

Oxford City Council

Local Development Scheme
2021 - 2026

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Introduction

- 1.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the requirement for councils to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS specifies which local development documents are to be development plan documents and sets out the work programme for the preparation of documents to be included in the Development Plan. This document supersedes the Oxford 2020-2025 LDS.

What is the Local Development Scheme?

- 1.2. This LDS is a five year project plan for preparing documents and provides the starting point for the local community, businesses, developers and other interested parties to find out what the City Council's current planning policies are for the area. It includes 'milestones' to inform the public about opportunities to get involved with the plan making process and to let them know the likely dates for involvement. The LDS is published on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/lds.

Oxford's Development Plan

- 2.1. Oxford's Development Plan contains a range of documents to guide development within Oxford. Applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Council-produced documents within the statutory Development Plan are subject to extensive community and stakeholder involvement, and an independent examination by an Inspector to ensure that the necessary legal requirements for the preparation of the document have been met and the document is 'sound'. All these documents are subject to the European Strategic Environment Assessment Directive and will incorporate a sustainability appraisal to ensure that they accord with the principles of sustainable development. They must be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.2. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide further details and guidance to supplement policies. SPDs are adopted by the City Council following public consultation, and are not part of the statutory Development Plan.

Documents in Oxford's Development Plan

- 2.3. Currently, the statutory Development Plan consists of:
 - Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 (June 2020)
 - Barton Area Action Plan (December 2012)
 - Northern Gateway Area Action Plan (July 2015)
 - Headington Neighbourhood Plan (July 2017)
 - Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan (April 2019)

Oxford Local Plan 2036

- 2.4. The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 was adopted in 2020 and superseded the following documents:
- Saved policies of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (November 2006)
 - Oxford Core Strategy (March 2011)
 - Sites and Housing Plan (February 2013)
- 2.5. The Adopted Policies Map (2020) (previously referred to as the Policies Map 2015) illustrates graphically the policies and proposals of the recently adopted Local Plan. The Policies Map (2020) has been revised and updated to reflect the new policies that have been adopted.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.6. The Localism Act introduced new rights and powers to enable communities to get directly involved in planning for their areas. Neighbourhood planning allows communities to come together through a parish council or formal neighbourhood forum and produce a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhoods can decide what they want to cover in their neighbourhood plan. They may allocate land for development, or influence the type and design of development that comes forward. Neighbourhood plans must however be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies already adopted by the City Council. They should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan and/or undermine its strategic policies. They are also subject to an independent examination and need to be approved by a majority vote in a local referendum.
- 2.7. Once plans are adopted they will become part of the Development Plan. To date, Oxford City Council has formally designated four neighbourhood areas where plans are being led by neighbourhood forums. Two Neighbourhood Plans, Headington and Summertown and St Margaret's are made.

Other Documents

- 2.8. In addition to the Oxford Development Plan there are several other important planning documents:
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (October 2013)
 - Oxpens Masterplan SPD (November 2013)
 - West End Design Code (2008)
 - Oxford Station SPD (November 2017)
 - Jericho Canalside SPD (December 2013)
 - Diamond Place SPD (July 2015)
 - Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (July 2015)

Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (SCI)

- 2.9. The Statement of Community Involvement in Planning sets out how the Council will involve the community in the planning process, including Local Plans and Development Management. It sets out the activities that the Council will undertake to reach stakeholders and the public during the various stages of preparation of Local Plan documents. The most recent SCI was adopted at City Executive Board on 9th July 2015. It can be viewed at www.oxford.gov.uk/sci.

An Addendum to the SCI was approved by Cabinet on 8th June 2020. This was a focused update on how the Council will amend its approach during the restrictions imposed by Government during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is available on the City Council's website at:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20007/communities/816/community_involvement_in_planning

2.10. The consultation draft of the updated SCI was agreed at Cabinet on 20th January 2021. Following consultation, the SCI will be revised and brought to Cabinet for adoption in June 2021.

Annual Monitoring Report

2.11. Each year the City Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report, which is approved at the City Cabinet in the autumn. The Annual Monitoring Report has the following main functions:

- to measure progress made in respect of the planning documents being prepared;
- to review the effectiveness of the adopted planning policies;
- to monitor the extent to which policies and targets in adopted documents are being achieved against a range of indicators.

2.12. All of the Annual Monitoring Reports produced by the City Council can be viewed on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/amr.

Work Programme for 2021-2026

3.1. During the period covered by this LDS, the City Council will commence / continue work on the following documents:

Development plan documents

- Oxford Local Plan 2021-2040
- Oxfordshire Plan 2050
- Neighbourhood Plans

Other documents

- West End SPD
- Oxford Station SPD
- Review of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning
- Annual Monitoring Report

Development Plan documents

Oxfordshire Plan 2050

3.2. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will set out strategic policies to deal with key issues for Oxfordshire with a cross-boundary approach. The plan period for the Oxfordshire Plan is 2020 to 2050.

3.3. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 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; and
- West Oxfordshire District Council.

3.4. The Oxfordshire Plan will be a formal Development Plan Document, prepared under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) which enables two or more local planning authorities to agree a joint Plan. It will form part of the development plan for each of the authorities in Oxfordshire and will be used in the formulation of more detailed plans locally and in determining planning applications where appropriate.

3.5. The scope of the Oxfordshire Plan was developed in the Scoping Document¹ which was agreed by the partner authorities in October 2018 and endorsed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board. This set out that the Oxfordshire Plan will build on the foundations set by the suite of current and emerging Local Plans and look at the strategic planning issues for the period up to 2050. It will take into account the existing commitments made by this suite of Local Plans through their site allocations as a baseline for the earliest part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 plan period. The agreed Statement of Common Ground identified the following key matters for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to set out:

¹ Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan Scoping Document (Oct 2018)
Planning for Oxford's future

- An overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development in Oxfordshire to 2050
 - Identify the number of new market and affordable homes and level of economic growth needed across Oxfordshire
 - Identify an appropriate spatial strategy and strategic locations for new development based upon an understanding and appreciation of both the environmental quality and natural capital of Oxfordshire
 - Outline the strategic transport and other infrastructure that needs to be provided to support sustainable growth
- 3.6. The Oxfordshire Plan will identify broad locations for housing and economic growth but will not allocate sites except at the request of the relevant local planning authority. This will follow through separate plans produced at the local level.
- 3.7. A Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 was undertaken in June 2019. Work on the Plan will be undertaken during the LDS period, with the intention of adopting the Plan in May/June 2023. The latest timetable was presented to the Oxfordshire Growth Board in November 2020 for endorsement, replacing the timetable from September 2019 and the revision that was an initial response to the impacts of the Covid-29 pandemic in June 2020.

Local Plan 2020-2040

- 3.8. The Local Plan 2016-2036 was only recently adopted (8th June 2020) and contains policies based on recent evidence and is compliant with current guidance. However, government guidance requires that all Plans are reviewed every 5 years. That is to say that the Plan must have been reviewed by the date 5 years after adoption. Given that a Local Plan takes considerable time to produce, a review must be started a relatively short time after adoption of a Local Plan.
- 3.9. The Oxford Local Plan 2040 will replace the Oxford Local Plan 2036. The Barton and Northern Gateway AAPs will remain relevant to those sites if they are not yet fully built out, although some policies may be superseded. These documents, as well as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and any neighbourhood plans, will form the statutory Development Plan. Following the council meeting to approve the pre submission draft, that draft will be used as a material consideration for development management decisions on planning applications; its weight will be limited initially, but increases as it proceeds towards adoption.
- 3.10. There are several reasons for expediting the start of the review of the Local Plan. One of these is the need to co-ordinate plans across Oxfordshire. This will help to avoid the issue of trying to apportion housing need generated across the whole county and calculated for a particular period, between local plans that have differing base and end dates.

- 3.11. In addition, it will be important for the next Local Plan for Oxford to reflect the policies of the Oxfordshire Plan and put in place the detailed policies for Oxford that will implement that plan. Therefore it is important that the timeline for the next Local Plan follows the key stages of the Oxfordshire Plan.
- 3.12. The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 has a great deal of flexibility in order to deal with a twenty year period and many of the policies within it place Oxford in a strong position to effectively manage growth and change that will face the City over this period. The Inspectors' report in paragraph 39 says that: 'the examination hearings took place before the Covid-19 epidemic. Whilst the short-term effects are here for all to see, there is currently no evidence that the fundamental assumptions and requirements of the plan in respect of housing need, or indeed any other strategic matter, will be affected to the extent that its soundness will be undermined.'
- 3.13. Although the Oxford Local Plan 2036 will already help us carefully manage change and assist the city to "build back better" it will be important for the new Local Plan 2040 to actively look at the issues the pandemic will leave with us and to consider if any alterations of policies are required as a result. The effectiveness of policies are always monitored and this will be important in understanding the scope of the new Local Plan. We need to give enough time to understand how our new policies are working and better understand any challenges posed by Covid-19 before taking action. Through the process of producing another local plan the needs and opportunities that emerge can be understood properly considered collectively and ensure that the response to the crisis is not reactionary. It can also seek to balance carefully issues such as the route to zero carbon, inequalities and the quality of the built and natural environment as the existing Local Plan does and seek to build upon these comprehensively.
- 3.14. In order for the Oxford Local Plan 2040 to have 15 years to run from adoption, adoption will need to be in 2025 at the latest. Therefore, the plan will need to be submitted to the secretary of state in early 2024, based on the timescales from the Oxford Local Plan 2036 that was submitted in March 2019 and adopted in June 2020. Because of the uncertainty of the current time, significant stakeholder engagement and input will be needed in the early stages to try and clarify what the plan needs to address.
- 3.15. Early, non-statutory engagement will begin in 2021. The Regulation 18 consultation will be in the form of preferred options in summer 2022. Engagement on the pre-submission draft of the Local Plan will be then be in summer 2023, with the expectation to submit the plan for examination by the end of 2023. Once submitted for examination the timetable is not within the council's control. Based on the timescales for the examination of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 we have allowed 15 months from submission to adoption. This would mean adoption would be expected in March 2025.

3.16. This timetable will also allow the plan to take account of emerging evidence and policies from key stages of the Oxfordshire Plan with some room for slippage in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 if that arises. If the Oxford Local Plan is to take account of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 then certain milestones of the Oxfordshire Plan will need to be reached before the Oxford Local Plan can progress to the next key stage.

Neighbourhood Plans

3.17. The remaining neighbourhood areas, which are at various stages of plan production, are:

- Littlemore; and
- Wolvercote.

3.18. The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan was due to have its referendum in May 2020. However, the [government published guidance in April 2020](#) outlining changes that have been introduced to neighbourhood planning in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This referendum is now postponed until 6th May 2021 as regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020 postpone all neighbourhood planning referendums until then. The Government is committed to keeping these regulations under review, so they may be amended or revoked in response to changing circumstances.

3.19. In response to these delays, the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan can be given significant weight in decision-making, so far as the plan is material to the application. This is due to the fact that the council has issued a decision statement detailing its intention to send the neighbourhood plan to referendum. This was approved at Cabinet on 9 October 2019.

Other documents

West End SPD

3.20. Much of the West End is under- utilised and does not reflect Oxford's international reputation or live up to its potential. The role of the SPD is to provide some detailed advice and guidance to show how working with landowners, partners and key stakeholders, regeneration can be delivered. The west end is also identified as a key opportunity in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy that identifies the areas as an Innovation District.

3.21. There are currently several supporting documents that cover the west end area. These include:

- Oxpens Masterplan SPD (November 2013)
- West End Design Code (2008)
- Oxford Station SPD (November 2017)

3.22. There had also previously been a West End Area Action Plan but this has already expired and no longer forms part of the current development plan.

- 3.23. The new West End SPD will replace these documents and provide detailed guidance to support the over-arching policies in the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 in a single document.
- 3.24. Policy AOC1: West End and Osney Mead and Policy SP1: Sites in the West End set the strategic policy context for the West End Area, within the Area of Change. It therefore provides the opportunity for an SPD to provide some further detailed advice and guidance on these adopted development plan policies to manage change within this area. The bullet points in Policy AOC1: West End and Osney Mead help to provide the scope for the SPD. These set out the need for:
- High density urban living
 - Vibrant mix of uses
 - Maximising contribution to Oxfordshire's knowledge economy
 - Improved public realm
 - Better connections for all users, including across the rivers
 - Improved space for pedestrians and cyclists
 - Respect for the heritage of the area
 - Development of a well-designed transport interchange around the station
 - Reduce the amount of car parking
- 3.25. In addition of course there should be a recognition that this advice and guidance does need to fully take into account the over-arching policy framework set out in the adopted Local Plan, which seeks to promote a presumption in favour of sustainable development, sustainable travel and the importance of making the best use of resources to secure a good quality environment. There are also key issues around climate change, flooding and heritage matters that can be looked at in a locational specific way through this SPD.
- 3.26. The complex issues present in the West End means the SPD will have a key focus on creative and deliverable solutions to achieve a co-ordinated approach to development and comprehensive regeneration. It will seek to provide clarity on what is needed to support the development in this area. The intention is that this will include detailed information on infrastructure that is needed to facilitate and support the change. Masterplanning of key sites will be included in the SPD as part of providing locational specific guidance. Work on the masterplanning of Oxford Station has already commenced due to specific needs around that site. This will be reviewed and embedded as appropriate into the guidance in the West End SPD.
- 3.27. In accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning (SCI) two key consultations will be undertaken alongside ongoing engagement. The first will be to consult on the scope of the SPD. This is expected to take place in Spring 2021. This will include the reasons for producing the SPD and identifying its geographic scope and key deliverables. The second consultation will be on the draft SPD and this is expected in February/March 2022. More informal engagement will also happen throughout the preparation of the document.

3.28. Based on this timetable we would expect to adopt the West End SPD in June 2022. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining future planning applications.

Oxford Station SPD

3.29. The Oxford Railway Station Masterplan will set the framework for future development at the station. It will guide the location, nature, size and operating conditions of particular uses to meet the objectives of the Local Plan 2036 and the City Council and partners. Oxford Station redevelopment forms part of wider network of upgrades to remove the “bottleneck” at Oxford and enable passenger and freight services to run smoothly through Oxford Station.

3.30. As well as the wider network upgrades, the regeneration of Oxford Station will act as a catalyst for wider redevelopment and regeneration in the West End and city centre. Whilst the Masterplan will not have the weight of a Local Plan policy, it will be adopted by the City Council and be considered as a material consideration when determining planning applications. It will be developed as an SPD and will either be a standalone SPD, or more likely it will become absorbed into the West End SPD.

Review of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning (SCI)

3.31. The consultation draft of the updated SCI was agreed at Cabinet on 20th January 2021. Following consultation, the SCI will be revised and brought to Cabinet for adoption in June 2021.

Annual Monitoring Report

3.32. Each year the City Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report. This will be taken for Cabinet approval in November 2021 for publication in December 2021. The Annual Monitoring report published in December 2021 will be reporting on the monitoring year 2020/21.

Appendix 1: Gantt chart of the LDS work programme 2020-2025

	2021												2022												2023												2025	
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Jan	Mar
Oxfordshire Plan 2050						■	■	■	■					■	■	■					■					■	■		■	■								
Local Plan 2020-2040					■	■											■	■											■	■					■	■		■
West End SPD			■	■								■	■				■																					
Oxford Station SPD				■	■							■	■				■																					
Annual Monitoring Report							■				■								■				■							■				■				
Statement of Community Involvement for Planning		■	■			■																																

Start	
Publish	
Issues/Scoping Consultation	
Consultation on draft document	
Preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18)	
Proposed Submission Consultation (Reg 19)	
Submit	
Inspector's Report	
Adopt	

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