester.
46. The implications of this aspiration for the Oxfordshire Plan are less direct than several of the others but it would affect the way in which a range of policies are framed. For example, it could mean that greater emphasis is placed on providing a range of different housing options to suit different parts of the community rather than on total numbers themselves. It could mean that economic policies are framed to try and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are shared widely throughout the community rather than focused on particular sectors. It could mean including policies that seek to address inequality of access to local services or public transport. More broadly it could mean making sure that choices taken in the plan are based on considerations of health and wellbeing for example.

Draft Objective 5 – To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities

Draft Objective 6 – to create sustainable communities by providing good access to employment, housing, open space, transport, education, services and facilities to meet identified needs

Aspiration 4: Protect environmental quality

47. Oxfordshire has an attractive and diverse landscape with high quality built and natural assets. The heritage of places such as Oxford city centre and Blenheim Palace and the character of historic market towns and villages are real assets to the county. The county has substantial areas of internationally and nationally valued habitats and landscapes set within a mosaic of other areas of important wildlife habitat, high quality landscape, productive agricultural land, significant rivers and wetlands. Oxfordshire's farmed, rural and settled landscapes are valued for being accessible through the extensive public rights of way network.
48. These aspects are in large part what makes Oxfordshire so special and make it a desirable place to live and work. It is a key aspect of the tourism economy in the county, attracting visitors and supporting jobs. It is likely that the quality of the environment in Oxfordshire sets it apart from

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other “competitor” economies in the UK and further afield. This plays a large part in attracting investment and employees to help grow local businesses.

49. There is a long-term responsibility on us to ensure that these environmental assets are maintained and enhanced for the benefit of future generations of Oxfordshire residents. There is also a clear short to medium term benefit in terms of preserving our quality of life and the county’s distinctive character.
50. The implication of this aspiration is that consideration (based on a clear understanding) of the environmental assets of the county should be fundamental to the choices made in the plan. Choices such as the locations of new developments should be led and guided by information on the value and quality of the environment. This may mean that development options that provide opportunities for improvement to and enhancement of the natural and built environment (and access for them to be enjoyed where appropriate) would be favoured. Future development will have to be designed to anticipate and mitigate climate change.

Draft Objective 7 – To maintain and enhance the historic built and natural environment of the county through strategic investment and high quality design and to capitalise on the benefits these assets contribute to quality of life and economic success

Draft Objective 8 – To protect and enhance the County’s distinctive landscape character, recreational and biodiversity value by considering the benefits these assets bring when selecting areas for growth, by optimising densities, by improving connectivity between environmental assets and securing a net gain for biodiversity.

Aspiration 5: Improve connectivity and movement

51. Much of Oxfordshire benefits from good connections to other parts of the county, into neighbouring areas and to important centres for employment. Other parts of the county are much less well connected both physically and virtually (i.e. broadband facilities). There are also pressures on the current networks that will need to be considered when planning for the next round of growth. Investment in new networks and connections is often very expensive and much of that is funded by the development that it unlocks; in essence this means that providing significant new pieces of infrastructure is only usually realistic where new development is delivered.
52. As the Oxfordshire Plan will look towards 2050, it is important that we don’t simply assess proposals against an understanding of current lifestyles, technologies or practice. Whilst we will need to make sure that choices are evidenced and deliverable, we will need to provide some flexibility for adaptations to be made as technological advances occur and habits change. For example, in the earlier part of the plan it is reasonable to assume that a piece of highway infrastructure will serve bus and private car travel; in the later part of the plan it is likely that technologies will have changed offering different mass and personal travel choices and that lifestyles will also have adapted making a rush-hour commute, for example, a thing of the past. This will mean the same piece of highways infrastructure will need to adapt its function and

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opportunities are likely to arise out of that. Digital infrastructure is already vital to the way businesses and homes operate and this is likely to intensify in the future. It is possible that digital infrastructure will become as or more important than highways infrastructure in the future.

53. The implication of this aspiration is that choices such as the location of new development should be informed by the ability for them to connect into existing networks or be planned at a scale that would support new effective connections or networks. For example, this might mean that development that can either connect into existing transport networks, or which is of a scale that can support its own new public transport connections should be favoured over those which are poorly located or of a scale that wouldn't support the required investment. The plan will need to factor in changing technologies and lifestyles and where possible make provision for more digital connectivity.

Draft Objective 9 – To reduce the need to travel and provide better travel choices, ensuring that walking and cycling are convenient and attractive, and that public transport is preferred by residents to private car ownership and use

Draft Objective 10 – To promote development in the most sustainable locations and co-locating homes and jobs; then connecting those less sustainable locations through improved public transport and digital networks

Discussion point 2 – Do you feel that we've identified the right aspirations for Oxfordshire? Where do you think the balance should lie in prioritising these aspirations?

Discussion point 3 – Do you feel the draft objectives are appropriate for the plan? Are there any changes or other objectives that you would like to see? Should they be bolder? Or more specific?

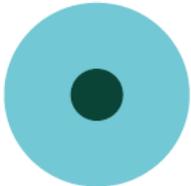
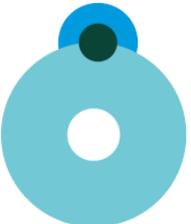
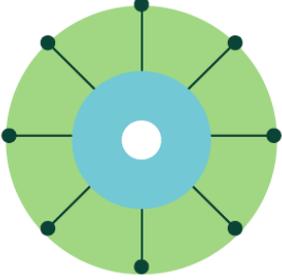
POTENTIAL SPATIAL SCENARIOS

54. The Oxfordshire Plan will identify broad locations for housing and economic growth but it is unlikely²¹ to identify or allocate specific sites. This will follow through separate plans produced at the local level. It will be a challenge to settle on the best locations for growth. Decisions around where housing will be located for example will be difficult and are likely to be emotive; specific local concerns will need to be considered alongside the strategic need for homes and employment opportunities.
55. The following section presents a range of options that may be available in Oxfordshire for accommodating new development. The broad scenarios that follow are, at this stage, deliberately conceptual, and are presented here to offer an opportunity to explore their merits and drawbacks. At later stages of Plan production, these will be explored in more depth, in particular, how they might apply within Oxfordshire's geography and context.

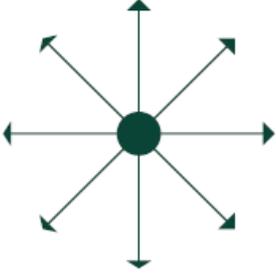
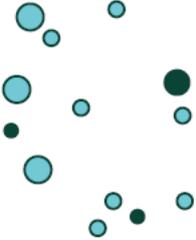
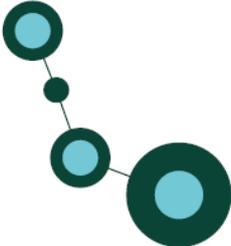
²¹ Signpost to JSSP Process Background Paper

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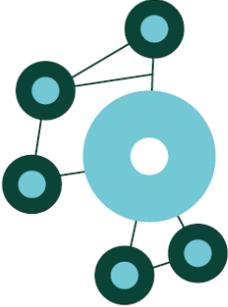
56. The spatial form of development that emerges in the Plan is likely to follow a combination of the broad scenarios outlined here. These overarching scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive and the preferred scenario is likely to involve a combination of these options:

<p>Intensification of city, town and district centres</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonly encouraged in Local Plans in line with the NPPF but unlikely to be enough to meet needs • Focus on housing and economy may conflict with other important functions of these centres • Townscape character may be affected • There are usually good existing transport links, although they may already be at capacity
<p>Intensification of development within existing suburbs</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land assembly is challenging with multiple landowners • Highly disruptive for existing residents • Focuses development close to, and supports, existing services and connections
<p>Intensification around the edges of larger settlements and strategic extensions</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can link into existing public transport networks • Focuses development close to, and supports, existing services and connections • These locations may be in the Green Belt and development may affect the purposes of the Green Belt
<p>Spoke and hub (Continue to focus on Oxford and key corridors in to Oxford)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concentrates transport along routes that are already at high capacity • May offer opportunities for funding to enhance strategic corridors • This would not help 'spread the load' of new development, but would mean improving existing infrastructure, which might be efficient, but much will depend on the potential of existing infrastructure to be improved to take new development

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<p>New settlement/s</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on location, it may or may not be close to existing high quality transport corridors • Would need to be of a sufficient scale to support provision of sufficient new infrastructure. • May have a negative environmental impacts and but could be designed to deliver environmental gains • Designing a settlement from scratch provides opportunities for urban design principles to be followed throughout, such as Garden Town principles • A new settlement would take a long time to be delivered
<p>Dispersal (This would involve spreading new development evenly across the county, including in smaller settlements)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small sites are unlikely to generate infrastructure needs alone, so are unlikely to significantly contribute to improvements to infrastructure • The character of a smaller settlements might be adversely affected by new development • Expanding some smaller settlements can support local shops, pubs and bus services • Smaller sites may improve deliverability rates due to competing developers • Dispersal is unlikely to meet the employment land needs of the county - larger businesses often need large sites and there are advantages to clustering
<p>'String' settlement / settlement cluster (Development focused on a number of linked settlements. It could involve new and/or existing/expanded settlements)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not be close to existing high quality transport corridors • Relies on there being suitable broad locations available for this type of development • This may involve promoting development at some existing, currently small, settlements, which may significantly change their character • A number of smaller settlements could collectively, be of sufficient scale to be served by shared infrastructure

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<p>'Wheel' settlement cluster</p> <p>(Focus on Oxford and the existing larger towns and the key corridors in to Oxford and between the towns)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could be a variation on the spoke and hub approach but with the added benefits of stronger links between the towns • Could take some of the pressure off the corridors into Oxford
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Discussion Point 4: Do you agree with the commentary relating to the spatial scenarios illustrated, or do you think there are important considerations we have missed? Do you consider there are any other potential spatial scenarios we should consider? Are there any spatial scenarios you think we should avoid (please provide reasons if you can)?

57. This Plan aims to make the process understandable and transparent to all potential interested parties. It will explore all reasonable options for locating new development, exploring to what degree the options meet the objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan so that whatever decisions are taken, they are clearly justified. How locations perform in sustainability terms and potential capacities will be assessed at the next stage of the plan-making process. The views of communities and stakeholders arising from this consultation will also be taken into consideration when refining options.

INFRASTRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

58. It is vital that when planning for a sustainable future, full account is taken of the infrastructure needs associated with new development and infrastructure required to improve existing networks to accommodate growth.

59. The successful delivery of the housing and economic growth within the Oxfordshire Plan will require a strategic approach with infrastructure delivery, particularly transport and environmental planning. Many towns and roads in Oxfordshire struggle during peak times with average annual traffic flows increasing year on year. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy²² (OXIS) was been prepared on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board to provide a view of emerging development and infrastructure requirements to support growth from 2016 to 2031 and beyond. This work will be reviewed alongside the production of the Plan.

60. Improving connectivity, public transport networks, high quality walking and cycling access to transport hubs and reducing congestion are critical to delivering a highly functioning transport network in Oxfordshire which will in turn support economic growth by improving the movement of people and commercial goods.

²² [Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Stage 2](#) (Nov 2017) AECOM

Key regional projects

61. During the period of the plan there are several large-scale infrastructure projects that are likely to come forward including the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, East-West rail and the projects emerging from Thames Water's strategy for improving water supply, particularly the South East Strategic Reservoir Option for Oxfordshire.
62. Decisions on each of these will have an impact upon how and in what way Oxfordshire should grow. The big challenge for the Oxfordshire Plan is the different timescales of these projects and how the Plan should respond to them or how the Plan can influence them. We are working with decision makers to identify the ways in which projects can relate and interlink with the Oxfordshire Plan.

Transport connectivity

63. Planned transport infrastructure in Oxfordshire (for the earlier part of the Oxfordshire Plan) is set out in the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan and reflected in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy. This facilitates movements of different modes of transport around the county's road and rail network and is aimed at increasing the capacity of the network and mitigating the impact of vehicular traffic on the local environment. These planned interventions will contribute to addressing existing issues of congestion and poor air quality and mitigate the impact of 100,000 new homes already planned for in existing and emerging Local Plans.
64. However, there is still a funding gap and deliverability issues for many strategic projects and so their delivery is not guaranteed. A bold, forward thinking Oxfordshire Plan that sets a clear vision for growth is more likely to release opportunities for Government funding and will help direct local authority funding and Community Infrastructure Levy income to the projects that are priorities for supporting growth. The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal also states that the Oxfordshire authorities will explore the potential for a countywide Strategic Infrastructure Tariff, to increase the flexibility of the developer contribution system, and encourage cross boundary planning to support the delivery of strategic infrastructure.
65. The Plan should recognise that technology will differ dramatically later in the plan period than it does now and this is likely to have a significant bearing on lifestyle choices and opportunities to travel in different ways. Electric vehicle use is already expanding and is likely to be common place by the 2030's. Innovations are already taking place in the development of autonomous vehicles which are likely to become a feature on the highway network in the coming years.
66. However, the Plan and the decisions on supporting infrastructure also needs to get the basics right as well as planning for future technologies. Public transport (in whatever form might be available in the future) must be able to function efficiently and reliably with priority at junctions and on shared road spaces and utilising smart technology. The design of developments should encourage the use of public transport and provide connections to encourage people to walk and cycle to jobs, services and transport hubs and improve connectivity to the county's accessible greenspaces.

Digital connectivity

67. Digital connectivity of people, things and places through broadband and mobile telecommunications has increased and improved dramatically in recent years. The ability for people to access services and perform tasks from anywhere at any time via connected devices has meant a dramatic change in human behaviour. Further growth in these technologies will require improved capacity.
68. With planned rollout of fibre networks to rural areas around Oxfordshire, communities will be better connected than ever before. By 2050, digital connectivity improvements in tandem with other technological advances are likely to have transformational effects on lifestyles, employment, access to services and the way in which people interact with one another.
69. The Oxfordshire Plan should be mindful of such transformational technology as it is likely to affect the way in which people physically move around the county, with potential implications for land use patterns and the design of homes and offices in both urban and rural areas.

Energy

70. With technological advancements in transport and digital connectivity, more houses, businesses and an increasing population, the supply and demand of energy across the county is a key issue to be addressed. In addition to this, tighter environmental regulations mean that the energy generated must be greener to reduce carbon emissions.
71. The existing grid for distributing energy around the county is constrained and the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy is considering ways in which the network can be strengthened. In the future decentralised and community energy provision. The Oxfordshire Plan must therefore facilitate a shift towards lower energy demand and low carbon forms of energy development.
72. Much of the development in Oxfordshire to 2050 will be comprised of residential development so opportunities must be sought to improve the energy efficiency of homes and reduce energy demands of households. It will be important for new developments to maximise energy efficiency whilst integrating renewable and smart energy technologies in order to minimise energy demand.

Social infrastructure

73. Planning for school places and GP services are critical elements of delivering successful places. Population growth if not planned carefully, can add pressure on services for new and existing residents. There is a strong level of provision of school places throughout Oxfordshire with existing schools being extended and new schools being planned to support growth. Cherwell in particular has the largest available capacity of the five local authorities. The highest concentrations of primary schools are within Oxford, and the main towns including Didcot, Banbury and Bicester. In certain settlements (e.g. Witney, Bicester, and Oxford City) there are clusters of schools which either have a current deficit of provision, or have fewer than 10 places available and new schools are being planned.

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74. There are some areas of the County which geographically show a lack of secondary education providers (e.g. North West Oxfordshire), however given wider catchments for secondary schools, and that secondary age pupils can be expected to travel further to access schools; there is good access to secondary education provision across the County. Notably, there is very little evidence of deficiency in provision, with only one area (Oxford City) which has a school with a deficit in secondary places, and three others (one in South Oxfordshire and two in Cherwell) which have less than ten places available.
75. The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group oversees GP and other primary and acute healthcare. There is a desire to deliver primary care services 'at scale' rather than through a number of small practice sites. This offers more opportunities to deliver more services, although it should be noted that there will be strategic sites where a smaller GP practice will be essential. It will also be necessary for the traditional GP to change to adapt to the demands of modern healthcare.
76. One of the biggest impacts on social care services is likely to be from an ageing population. Oxfordshire's Joint Health & Wellbeing Board have an aspiration to shift the focus of care from nursing homes to the assisted living (extra care) approach. There are already 13 schemes opened or under construction between 2011 and 2016 delivering an additional 656 extra care flats and a further 18 schemes proposed between 2016 and 2020 at a feasibility stage with the potential to deliver a further 1,238 extra care flats. This Board have an aspiration to deliver a considerable number of additional extra care housing places to meet the needs of Oxfordshire residents and to help to shift the focus of care from nursing homes to the assisted living approach.

Discussion point 5 – Do you agree with the commentary relating to the main infrastructure issues? Are there any changes or other issues that you would like to see referred to?

Next steps and how to comment

We are really keen to hear your views on this consultation document. Comments can be made from X to Y. Your views are important as they will help shape the next stage of the plan.

You can make comments in a number of different ways, the easiest way is likely to be online. On our project website www.oxfordshireplan.org there is a copy of this document, some supporting information and a page for you to leave your comments. Much more information on the Oxfordshire Plan can be found on our website and you can register your interest to be kept informed of the progress on the project.

Alternatively if you would prefer to send us your written comments you can download a comment form from the website or pick up a hard copy from any of the Council Offices or selected libraries as listed below and returned to the following address:

All comments/completed response forms should be received by 5pm on X.

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All the comments received before the consultation closes will be analysed and a summary report produced and published on our website. The responses will be carefully considered and used to help prepare the next stage of the Oxfordshire Plan. Further details of the next steps will be published on our website.

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