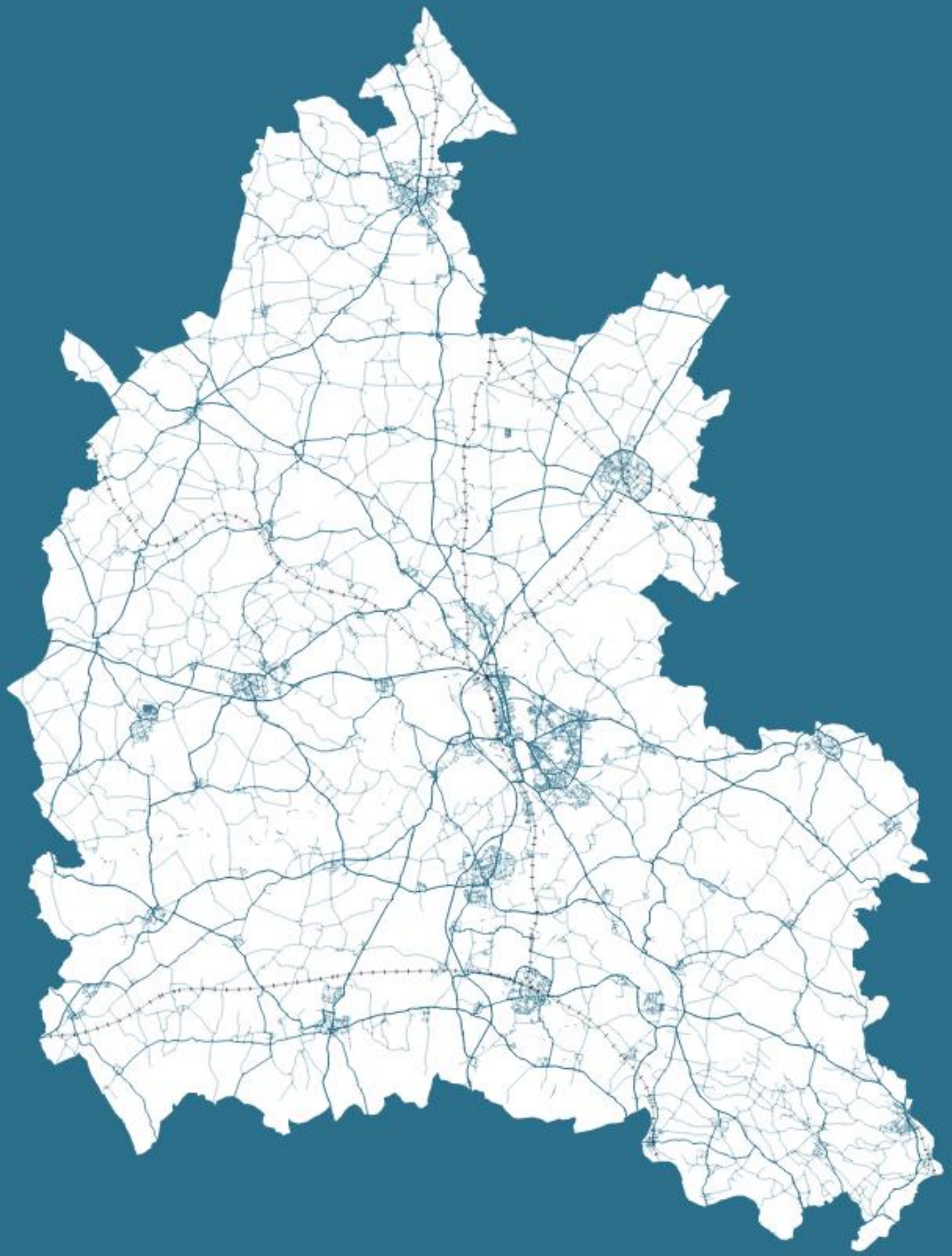
Metro——Dynamics

Future Oxfordshire Strategy

Phase 2B Report

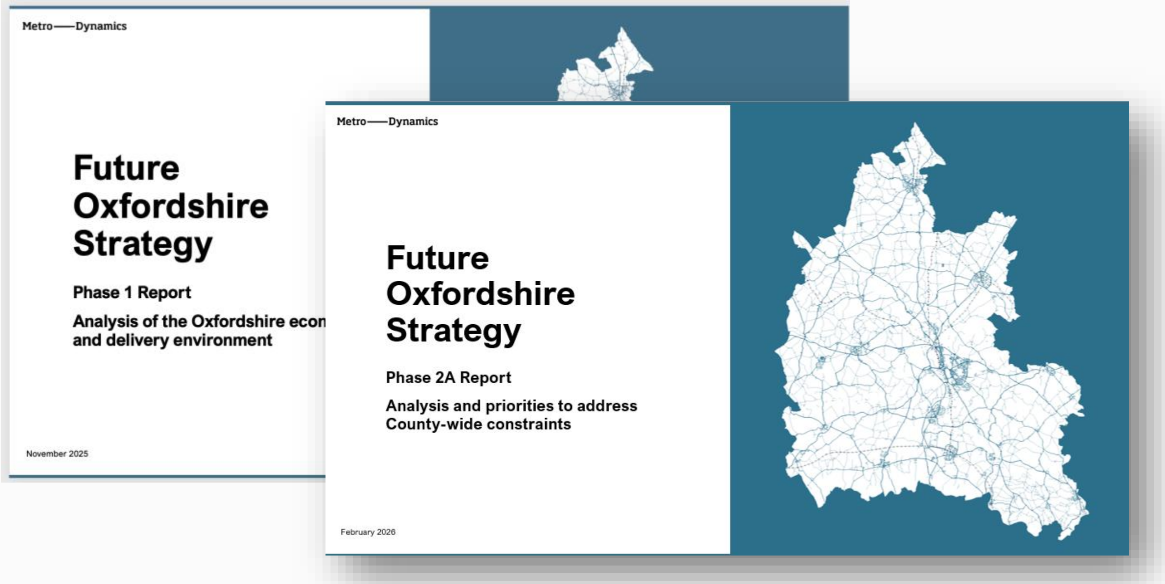
Spatial economic strategy and delivery framework



March 2026

Introduction to this report

This report is the final output of Phase 2B of the Future Oxfordshire Strategy project, which aimed to develop a spatial view of strategic economic priorities and set out a framework for how partners in the local government system and wider stakeholders can work together to deliver economic development to address these priorities.



It follows two other reports from this project. Phase 1, which assessed the structure, composition, performance and delivery environment of the Oxfordshire economy, to scope what is needed from a Future Oxfordshire Economic Strategy, and Phase 2A, which set out Oxfordshire-wide strategic economic priorities, against clear evidence of growth opportunities and constraints. Phase 2B builds from both reports, including translating county-wide priorities into key spatial economic areas.

Report 2A highlighted a number of constraints that are shared across all of Oxfordshire which require county-wide intervention

	Context	Selected County-wide Priorities
Sectors & Investment	• Growth and investment highly concentrated in a small number of high-value sectors and locations • SME base strong but unevenly supported • Connectivity barriers act as a further break on converting new and existing business investment	• Drive more value and impact from increased inward investor support • Strengthen productivity and growth in the wider SME base • Further integrate investment, cluster support and business growth support delivery
Skills & Labour Market	• Oxfordshire has a tight labour market, high qualification levels, and strong participation • Skills shortages persist across key sectors • Disadvantaged groups (youth, minorities, rural workers) face barriers to participation	• Improve access and provision for technical skills where there are known current and future shortages • Ensure continuity of skills programmes during LGR • Develop place-based labour market strategies
Housing	• Affordability is structurally high across the county • Spatial misalignment of new housing • Plan and delivery gap • Public resistance to housing growth	• Work to develop non statutory good growth plans • Support Oxford Growth Commission case for new powers and funding • Ensure that powers for future delivery vehicles e.g. development corporations are deployed effectively

Source: OxIS Baseline Report, State of Nature in Oxfordshire, IMD 2025, Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Metro Dynamics analysis of ICB Data, Metro Dynamics analysis of Gross Fixed Capital Formation

Why does Oxfordshire need a spatial approach?

The structure, composition and performance of Oxfordshire's economy and its future growth opportunities and constraints exist differently in different spatial areas of the county, with overlaps across the county boundaries.

Oxfordshire is an economic powerhouse that is spatially diverse and complex, with a range of sectors contributing to growth. The county has an opportunity to secure good growth outcomes, but precisely what this looks like varies place to place. There are varying demand and supply-side constraints on growth, and the levers to impact them are fragmented between Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), Enterprise Oxfordshire (EO) and District and Borough Councils, as well as other partners.

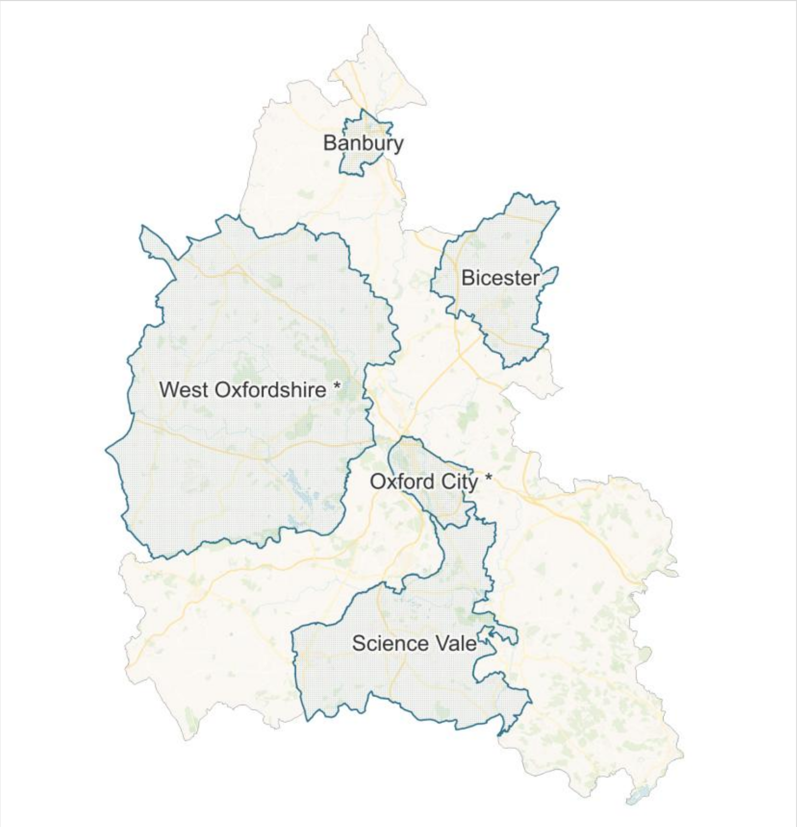
Local government reorganisation, potential devolution, and wider activity led by the Government's Oxford Growth Commission and across the OxCam Corridor, present opportunities for new and strengthened economic development, but risk complicating collective local action in the next 1-3 years. Local economic leadership in Oxfordshire need a joint framework to guide and focus economic development action, so that specific spatial opportunities and constraints that require intervention are addressed and inclusive benefits can start to be realised through this period of change.

This report sets out a spatial economic strategy and delivery framework for 4 spatial areas in Oxfordshire, which reflect the complexity and diversity of growth opportunities and constraints in the county. This does not aim to be a new longform strategic economic plan, but instead a product that:

- Shows where growth is likely to happen spatially and where there are sectoral opportunities. Not detailed site allocations, but a view of how sector strengths and business dynamics manifest in places.
- Translates analysis into insight into economic priorities, creating a logical link between evidence and choices for deploying collective economic development resources and interventions over time.
- Does not replace existing or future district level economic strategies and seeks to complement these through a more focused approach on practical interventions that can and should be delivered by OCC, EO, District and Borough Councils, and other partners.

The rest of this report sets out economic analysis of growth opportunities and constraints in 4 spatial areas, and collective economic and delivery priorities to respond to these. It has been developed in collaboration between OCC, EO, District Economic Officers and the Economic Partnership Board.

4 priority spatial areas for focused economic intervention



This report examines four spatial areas in Oxfordshire and sets out economic priorities and delivery interventions for each one

This comprises a spatial economic strategy and delivery framework to focus OCC, EO and District and Borough activity collectively over the next 1-3 years, supporting partners to navigate external change and to invest in economic development activity in a practical and focused way. The four spatial areas are:

1. **Banbury and Bicester, p8-19:** Cherwell's two principal towns with distinct economic roles - Banbury as a key employment and logistics centre, and Bicester as a high-growth town with a strong retail-led visitor economy and future mobility focus
2. **Oxford City, p20-31**: Oxford's wider functional economic area, focusing on the city and its connected labour markets, supply chains and knowledge-based growth.
3. **Science Vale, p31-44**: Southern Oxfordshire's science and innovation corridor, centred on Harwell, Milton Park and Didcot
4. **West Oxfordshire, p45-54** : A rural and market town economy, with a strong visitor and leisure offer and a major defence asset.

Note: for the non-LA boundaries, map shows best-fit MSOA definitions

Principles for developing a spatial economic strategy and delivery framework

This spatial economic strategy and delivery framework is intended to be a different kind of product to economic strategies that have been developed at the county and district level – one that is deliberately highly focused on a small number of priority interventions delivered by partners.

The following principles define the purpose of spatial economic priorities and what the delivery framework should and should not contain for each area:

1. The delivery framework can include collective and individual organisational interventions, from those to be delivered by Districts to those delivered by EO and OCC. In the case of the latter two organisations, this would be delivered by a county-wide vehicle but with interventions tailored directly to area-based priorities.

2. The priorities and framework must focus on specific, near-term objectives, defined by what is most useful to work on in the next 1-3 years to make a direct impact on the *specific* growth opportunities, drivers and related constraints in the area. For example, this could be through targeted inward investment and promotion, hyper local skills actions, focused business support for specific cohorts of businesses, practical action to accelerate planning and development.

3. Avoid focusing on broader strategic objectives that are important but not as directly impactful on growth sectors, projects and constraints. For example, interventions to improve air quality are important but are not likely to make a direct impact on growing life sciences in the county.

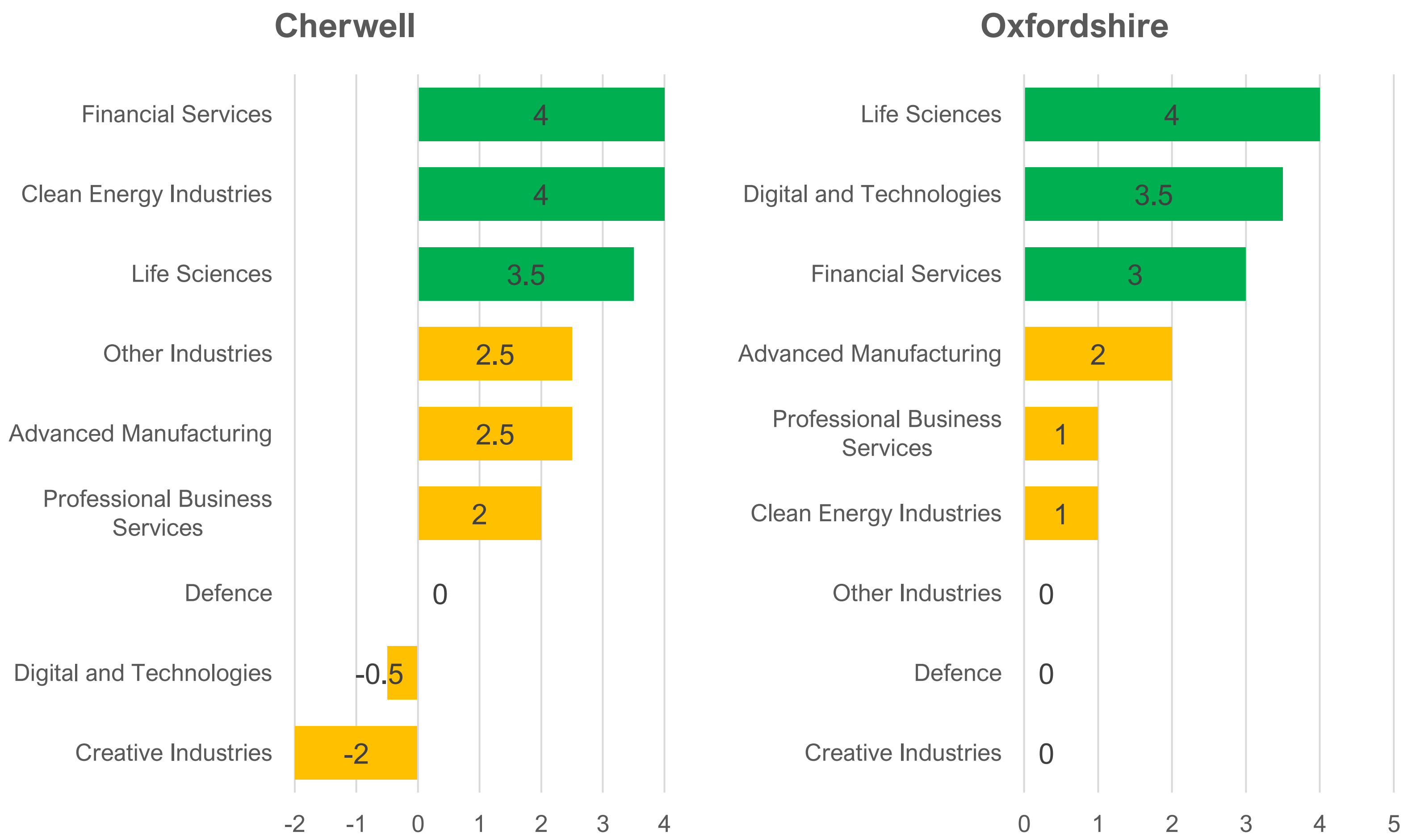
4. The framework should be clear where interventions are new, or are adaptations to existing approaches, where additional investment or a larger scale of activity is required.

5. The priorities and framework should assume an environment for collective leadership and action and specify mechanisms for enabling this. For example, establishing a new multi-partner delivery group to agree an action plan and collectively manage progress.

Phase 2b

Banbury and Bicester

Cherwell's sector growth profile is healthy, but less life sciences-led than the county as a whole



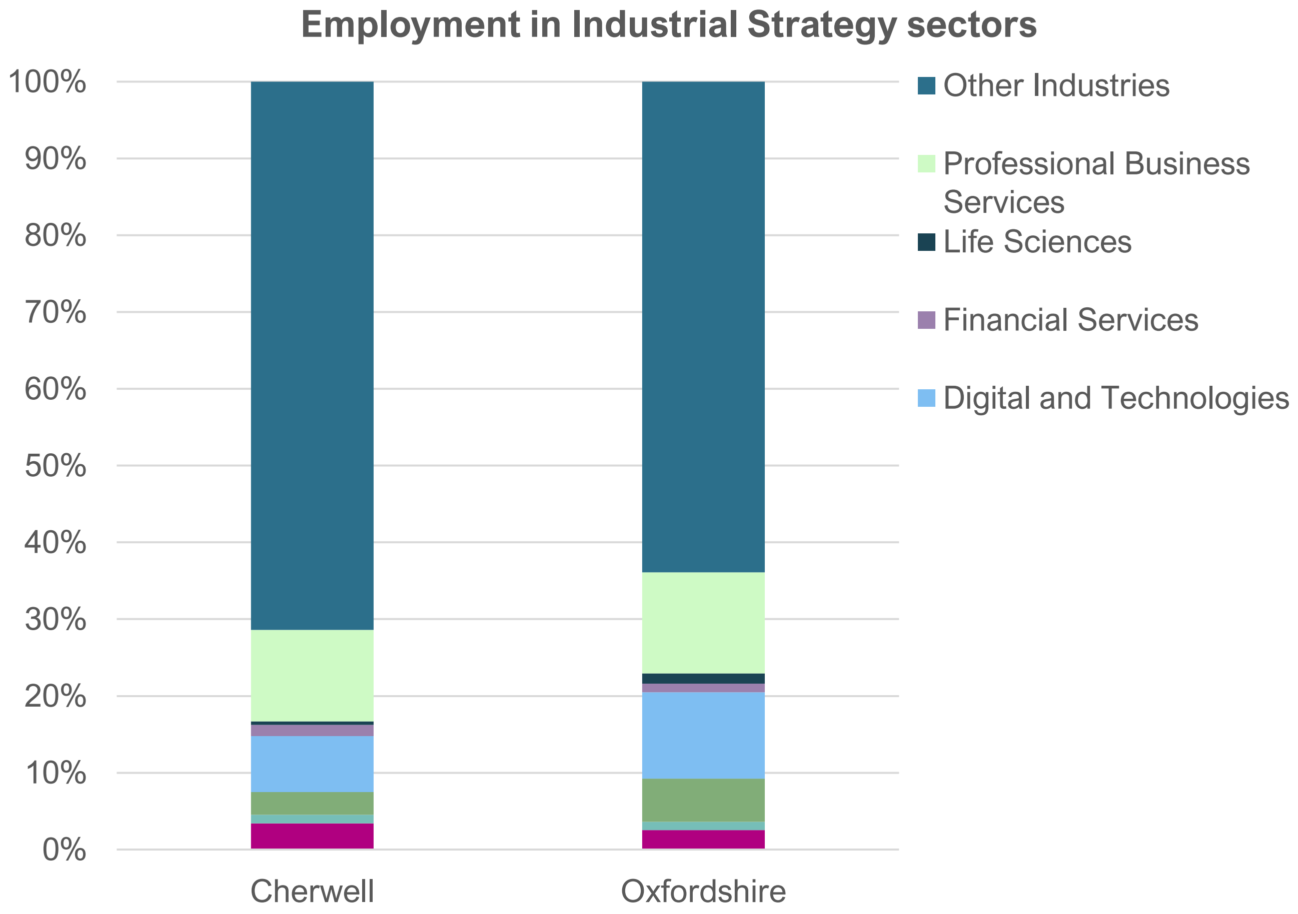
Cherwell is seeing positive growth across several priority sectors.

That said, its life sciences performance is more moderate than in the county – with a score of 3 indicating growth across multiple measures – in contrast to Vale, for example, which recorded a score of 7, reflecting growth across all indicators.

A notable feature of Cherwell's profile is growth in non-Industrial Strategy sectors, which are flat across the rest of the county, pointing to a more mixed growth pattern.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis

This Industrial Strategy growth is from a lower starting base in several sectors



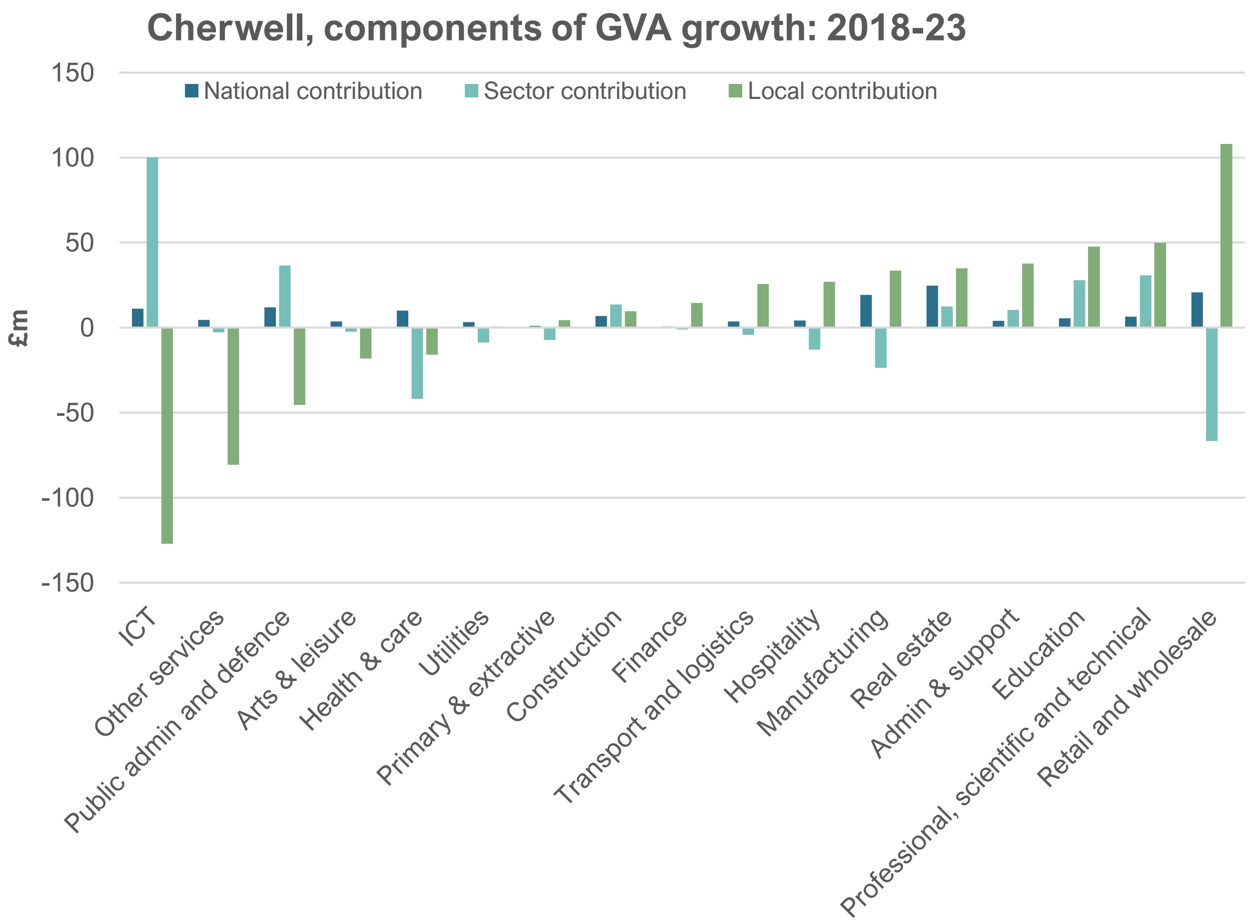
Cherwell has a much smaller existing base in life sciences and digital activities than Oxfordshire overall, so positive growth momentum should be understood in this context.

The district's profile reflects relative strengths in advanced manufacturing, focused primarily around Motorsports Valley, and a larger share of activity in non-Industrial Strategy sectors.

The emerging Clean Tech and Future Mobility Cluster – anchored by Bicester Motion – presents a significant opportunity to attract and land high-value firms within the district and close to Bicester.

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey

Cherwell's growth is driven more by local effects than by sector or national trends



Shift-share analysis breaks local economic growth into three elements: growth driven by the national economy, growth explained by national sector trends, and a local (or competitive) effect, which captures growth that cannot be explained by either and therefore reflects place-specific factors such as local specialisms, business performance, or competitive advantage.

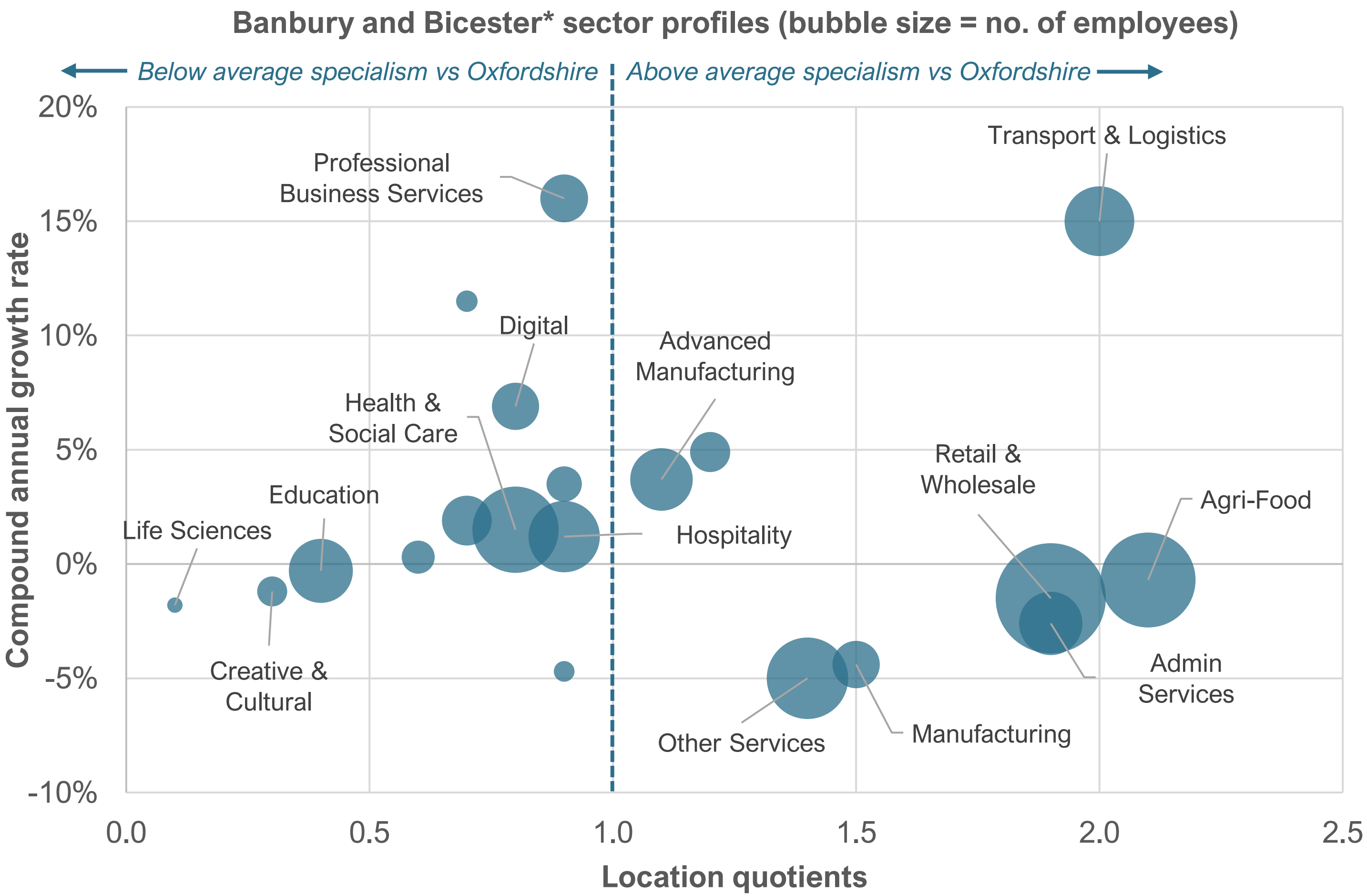
This analysis shows that Cherwell's recent GVA growth has been driven primarily by local competitive factors – accounting for around two-thirds of the growth above the national trend – in contrast to Oxford City and the overall county.

These local effects are concentrated largely in foundational activities, with retail and wholesale and manufacturing both outperforming despite weak national sector performance.

By contrast, information and communication shows negative local effects, acting as a drag on overall growth despite positive sector tailwinds, with a similar pattern evident in 'other services'.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis

At town level, this foundational element is more pronounced, with transport and logistics a clear standout



Transport and logistics combines a high level of specialisation relative to Oxfordshire with rapid recent employment growth, pointing to a strong and distinctive local advantage.

Professional business services is also growing quickly, but from a lower concentration than the county average.

Knowledge-intensive sectors are generally smaller in scale and play a more limited role in overall employment growth.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis

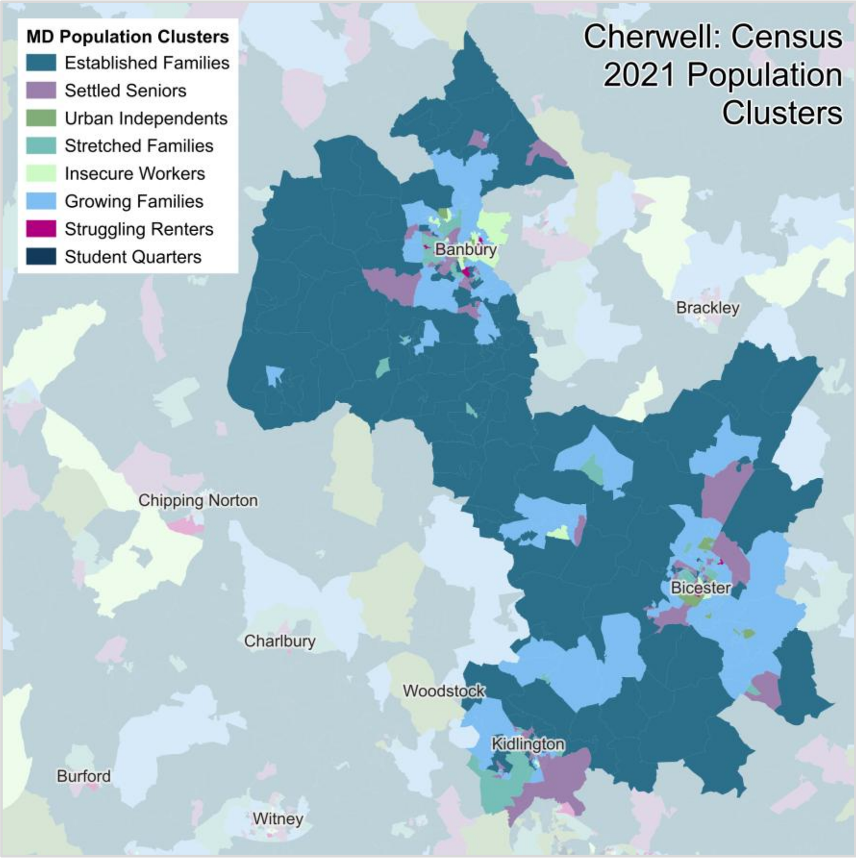
Population skill levels in Banbury and Bicester reflect this mix of sectors

The towns have a higher share of residents with no qualifications and lower attainment at Level 4 and above than the district and county, while mid-level qualifications are broadly similar.

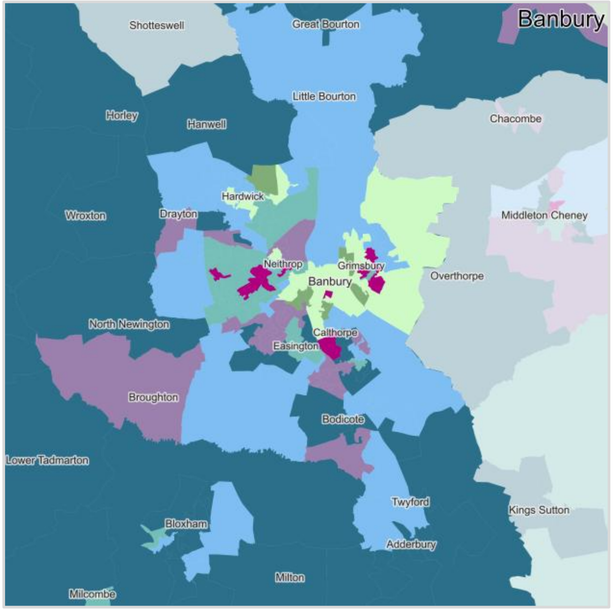
Cherwell as a whole sits between the towns and the wider county, with Oxfordshire distinguished by a much stronger concentration of higher-level qualifications.

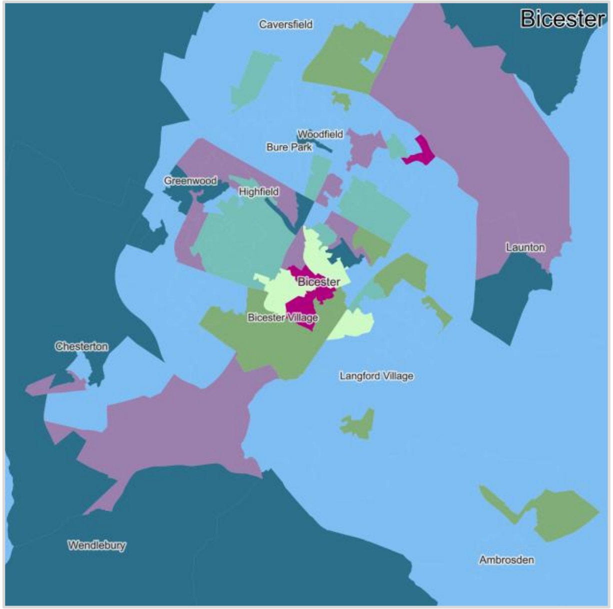
Source: Census 2021

This means Banbury and Bicester have a distinctly different population profile to the rest of the district



There is a contrast between Banbury and Bicester and the wider rural and village areas of Cherwell. The towns have more mixed and transitional populations, with higher concentrations of Insecure Workers and Struggling Renters, alongside Growing Families and some Urban Independents in surrounding neighbourhoods.





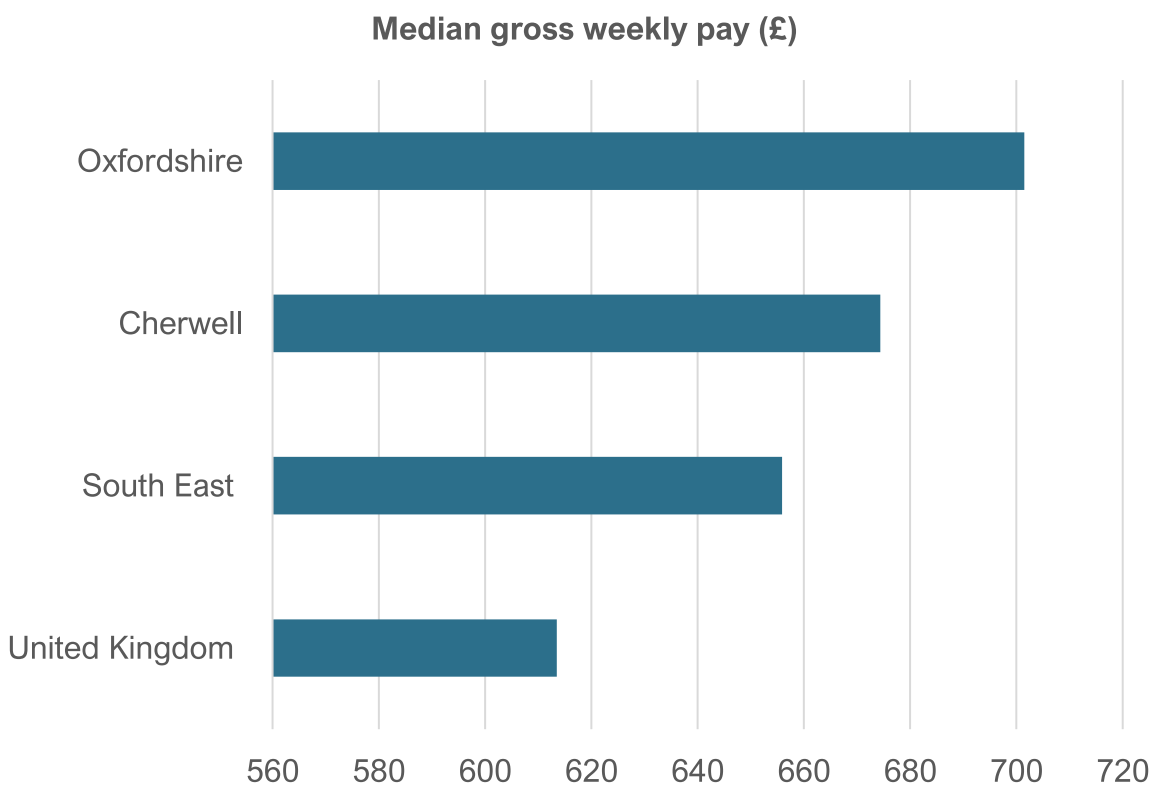
Source: Metro Dynamics analysis

Lower earnings are linked to this skills and sector mix, but still outperform national and regional averages

Median workplace earnings in Cherwell are lower than the Oxfordshire average and sit towards the lower end of the county, above West Oxfordshire but below the higher-paying districts.

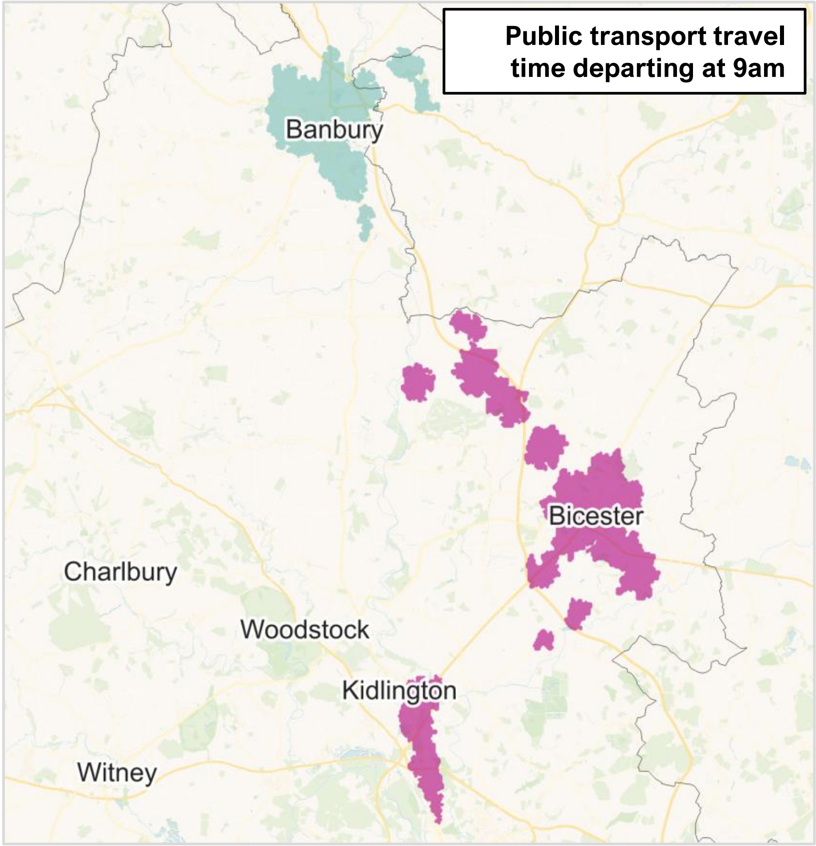
This reflects the district's skills profile and sector mix, with a greater emphasis on foundational employment and a smaller share of high-paying knowledge-intensive roles.

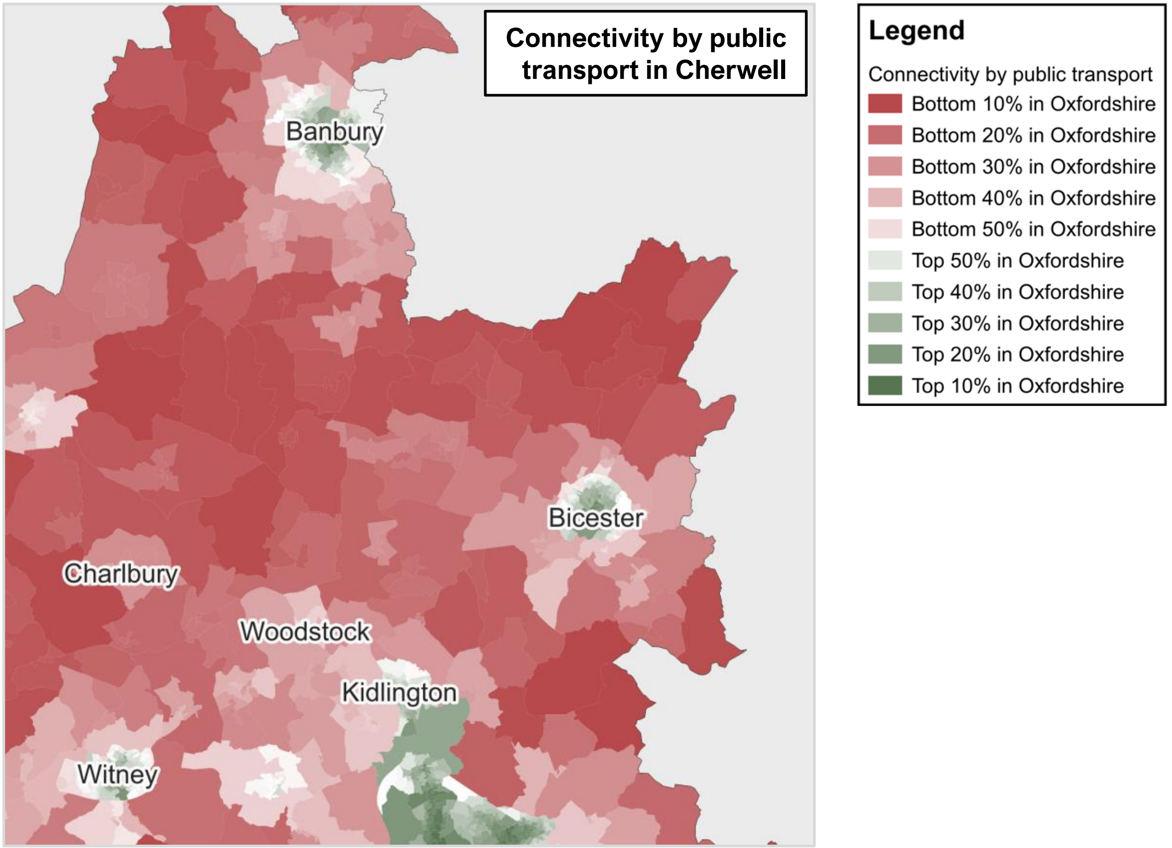
However, earnings in Cherwell remain higher than both the South East and UK averages, indicating a relatively strong labour market despite the absence of the county's highest-value concentrations.



Source: ASHE

Public transport connectivity is focused around the towns, potentially constraining access to higher-value employment

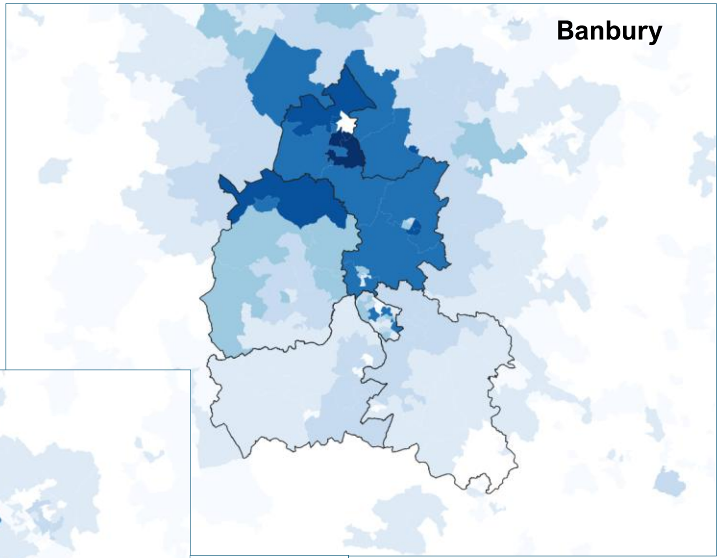


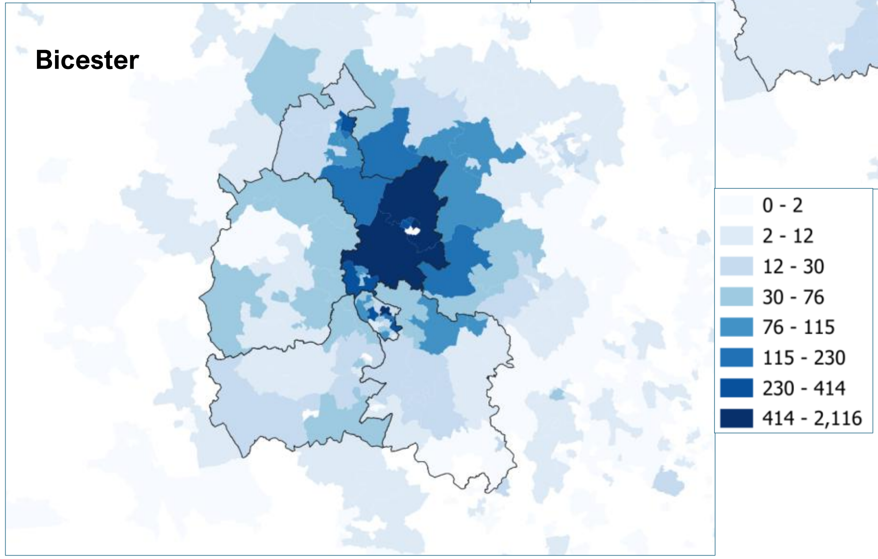


Source: Travel Time API; Metro Dynamics analysis of DfT connectivity data

Labour markets linkages point to a relatively self-contained economy, with some connection to Oxford City

Number of residents commuting for work





Banbury's commuters primarily travel within the Cherwell district, indicating that the local labor market is largely self-contained. Additionally, there are more significant employment and commuting connections extending northward toward Northamptonshire, compared to the relatively weaker links with the southern part of Oxfordshire.

In contrast, Bicester exhibits stronger economic and social ties with its nearby shopping center, drawing considerable consumer activity. Furthermore, it maintains substantial commuting flows toward Oxford City, highlighting its role as a key hub for both retail and employment opportunities in the region.

Source: Census 2021

Engagement Summary

Sector Opportunities The area is well positioned on the M40 corridor to continue benefiting from growth in logistics and light assembly. The medium-term ambition is to shift the balance towards advanced manufacturing further up the value chain, supported by a burgeoning clean tech ecosystem, the Eco-Business Centre, and an emerging Future Mobility Cluster linked to motorsport and F1 supply chains.

Visitor Economy Strong assets in Bicester Village, the F1 presence, and the incoming Puy du Fou attraction — projecting 1.5 million annual visitors — create a clear opportunity to move from a day-trip to a 1-2 night destination. Realising this requires proactive workforce planning, particularly on connectivity, where lower-wage roles are acutely sensitive to access costs, and a Hotel and Accommodation Strategy to better package the district's offer alongside Oxfordshire's wider attractions.

Housing & Growth Banbury is performing well, providing vital supply. Bicester faces infrastructure constraints limiting its ability to match growth with services and mobility. Kidlington is increasingly important as it absorbs Oxford overspill and responds to growing science park demand. Heyford Park complements this as a strategically located settlement and potential as a future labour supply hub for the science economy.

Foundational Economy There is concern about whether the foundational economy is strong enough to underpin long-term growth. Despite Bicester Village, Bicester lacks sufficient restaurants, amenities and evening-economy provision to retain workers and attract high-value employers. Enhancing the overall place offer is essential for both towns.

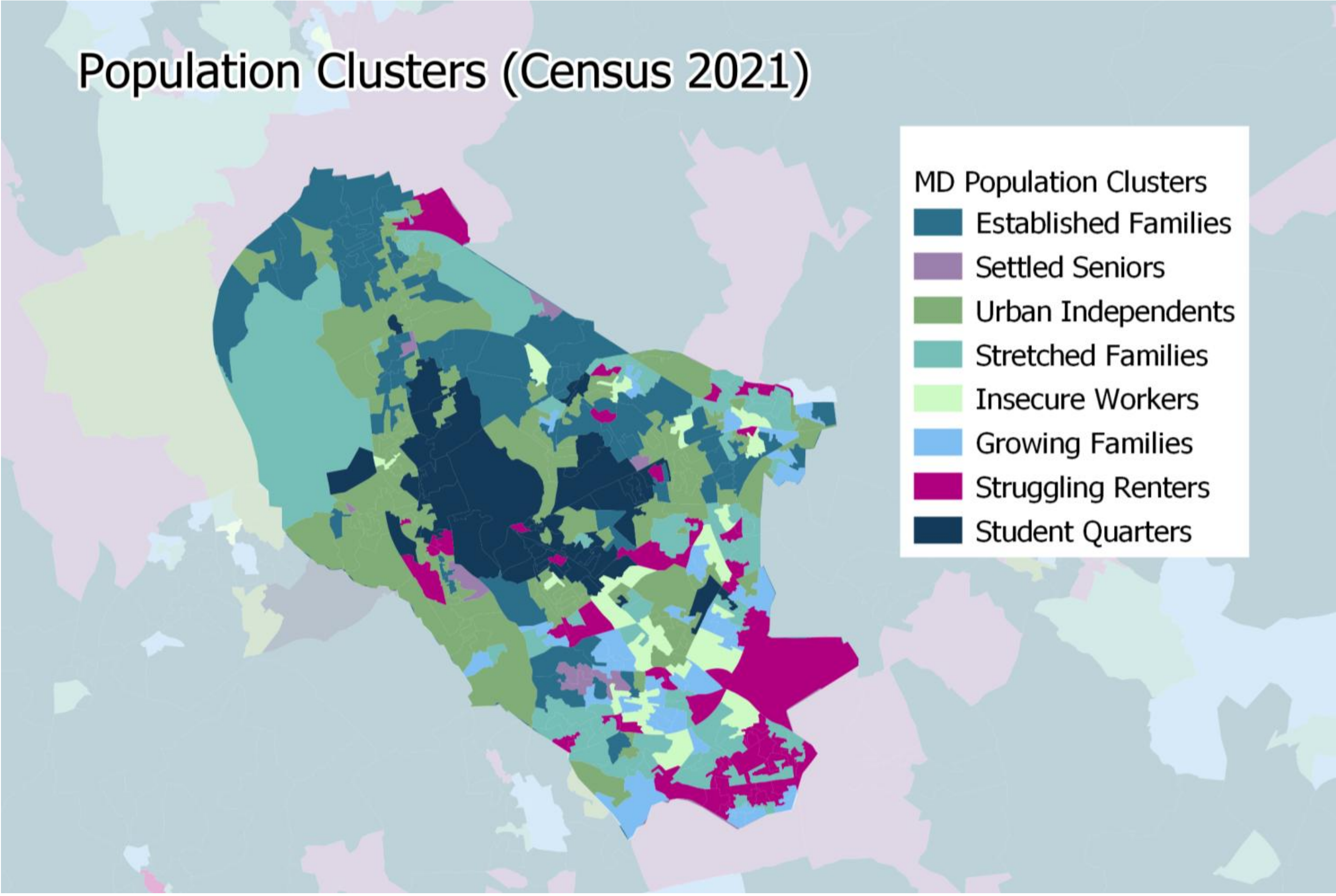
Spatial Area	Banbury & Bicester		
Objective	Establish a new joint partnership to enhance Banbury and Bicester's future role in Oxfordshire's economy – strong housing offer, diversifying into a place for high growth clusters and 'Oxford spin outs', whilst maintaining the success of foundational sectors seen so far.		
Context ⇒	**Rationale ⇒**	**Priorities ⇒**	**Impacts**
Banbury and Bicester feature a mixed economic base: foundational sectors are dominant, but there is also pockets of high-value activity: motorsports engineering, advanced manufacturing, clean tech Visitor economy opportunities are expanding with Puy du Fou and Bicester Motion Bicester Village is a global brand, but the wider town lacks the restaurant, leisure and evening economy infrastructure to convert day trips into evening stays and for residents Bicester's town centre and public realm lag behind its economic ambitions, reducing livability The M40 corridor (J8, J9, J10) drives large-scale employment in logistics and light assembly, forming a core part of the area's economic identity Heyford Park and Kidlington have potential to become significant growth locations linked to Oxford's housing pressures and expanding science cluster geography	**Shift to higher-value employment** Large logistics parks deliver jobs but not necessarily productive growth - there is an opportunity to rebalance land use to secure greater advanced manufacturing, clean-tech and future mobility jobs **Capture visitor economy growth** Major new attractions could expand tourism spend, but only if the area builds the hotel and leisure infrastructure required **Align housing growth with economic opportunity** Heyford Park and Kidlington are expanding, ensuring their connectivity, amenities and employment access matches growth will be critical	**Now…** Establish a comprehensive evidence base on commercial space demand to balance growing logistics requirements with opportunities in advanced engineering, clean tech and future mobility, ensuring the region attracts and supports a high-value, well-aligned mix of industry development Progress the Cherwell level Visitor Economy strategy to set objectives on visitor growth – spend / visit type – and how existing and emerging assets should be utilised **Next…** Strengthen and scale future mobility and clean-tech clusters, leaning on Bicester Motion as a key asset, by aligning them with Oxfordshire's wider high-tech innovation assets to drive integrated, high-value growth across the county Plan for and address the wider infrastructure requirements for the local community as housing growth continues. Alongside this, promote town-centre renewal in Banbury and Bicester to secure liveability and foundational economic resilience Ensure housing growth in Banbury, Bicester, Kidlington and Heyford Park is aligned with access to employment opportunities and local services. Similarly, work to ensure wider labour market integration for residents of the area into opportunities in the rest of Oxfordshire Prepare for continued growth in the visitor economy through increasing accommodation capacity and expanding the visitor economy labour supply as the area continues to attract opportunities. This should build on existing initiatives such as Puy du Fou's MoU with Active Learning. In parallel, elevate technical training and skills progression to meet the needs of engineering, high-value logistics and emerging innovation sectors. **Future…** Deepen partnerships with businesses and explore opportunities through devolved Adult Skills Fund arrangements to create a more responsive, industry-align local skills system Build a clearer economic narrative and governance approach that positions Banbury and Bicester as integral hubs for advanced engineering, high-value logistics and emerging innovation sectors, strengthening their role within Oxfordshire's innovation ecosystem while maximising their strategic economic links beyond the county's boundaries	Growth in higher-value advanced manufacturing and clean-tech employment Stronger engineering talent pipeline supporting future mobility sectors Increased visitor spending and accommodation investment A more liveable Bicester capable of retaining skilled workers and supporting new investment Improved integration between housing growth area and employment clusters Better connectivity from Heyford Park and Banbury into high-value employment areas A more balanced and resilient economy with strong hospitality and retail Clear growth narrative for Banbury and Bicester and wider Cherwell
Why now?	**Banbury & Bicester have clear economic strengths, but they risk underperforming without targeted interventions to upgrade infrastructure, support advanced sectors, expand tourism, and enhance place quality.**		

Oxford City

Oxford's economy is largely driven by its two universities

Oxford hosts more than 40,000 students attending its two main institutions, the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes, which makes up about a **quarter of the city's population**

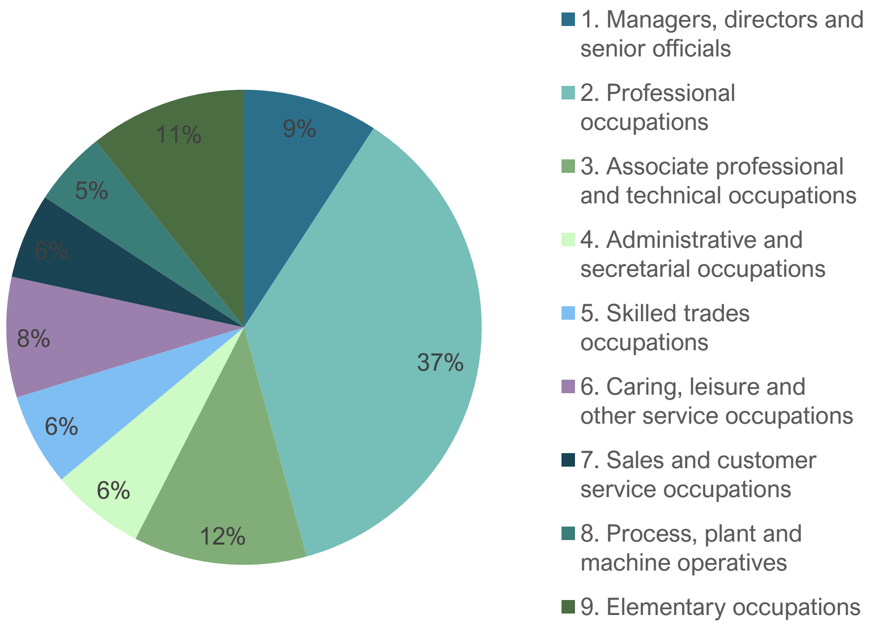
The central area of Oxford is predominantly occupied by students as well as young professionals, referred to here as Urban Independents, while the northern part mainly consists of homeowners and families. In contrast, within the Oxford East constituency, the neighbourhoods of Cowley, Littlemore, and Blackbird Leys **are largely inhabited by renters facing challenges and workers often employed on insecure contracts**



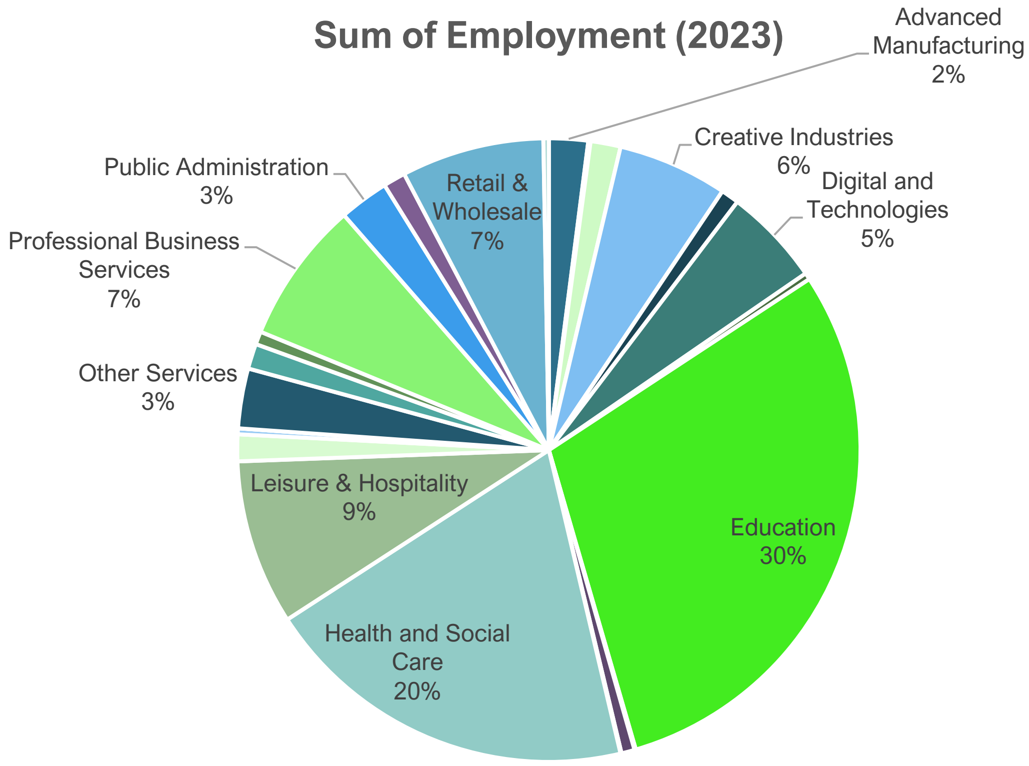
Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021

Oxford's knowledge-intensive labour market is shaped by high concentrations of professional roles

Oxford Occupational Profile



Sum of Employment (2023)



Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021 and BRES 2025

Oxford's economic performance reflects strong national sector alignment with mixed local competitiveness

Oxford City's economy grew by around 3x the growth that would have been implied by national economic growth alone

The uplift beyond the national share was driven largely by sector mix rather than local competitive effects:

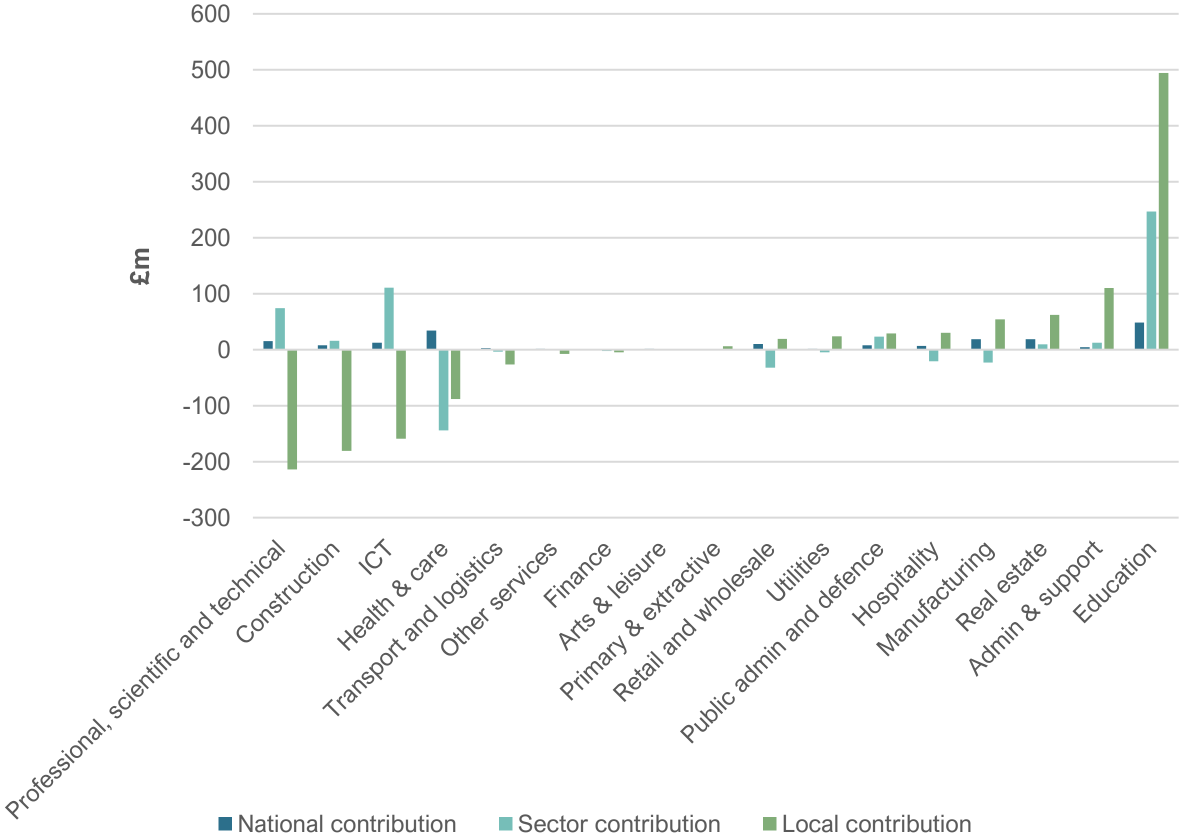
- Around 63% of the additional growth is explained by Oxford's sectoral composition, with the remaining 37% attributable to local factors.

This reflects the city's concentration in sectors that expanded rapidly at the national level. However, the aggregate position masks pronounced divergence across sectors:

- Very strong positive local effects in education, administrative and support services, real estate, and manufacturing. In these sectors Oxford outperformed both overall national economic growth and relevant national sector trends, indicating genuine local strength or competitive advantage.

- Large negative local effects are seen in professional, scientific and technical activities, construction, ICT and healthcare. In these sectors, Oxford performed below what would be expected given both overall national economic conditions and national sector growth, suggesting that wider constraints, particularly related to infrastructure capacity and labour market pressures, are limiting growth.

Oxford City, components of GVA growth: 2018-23



Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Regional GVA, 2025

Oxford's economy is undergoing a structural shift toward life sciences and digital industries, reshaping future growth drivers

Professional business services sectors such as law, consulting, and accounting are experiencing a **decline**

In contrast, **digital and life sciences are growing rapidly.** Life sciences growth is rooted in Oxford University's world-leading research base, with a strong pipeline of spin-out companies, supported by close proximity to the John Radcliffe and the wider trust.

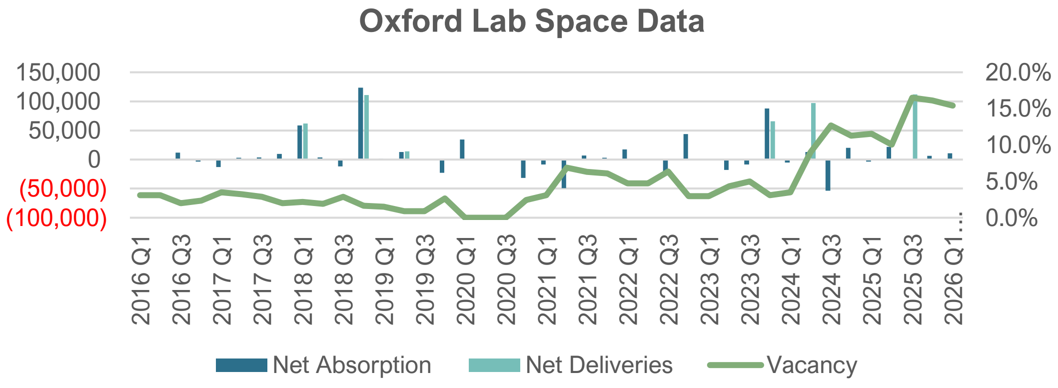
Digital similarly draws on the research ecosystem, with the city particularly strong in deep tech sectors such as AI, computational biology, future computing, and robotics, and benefiting from the same skilled graduate pool.

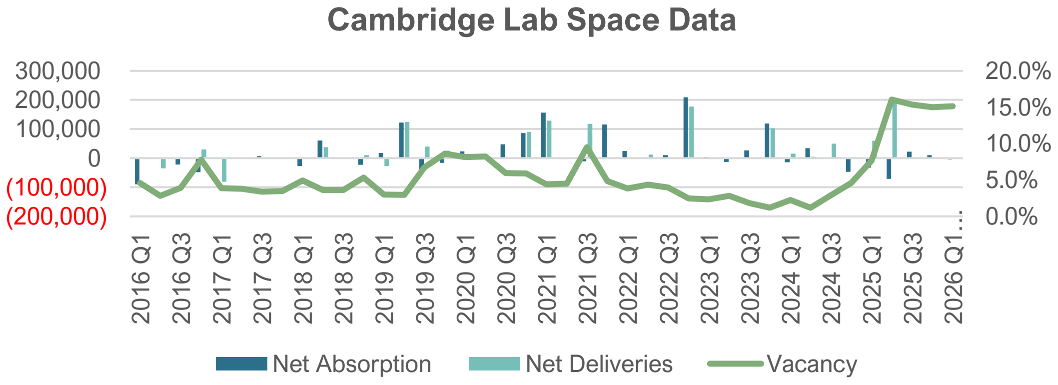
This trend is supported by recent research from the Centre for Cities, which identified **Oxford as having the 6th highest proportion of IS8 firms per 10,000 working-age residents among all UK local authorities**

Sector grouping	Sum of Emp_23	Emp_CAGR	Sum of Bus_23	Bus_CAGR	Sum of GVA_23	GVA_CAGR	Productivity_23	Prod_CAGR	Avg_con_23	Avg_con_change
Education	37980	1.7%	215	1.5%	£2,615	7.5%	£68,842	5.7%	3.1	3.0%
Health and Social Care	24965	3.6%	350	1.2%	£1,081	-3.3%	£43,301	-6.6%	1.6	5.5%
Leisure & Hospitality	10940	4.2%	485	2.0%	£313	1.6%	£28,570	-2.5%	1.0	1.3%
Retail & Wholesale	9455	-3.8%	555	1.3%	£368	-0.4%	£38,895	3.6%	0.7	-6.1%
Professional Business Services	9430	-2.3%	1010	-0.5%	£425	-5.0%	£45,031	-2.7%	0.9	-3.8%
Creative Industries	7285	11.8%	265	-0.7%	£317	-1.1%	£43,515	-11.5%	2.6	33.4%
Digital and Technologies	6475	7.9%	540	-1.9%	£238	5.9%	£36,681	-1.9%	1.1	21.4%
Other Services	3960	-3.1%	355	3.8%	£137	3.7%	£34,576	7.1%	0.9	-2.8%
Public Administration	3290	3.1%	5	0.0%	£348	3.8%	£105,775	0.6%	0.5	-2.6%
Advanced Manufacturing	2585	-9.5%	5	0.0%	£527	-1.4%	£203,945	9.0%	0.8	-30.9%
Construction	1990	-20.2%	345	-1.7%	£143	-13.8%	£71,859	8.1%	0.4	-50.7%
Life Sciences	1770	20.9%	70	11.8%	£157	11.3%	£88,932	-7.9%	7.1	62.4%
Other Transport activities	1670	-0.9%	60	8.4%	£51	-4.1%	£30,413	-3.3%	0.5	3.3%
Real Estate	1475	0.9%	235	8.0%	£794	2.4%	£538,305	1.5%	0.9	11.0%
Digital and Creative	1195	-2.0%	150	2.9%	£51	-12.3%	£42,978	-10.5%	1.3	-5.2%
Financial Services	875	-1.3%	70	1.5%	£40	-2.8%	£45,714	-1.5%	0.4	0.6%
Ports and Logistics	860	-5.1%	25	-6.5%	£27	-8.1%	£31,906	-3.1%	0.3	-31.2%
Digital Manufacturing	440	23.2%	10	14.9%	£88	35.0%	£200,997	9.6%	1.0	139.2%
Manufacturing	390	3.4%	30	-3.0%	£32	-4.1%	£83,008	-7.2%	0.2	-5.1%
Utilities	360	-5.4%	5	0.0%	£81	9.7%	£225,670	15.9%	0.3	-24.6%
Agri-Food	110	5.3%	5	0.0%	£8	26.6%	£68,571	20.3%	0.2	-13.8%
Farming	90	-9.1%	15	-12.9%	£11	12.9%	£122,222	24.2%	0.1	-43.5%
Fossil Fuels	65	13.2%	0	0.0%	£4	31.2%	£60,149	16.0%	0.1	113.6%
Clean Energy	40	-25.1%	10	0.0%	£10	-12.5%	£257,143	16.9%	0.5	-23.7%

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of BRES and Regional GVA

The Oxford Economic Strategy cites three key constraints that will limit the growth in these sectors of comparative advantage





Oxford is a structurally undersupplied lab market. Its history of ultra-low vacancy, limited development pipeline, and immediate rebound in absorption when supply comes online demonstrates a persistent imbalance between demand and deliverable space

Cambridge, while still exhibiting strong lab space demand, has a more flexible and dynamic supply pipeline. Developers in Cambridge respond more rapidly to demand signals, resulting in a market with greater delivery volumes and cyclical vacancy patterns

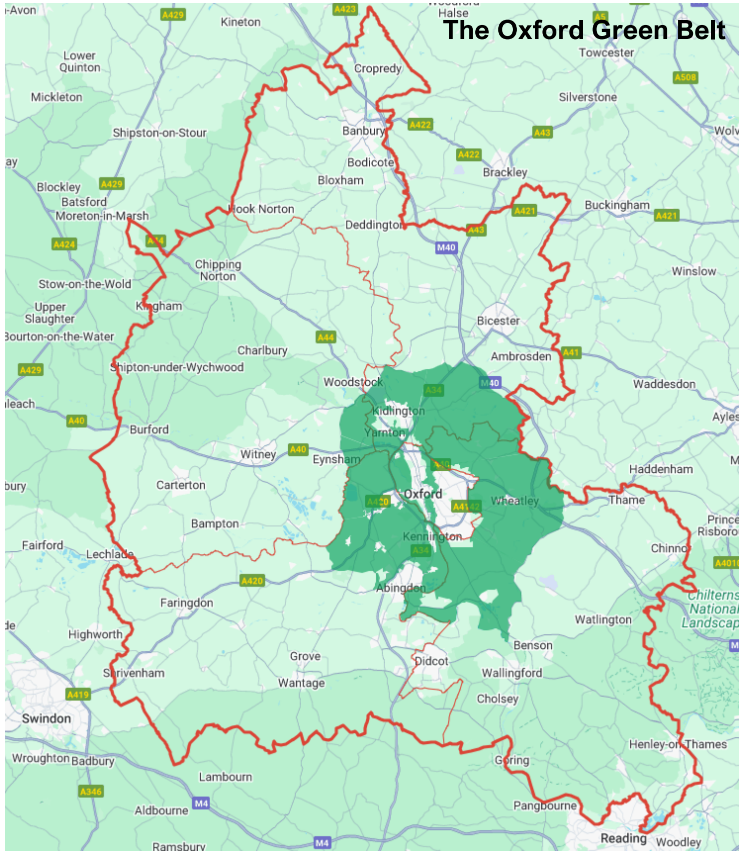
Regular office space in Oxford is also structurally tight (3-4% vacancy), with a looser environment over last year (9% vacancy). Volatility in absorption is driven by lumpy spikes in development, followed by a sharp readjustment as tenants flight to quality space

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of CoStar Data, 2025

Oxford’s severe housing affordability gaps are limiting access to opportunity and exacerbating inequalities across the city

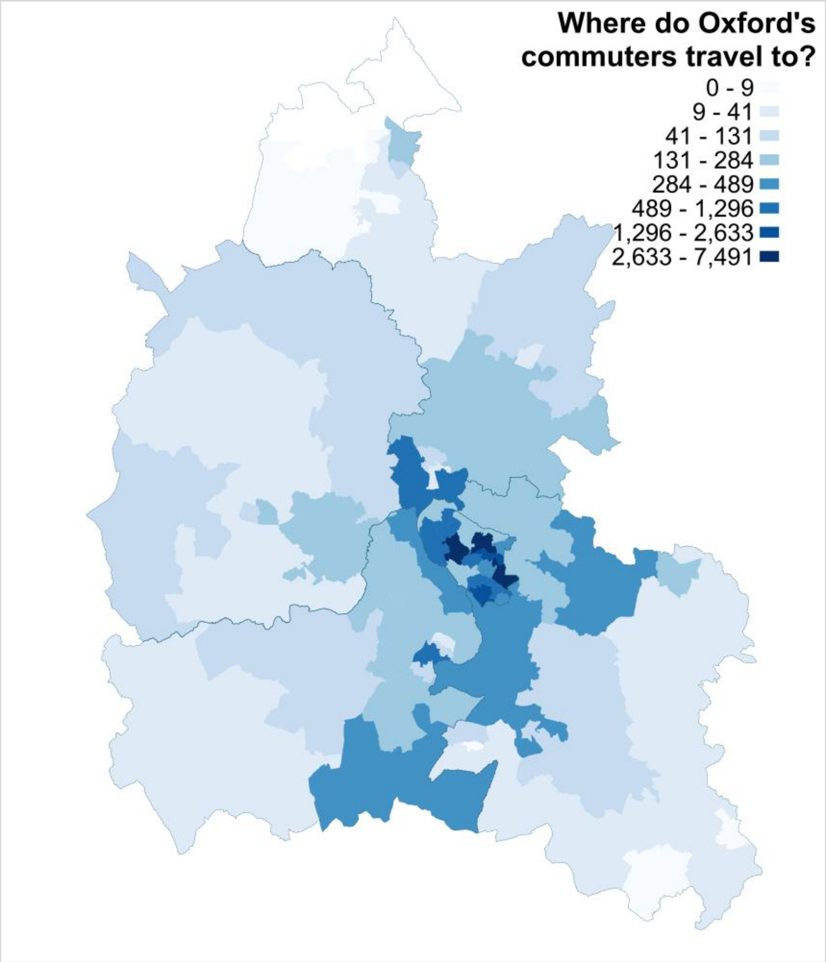
The average home price is about 12.5x the average annual salary, making it the least affordable city in the country. Housing supply has remained limited, with a widening gap between targets and actual completions since the changes to the NPPF

Moreover, Oxford faces development obstacles due to rising construction costs and borrowing rates, along with restrictions from **the surrounding Green Belt designed to prevent urban sprawl**. This situation puts **additional pressure on the city to make efficient use of its strategic sites** and carefully develop grey belt land, highlighting the importance of Oxfordshire functioning as an interconnected polycentric economy in terms of transport and the labour market.



Source: Centre for Cities Outlook 2026, CPRE

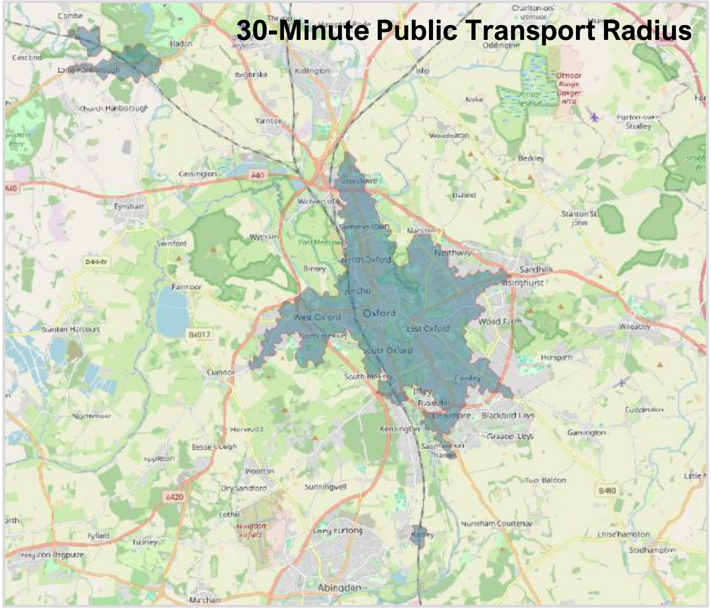
Oxford's transport network does not sufficiently support equitable access to key employment centres



The **Oxford city labour force is predominately self contained to the city**, but with some commuting to Science Vale. There are limited labour market connections with West Oxfordshire and Cherwell

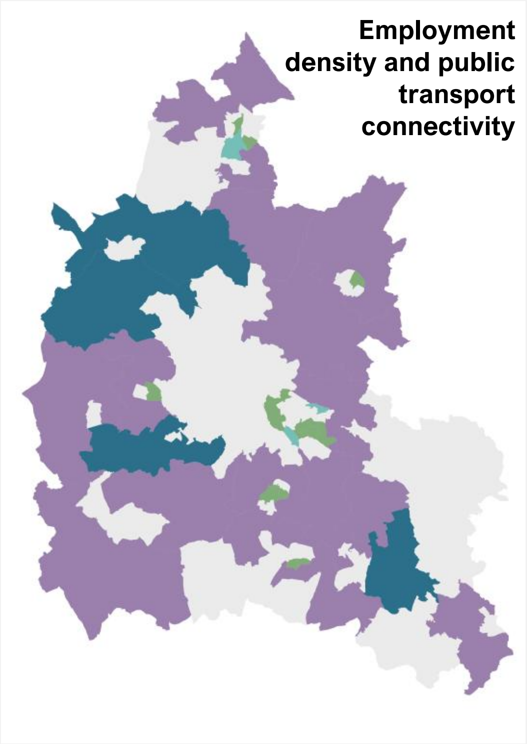
Public **transport connections between Oxford City and key Oxfordshire employment hubs are lengthy**, increasing the attractiveness of car travel

Oxford's medieval street network has narrow streets and limited road space, creating persistent bottlenecks and **conflicts between buses, delivery vehicles, cars, pedestrians and cyclists**

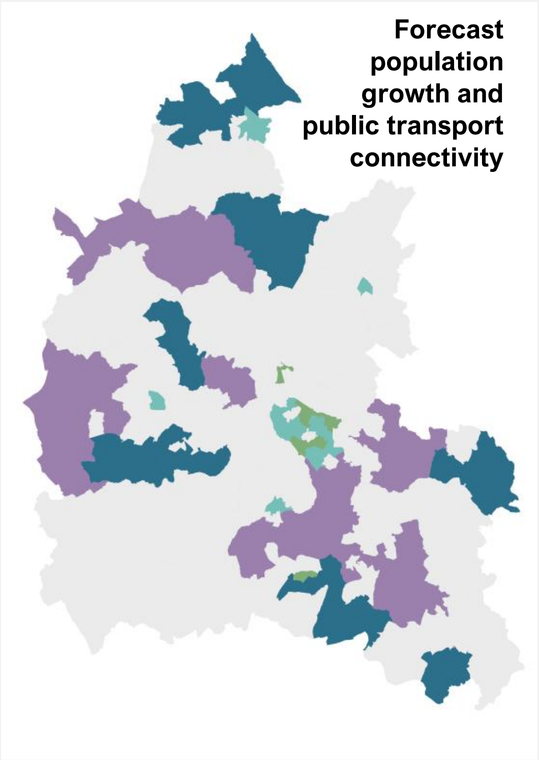


Source: *Oxford Economic Strategy, Oxford Transport Strategy, Travel Times API, Census 2021*

That said, Oxford remains the best-connected part of a county where transport and growth are currently misaligned



- Low pressure areas
- Underserved growth areas
- Underutilised connectivity
- Well-served growth areas
- Other



- Low activity
- Underserved employment areas
- Underutilised connectivity
- Well-served employment centres
- Other

Oxford contains the neighbourhoods with the county's highest employment densities and its strongest public transport connectivity.

Across the wider county, that relationship is less strong – areas forecast for significant population growth by 2032 are frequently among the least well-connected, with employment concentrations outside Oxford often in areas poorly served by public transport.

Type	Connectivity	Employment density / forecast growth
Well-served areas	High	High
Underserved areas	Low	High
Underutilised connectivity	High	Low
Low activity / Low pressure	Low	Low
Unclassified	Medium on either variable	

Note: MSOA-level analysis. Connectivity: DfT Public Transport Connectivity Score. Employment: BRES workplace employment density (2023). Population growth: OCC forecasts 2023-2032. Each variable classified into thirds; middle third unclassified:

Three key developments will address supply side market failures: West End, North and Cowley Branch Line

Project	Oxford West End	Oxford North	Cowley Branch Line Reopening
Description	Oxford West End is a major regen programme transforming an under-used central area into a mixed-use, highly accessible innovation and residential district	Oxford North is a £1.2bn, 64-acre, global innovation district on the northern edge of Oxford. It is to be designed as major hubs for science, technology, AI, biotech and research commercialisation, proving lab space, homes and public realm	Reinstatement project reconnecting Cowley and Littlemore to the national rail network for the first time since 1963. It introduces new stations (Oxford Cowley and Oxford Littlemore) and integrates four of Oxford's growth areas in a single link
Key facts	• Largest civic space in Oxford City created at Oxpens, with new public, cultural and green spaces across the district • New affordable housing in the city centre • High-quality SME workspaces • Improvements to active travel	• 1m sq fit of flexible labs and offices supporting start-ups through to global firms • 480 new homes and three new public parks • Positioned within the Ox-Cam-London 'Golden Triangle' improving national and international scientific connectivity	• Journey times: 10 minutes from Cowley/Littlemore to city centre • Direct connectivity to London Marylebone • New stations serve key employment clusters including ARC Oxford. Oxford Science Park and the Ellison Institute of Technology
Economic benefits	• New construction jobs, plus long-term employment in high-value industries • Additional annual spend from workers and residents once completed • Inclusive economy measures such as local sourcing and apprenticeships	• Expected to create 4,500+ jobs and inject £150m per year into economy • Strengthens the UK's life sciences, AI and technology sectors by providing much-needed high-spec lab space • Catalyst for spin-outs, venture creation and R&D investment	• Unlocks 10,000 new jobs and enables potential development of 5,000-10,000 additional homes • Supports over £1bn private-sector investment, including the Ellison Institute • Expected to generate over 1 million journeys within first three years, reducing congestion and supporting mobility

Sources: Vision, Oxford West End, About, Oxford North, Cowley Branch Line to be reopened with two new stations for Oxford, Oxfordshire County Council, 2025

Inequality in Oxford is highly spatial and concentrated due to education and income barriers

LSOA	IMD	Income	Employ ment	Education	Health	Crime	Housing	Environ-ment
Barton & Sandhills	2	2	3	1	3	4	5	6
Osney & St Thomas	2	5	4	3	3	1	2	1
Littlemore	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	6
Northfield Brook 17D	2	3	3	2	3	3	1	4
Northfield Brook 18B	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	8
Northfield Brook 18C	2	2	2	1	2	2	5	9
Rose Hill & Iffley 16E	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	4

Deprivation in Oxford is geographically concentrated, with the most affected neighbourhoods located predominantly in the south of the city (Oxford East parliamentary constituency), including areas such as Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, and Rose Hill

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), the primary drivers of deprivation in these southern communities are income and skills deprivation, rather than housing or access to services

In the rest of Oxford, where qualification levels are high and employment outcomes strong, housing costs act as the main constraint on quality of life, limiting disposable income and worsening overall living standards even among highly educated residents

Sources: Oxfordshire's 10 most deprived wards, JSNA Bitesize, 2023

Engagement Summary

Skills & Aspiration. A core challenge is aspiration, with many residents not seeing Oxford's high-value economy as accessible to them. This is compounded by a skills pipeline skewed towards adults, leaving a gap in early intervention in schools. Short-termism in funding cycles limits long-term impact, with a need to better link VCSEs, health, skills and employment.

Productivity, Innovation & Agglomeration. Despite world-class innovation assets, Oxford has not yet been able to agglomerate to the level its fundamentals suggest. The barriers are structural. Planned infrastructure upgrades are welcome but risk short-term disruption before benefits are felt.

Strategic Planning & Investment Tools. Oxford needs, and is developing, a spatial approach with an investor focus. There is an opportunity to align this with the Oxford West End opportunity area and its proposed TIF model, as well as making better use of the Enterprise Zone lever.

Infrastructure & Place-Shaping. Utility and space constraints remain a significant barrier to development. More can be done to continue the shift towards mixed-use typologies, though a clearer evaluation of what has not worked historically is needed before committing to new interventions.

<table>
<tr><th>Spatial Area</th><th colspan="3">Oxford</th></tr>
<tr><th>Objective</th><td colspan="3">To support a more productive and inclusive Oxford by improving space, mobility and skills around the city's core economic assets</td></tr>
<tr><th>Context ⇒</th><th>Rationale ⇒</th><th>Priorities ⇒</th><th>Impacts</th></tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Oxford’s economy is anchored in high value knowledge sectors, with the city’s growth outperforming national trends largely due to favourable sector composition

The city is home to over 40,000 students and a highly skilled workforce, concentrated in professional and scientific roles typically linked or because of the universities

Oxford is severely supply-constrained in both housing and commercial floorspace

Transport connectivity creates frictions – internal bottlenecks alongside poor cross-county linkages via public transport

Oxford is geographically unequal, with deprivation concentrated in the south, driven by low skills and low incomes</td>
<td rowspan="3">Aligning economic assets with spatial capacity

Oxford’s innovation economy is expanding, but commercial space and housing are not keeping pace, constraining scale-ups and inward investment

Unlike comparable cities, Oxford has not agglomerated effectively, partly due to poor digital infrastructure, fragmented SME space, and transport constraints

Addressing entrenched inequality

Economic opportunity is not spatially inclusive; deprived areas see low skills, limited labour mobility and poor access to career pathways. Without intervention, Oxford risks deepening attainment and aspiration divides

Capitalising on major developments

Oxford West End, Oxford North, and the Cowley Branch Line reopening create an opportunity to reshape the city’s housing, mobility and innovation ecosystem</td>
<td>Now..

Align Oxford’s Spatial Development Strategy with the needs of its core sector ecosystems, particularly life sciences and digital, so that land use, development and investment decisions are shaped by how clusters grow and operate in practice, giving investors clarity on the types of space required and enabling EquinOx to promote Oxford through a coherent, sector-led growth narrative

Agree delivery recommendations and mechanisms to accelerate housing development with the Oxford Growth Commission. Develop a strong, evidence-led case for unlocking housing growth, grounded in economic rationale, infrastructure needs and community priorities, to position Oxford for future funding opportunities, including through devolution

Accelerate the transport, digital and energy infrastructure schemes for Oxford City identified in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, ensuring that that schemes are supported by a clear rationale linked to the wider economic narrative

Develop a hyper-local Inclusive Growth Strategy for the deprived areas around the South/East of Oxford City, focused on improving life chances through better health, employment and skills, while galvanising a broad cross-organisation coalition to drive collective action</td>
<td rowspan="3">Increased productivity through better job-workspace proximity and stronger SME clustering

Greater inward investment flow and higher retention of start-ups and scale-ups

More commercial space reaching the market, reducing constraints on high-value sectors

Higher skills attainment and aspiration in deprived areas

Reduce spatial inequality within Oxford, especially between south Oxford and rest

Improved health, employment and progression outcomes due to integrated interventions

More balanced housing delivery aligned with economic geography

Better public transport access to major employment clusters

More resilient digital and infrastructure systems supporting agglomeration</td>
</tr>
<tr><td>Next..

Sustain clear Government engagement to secure a TIF mechanism for Oxford West End, backed by a strong concept of investment intentions and the benefits it will deliver

Ensure transport planning for an integrated public transport system recognises Oxford's central role in Oxfordshire's wider economic geography

Make the case for the South/East of Oxford City to become a Place-Based Pilot, enabling pooled public services to tackle the city's most concentrated pockets of deprivation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Future…

Ensure new commercial space is connected into emerging business-support offers that strengthen county-wide sector networks and supply-chain linkages, enabling SMEs to collaborate, access markets and scale across Oxfordshire

Explore devolved transport arrangements that could speed up delivery, strengthen agglomeration effects, and boost dynamism across the city

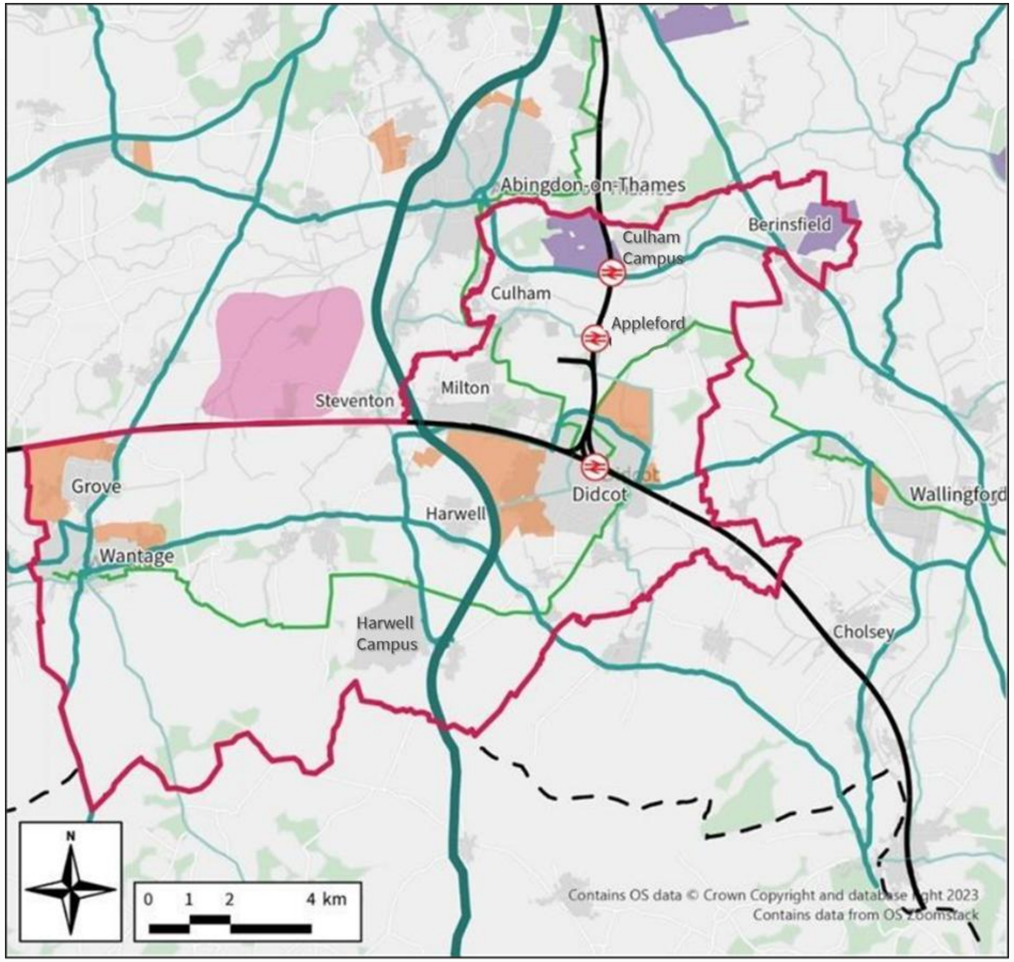
Assess how devolved skills levers, such as Adult Skills Fund, could be used to advance place-based priorities and improve outcomes for local communities</td></tr>
<tr><th>Why now?</th><td colspan="3">Oxford’s economic strengths are globally significant, but are increasingly constrained by structural barriers. Without coordinated intervention, the city risks hitting a growth ceiling, with implications for the wider county</td></tr>
</table>

Science Vale

What is Science Vale?

Science Vale covers South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, with major settlements in Wantage, Didcot, and Milton. It is principally characterised by the density and connectivity of key employment locations – Culham Campus, Milton Park, and Harwell, as well as presence of two Enterprise Zones.

Science Vale has an established boundary definition used across a range of strategic frameworks for the area (shown in the map on this page). Our analysis broadly reflects this boundary, but takes an expansive view of the functional economic area – recognising, for example, that Abingdon sit just outside the defined boundary yet is integral to the area's labour market and wider economic geography.



Source (right): Science Vale Movement and Place Plan

A large portfolio of developments and assets support good growth opportunities

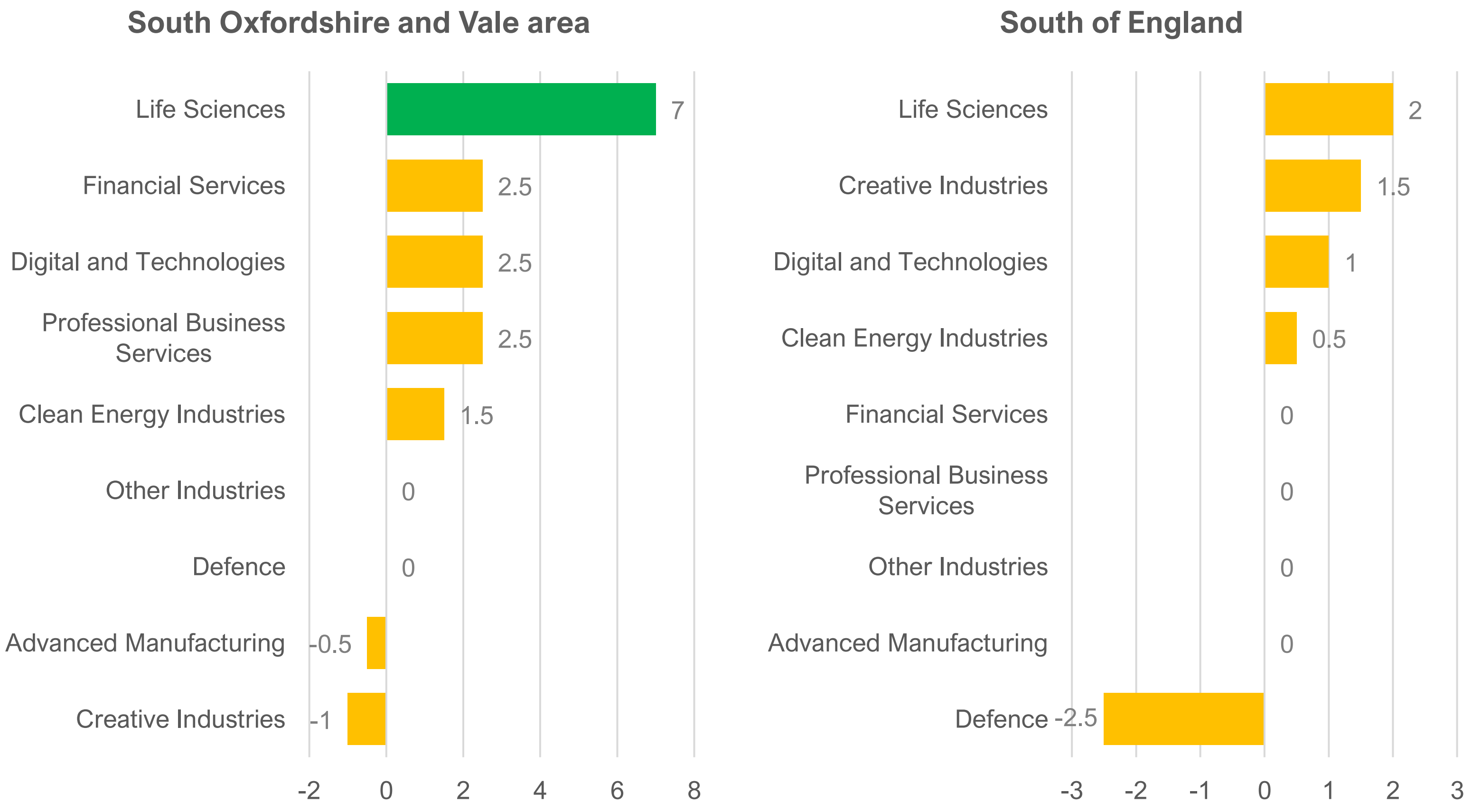
Existing assets (among others)

- **Campuses and business parks.** Science Vale hosts nationally significant innovation assets at Harwell, Culham and Milton Park, alongside a wider portfolio of employment land.
- **Enterprise Zones.** Science Vale UK (Harwell Campus and Milton Park) and the Didcot Growth Accelerator (Milton Park and north of Didcot) allow retention and reinvestment of business rates growth until 2038 and 2041 respectively.
- **Strategic connectivity.** Didcot Parkway provides strong rail connectivity, complemented by links along the A34 and A4130.
- **Skills**. UTC Oxfordshire, based in Didcot, provides specialist technical education for 14-19 year olds, offering a pipeline of STEM-skilled young people directly within the area.
- **High-quality natural environment.** The area sits between the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes, offering a strong nature, recreation and quality-of-life asset.

Major projects in the pipeline (among others)

- **Major urban expansion at Didcot and Culham.** Large-scale housing and employment growth is planned through Didcot Garden Town and the Culham strategic allocation, supporting long-term population and jobs growth.
- **Campus expansion at Harwell and Milton Park.** Significant new laboratory, office and advanced manufacturing space is planned to support continued growth of the science and innovation economy.
- **Oxford Metro opportunity.** Proposed improvements to local rail services and connectivity have the potential to strengthen access between Science Vale, Oxford and the wider county.
- **Road upgrades and new bridges.** The HIF-funded package includes major road improvements, new bridges and river crossings to unlock development and improve movement across the area.

High-value sectors are leading growth across South Oxfordshire and Vale



The Metro Dynamics Sector Growth Index combines performance across **employment, businesses, GVA and productivity** between 2018-23, benchmarked against national trends (7 = strongest possible growth).

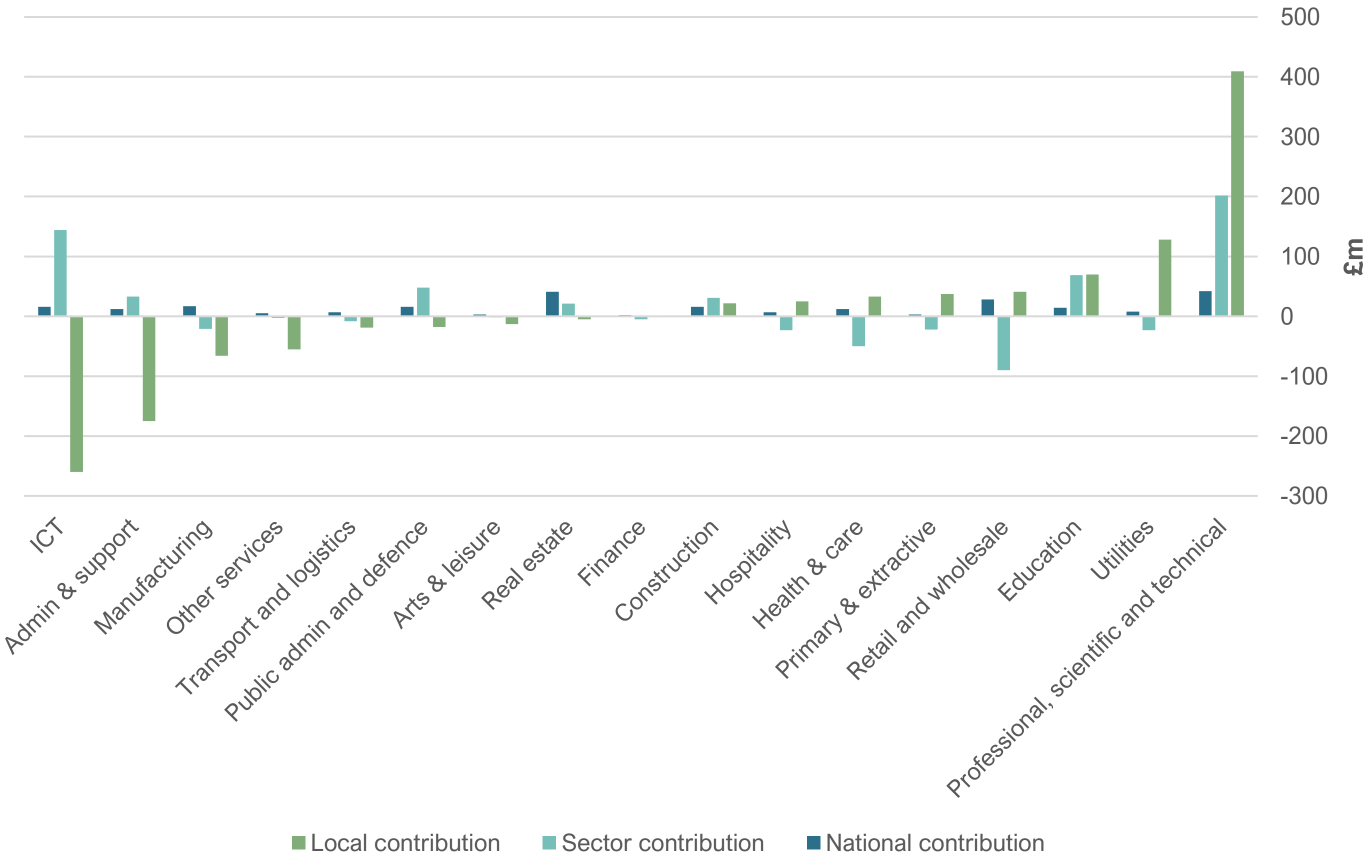
At a district level, growth in South Oxfordshire and Vale is being **driven by high-value sectors.**

These sectors are **growing faster and at greater scale** than in the wider South of England, while ‘other industries’ remain broadly flat.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis

Local factors are contributing significantly to this strong sectoral growth

South Oxfordshire and Vale, components of GVA growth: 2018-23



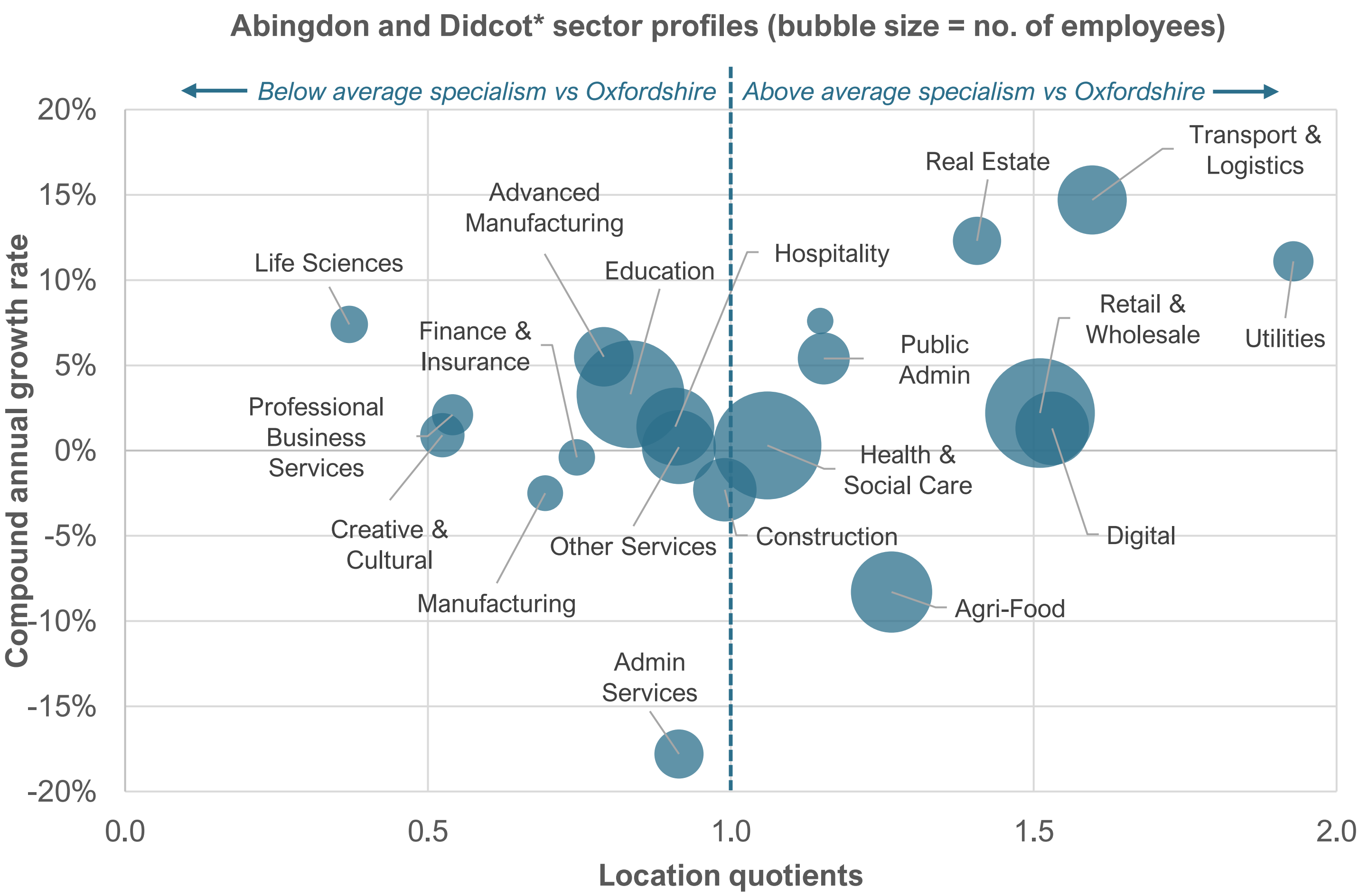
Growth in South Oxfordshire and Vale reflects a combination of high-performing sectors and strong local competitive effects.

Sector contributions indicate a high concentration of activities that have grown quickly at the national level, while positive local effects point to place-specific advantages such as the depth of the science and innovation ecosystem, institutional presence, and business networks.

Professional, scientific and technical services stands out, with local contributions substantially exceeding both national and sector trends, reinforcing the area's role as a core driver of the county's science-led economy.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Sub-Regional GVA, ONS

Abingdon and Didcot are also growing, but driven by more foundational sectors



Top right: **Transport and logistics** is Abingdon and Didcot's clearest growth area, combining high specialisation compared to Oxfordshire and rapid growth.

Top left: High value activities such as **life sciences** and **advanced manufacturing** are growing quickly from a low base.

Bottom right: **Agri-food** is specialised but contracting.

Near the x-axis: Many of Abingdon and Didcot's sectors show moderate growth, including **digital and retail**, local specialisms.

Retail, **health**, and **hospitality** are one third of employment, underlining the towns' supporting role.

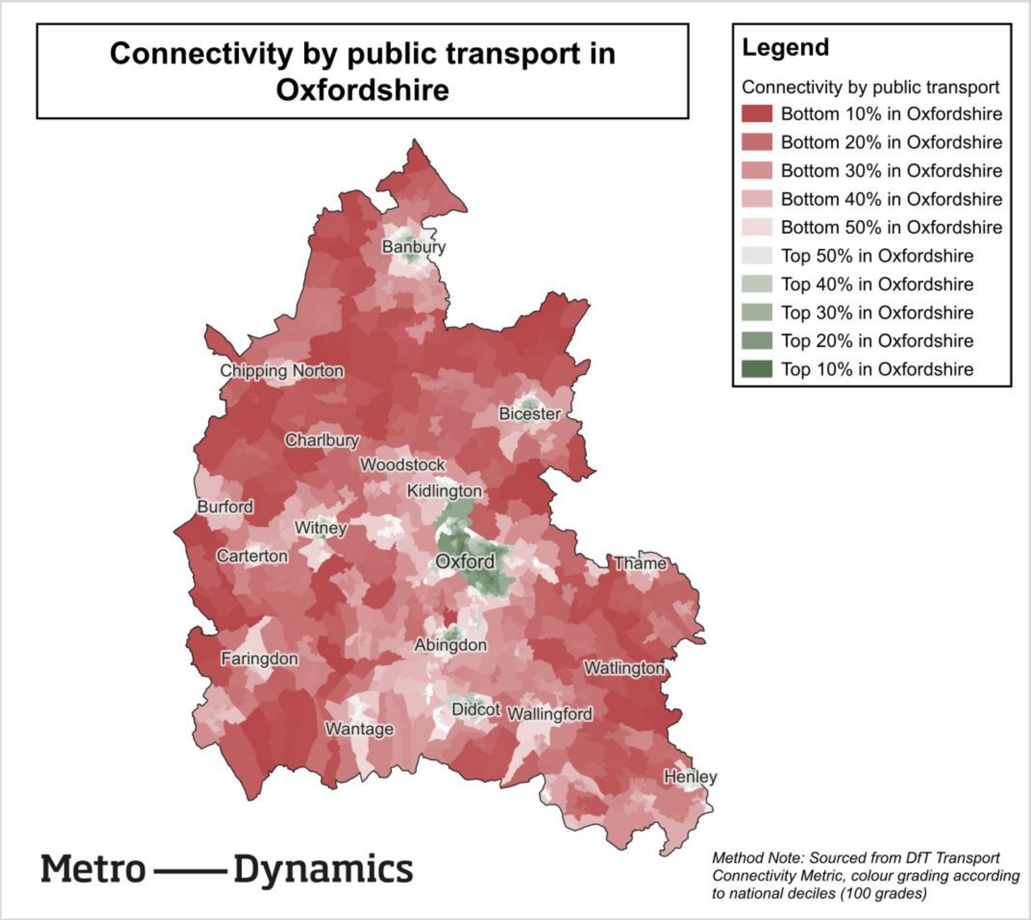
Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of BRES

* Custom definitions using best-fit MSOAs on built-up town areas

Limited public transport access can constrain who can reach growth opportunities

Harwell, Culham and Milton Park act as major magnets, but access is highly car-dependent. Limited sustainable transport options restrict who can realistically access jobs.

For example, timely public transport access to Harwell Campus is largely confined to corridors along the A417 and A4130, limiting access from surrounding towns and rural areas.



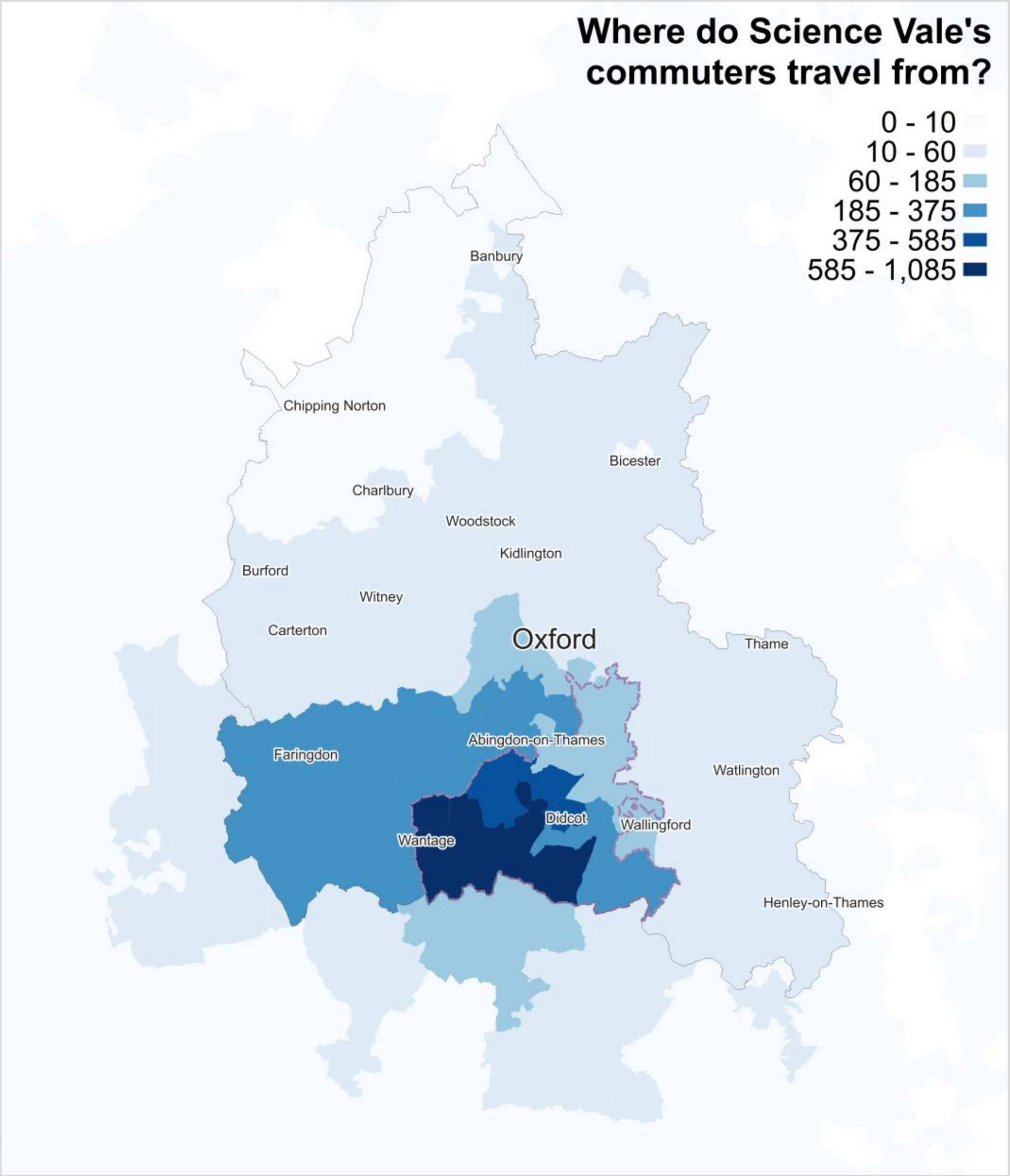
Source: DfT and Travel Time API

Science Vale's workforce is relatively self contained

Science Vale's workforce is drawn predominantly from within the Science Vale area itself, with commuting patterns showing a largely localised labour market rather than extensive long-distance inflows.

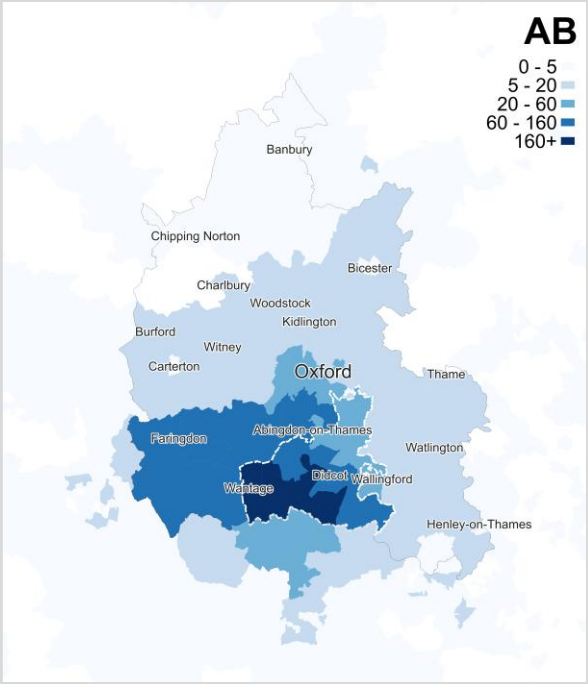
There are comparatively smaller commuting flows from Oxford and from outside the immediate sub-region.

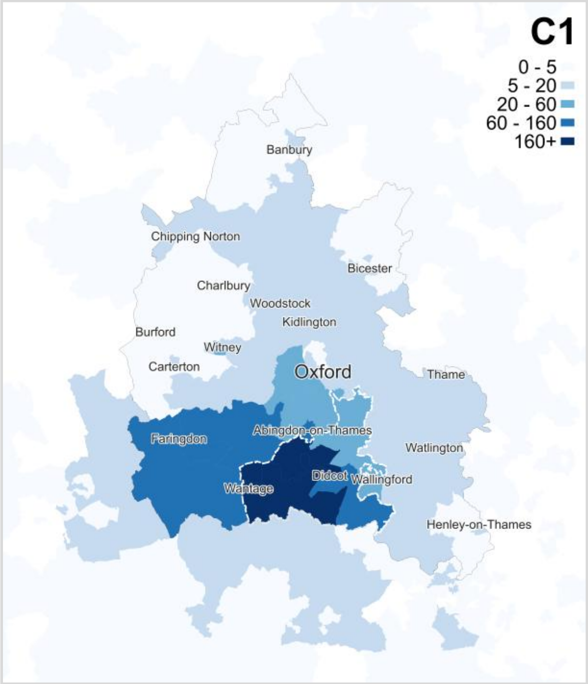
These patterns should be interpreted with some caution, as Census 2021 commuting data was affected by pandemic-related home-working, which is likely to understate longer-distance commuting.

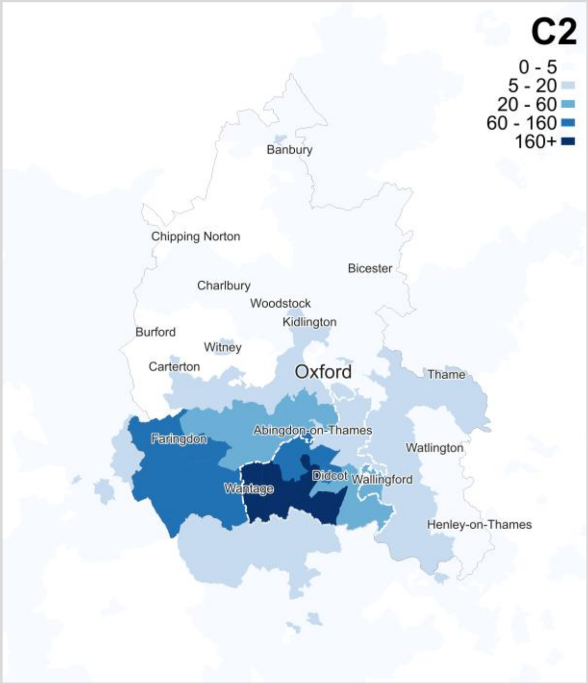


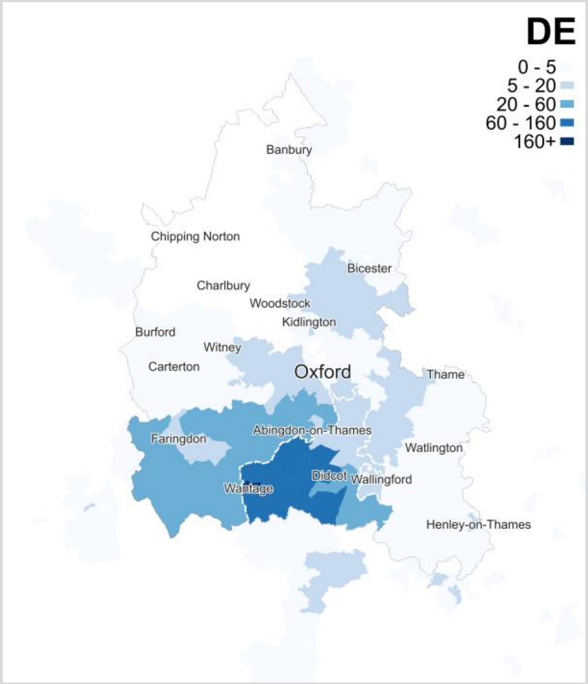
Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021

This varies by social grade, with high-skill workers travelling further









AB: Higher & intermediate managerial, administrative, professional occupations

C1: Supervisory, clerical & junior managerial, administrative, professional occupations

C2: Skilled manual occupations

DE: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations

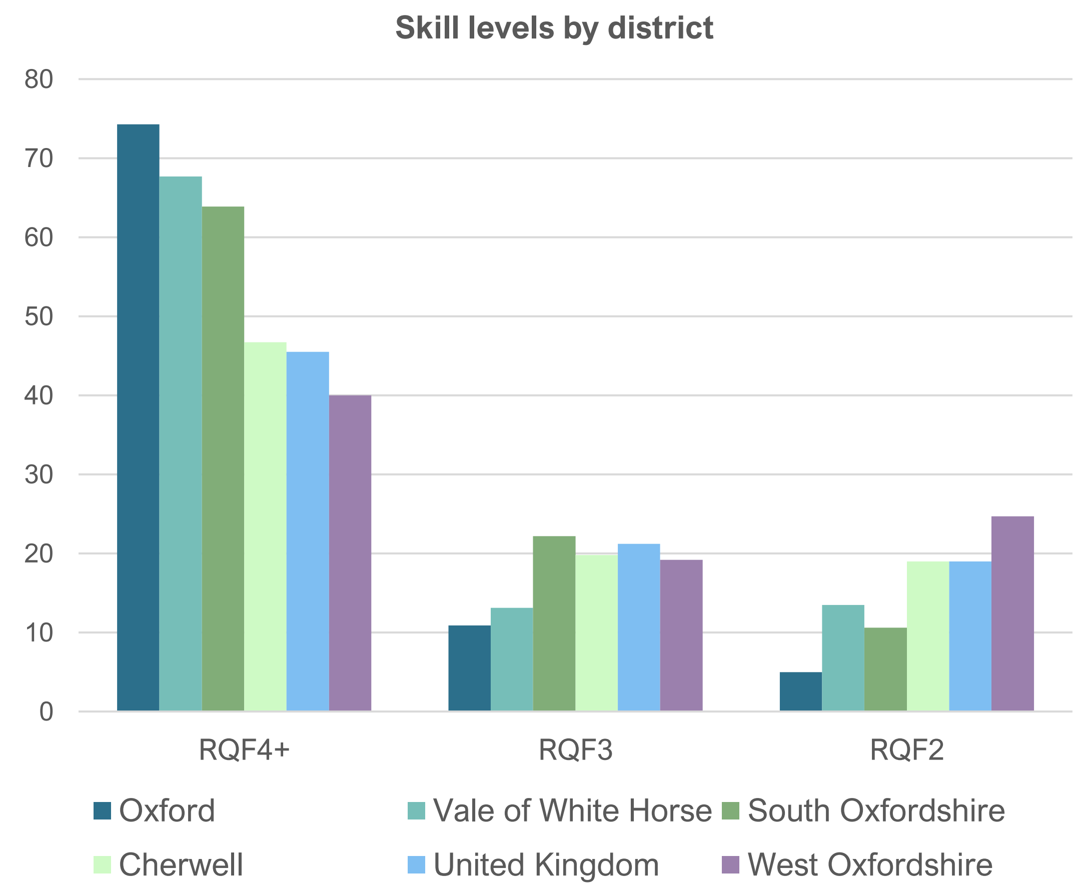
Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021

* Custom definitions using best-fit MSOAs on built-up town areas

Overall, however, skill levels are very high across South Oxfordshire and the Vale

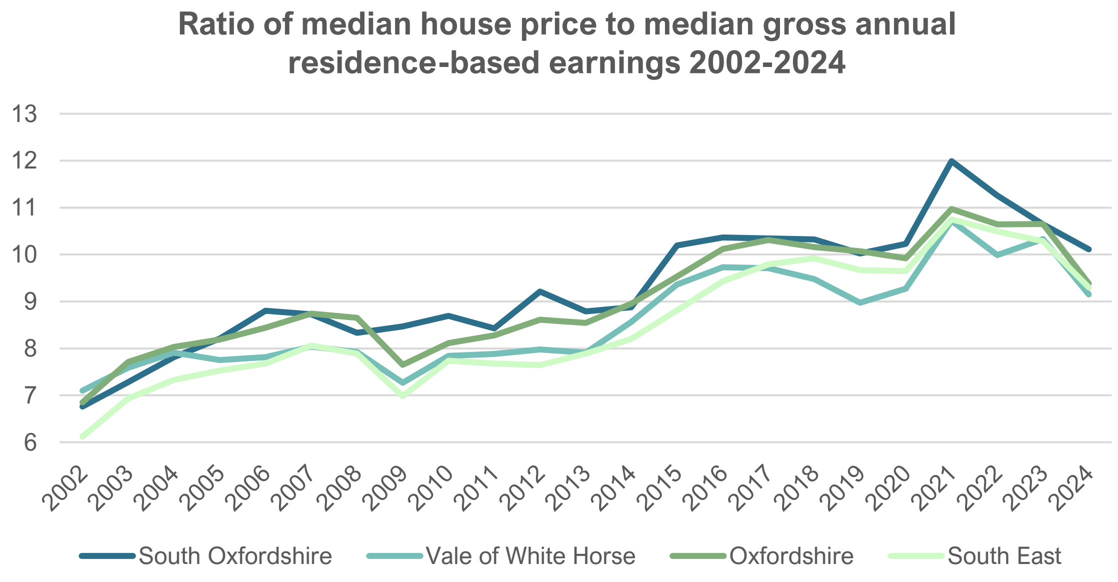
South Oxfordshire and the Vale have very high overall skill levels, with around **two-thirds of residents qualified to degree level and above**, well above national and regional averages.

However, a substantial minority of residents are below degree level, and as the evidence suggests, these residents are less well connected to the area's wider labour market and higher-value opportunities.



Source: Annual Population Survey

High housing costs constrain where people can live and work



Proportion of annual new homes target achieved (Local Plan 2024)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
South Oxfordshire	106%	141%	108%	87%
Vale of White Horse	145%	164%	138%	146%

Alongside skills and transport, housing affordability is a further constraint on growth and labour market access.

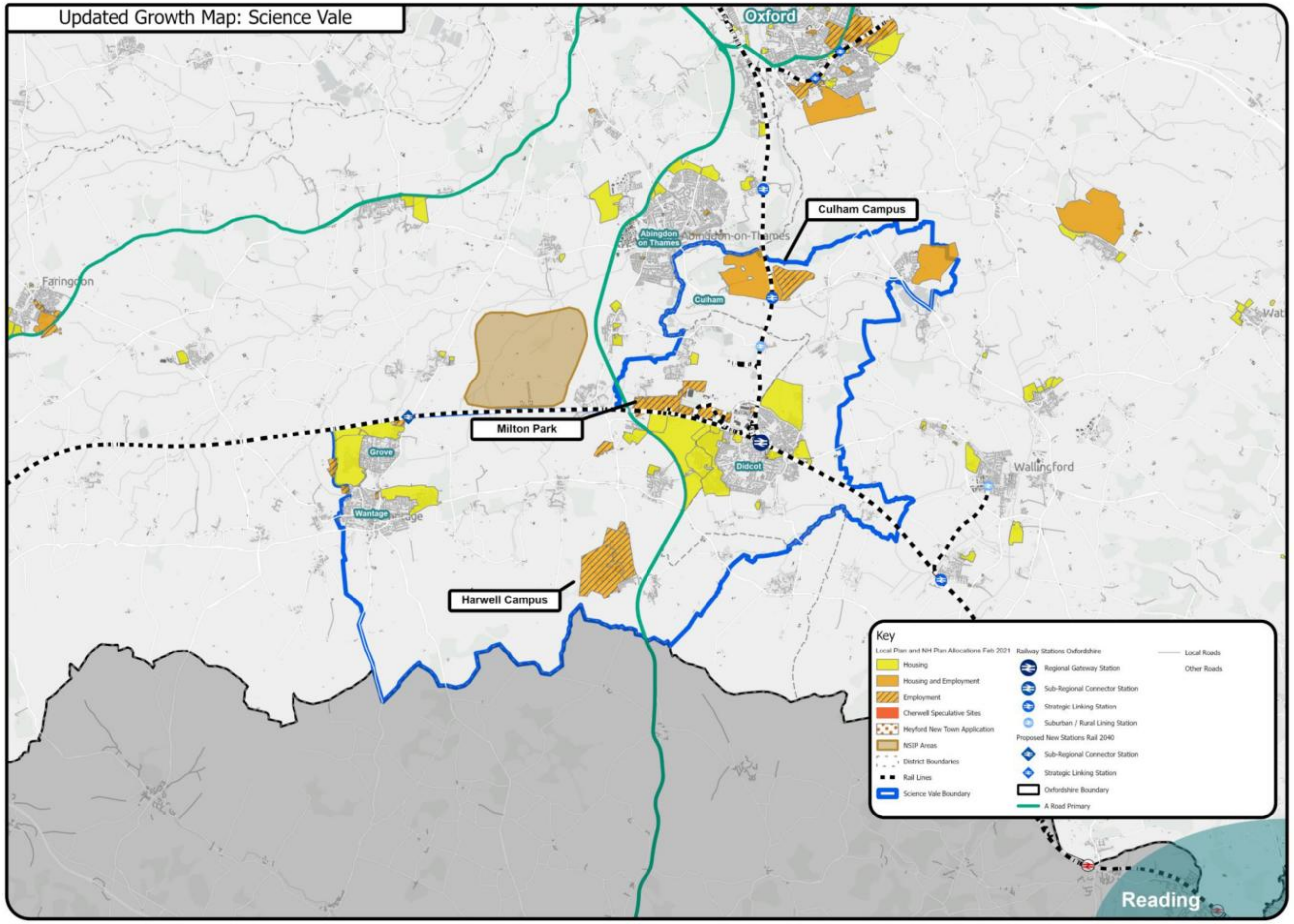
The South and Vale Local Plan identified the need for additional housing in the district as a vital factor for future economic growth.

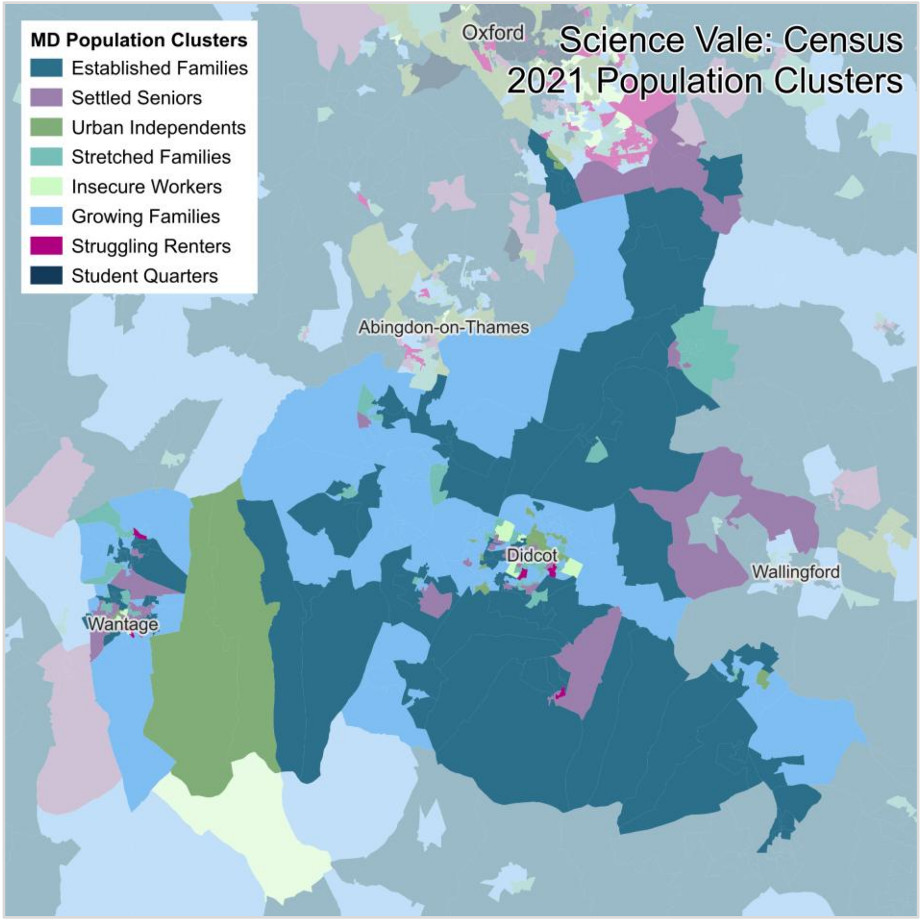
Housing affordability remains a significant issue in the Science Vale area, similar to the wider Oxfordshire region, with **median house price to median earnings ratios at 10.1x in South Oxfordshire and 9.2x in Vale of White Horse.**

South and Vale have recently performed well in delivering new homes, surpassing the targets outlined in the Local Plan. The Oxford Growth Commission has pointed to opportunities to further actively support housing allocation and increase delivery near major employment centres to help reduce commuting distances.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of MHCG Data

In response to these pressures, growth is planned at scale, with allocations for 18,000 homes and 200ha of new employment land





Source (left): South Oxfordshire and Vale Joint Local Plan

* Map uses custom definitions for best-fit MSOAs on the Science Vale area

Engagement Summary

Partnership & Governance. Science Vale's individual sites are pioneering world-class assets with mature approaches to development - Harwell's cluster leadership model being a strong example. As an area, however, it lacks an overarching partnership structure. Collaboration between sites is limited, funding remains largely site-by-site, and LDOs, while positive enablers, operate at the micro level.

Labour Market & Skills. Science Vale is not yet making full use of the local labour pool, with skills gaps a persistent issue. There is an opportunity to work more closely with large firms and major developments in the area to build local pathways, but local authorities currently lack the capacity to engage deeply and maximise their benefits.

Transport & Infrastructure. For those already working in Science Vale, weak public transport restricts access to jobs - particularly for entry-level and shift-based roles, crucial entry points to the area's career pathways. HIF works should help significantly, but temporary disruption poses a short-term risk to investor and worker confidence. Science parks are also frustrated by the slow pace of wider public-sector network improvements.

Place-Shaping & Foundational Economy. Science Vale's ability to grow will depend on it being a thriving, attractive place for current and future workers beyond its high-tech sites. Improvements to transport, housing, amenities and evening-economy provision are essential to supporting a balanced, resilient local labour market.

Metro——Dynamics

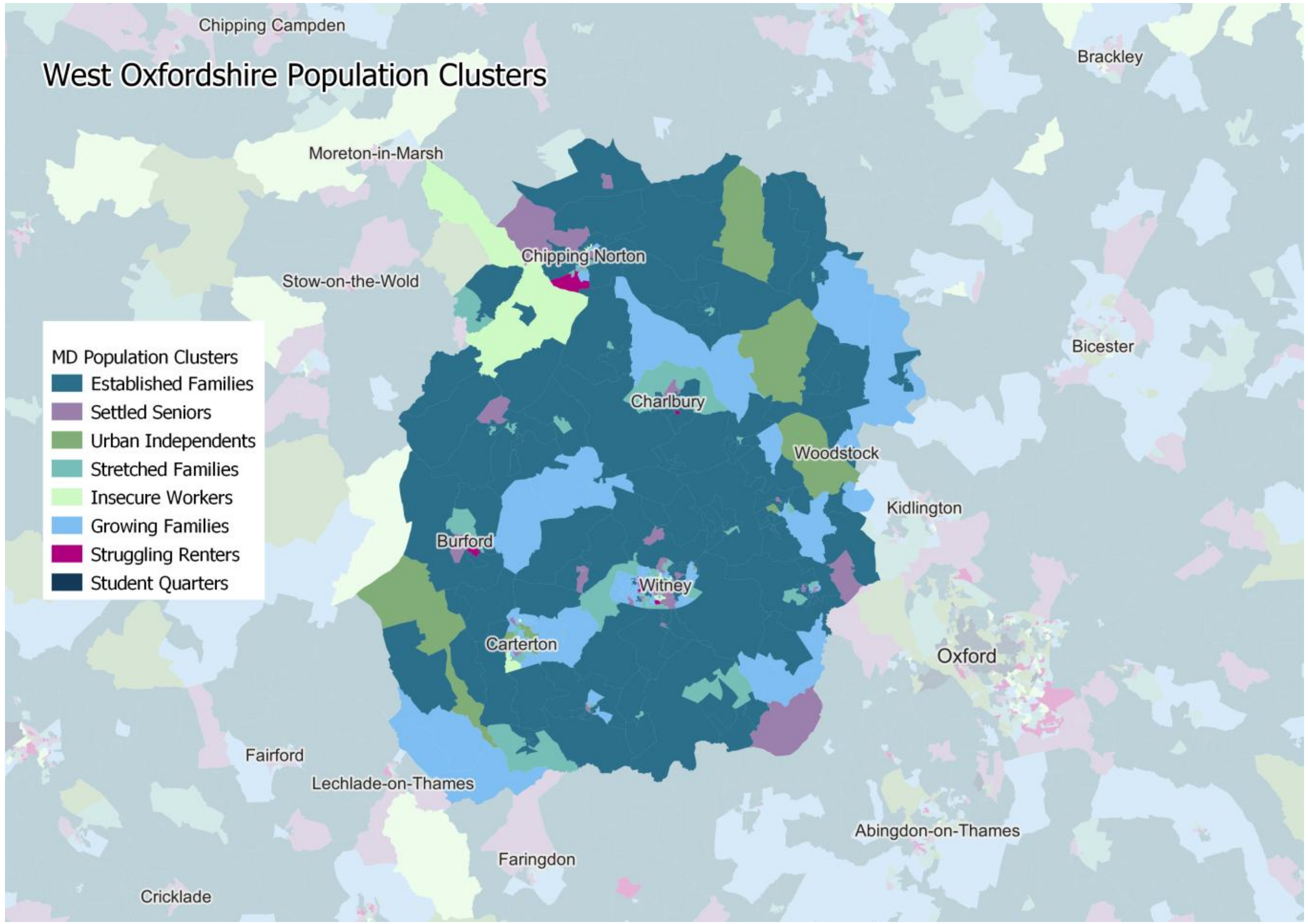
Spatial Area	Science Vale
Objective	**Establish a new joint growth partnership with a shared ambition to make a greater impact from this internationally significant economic corridor, through in-depth work with local skills and FE providers, significant investment in investment promotion and active cluster development**

Context ⇒	Rationale ⇒	Priorities ⇒	Impacts
Science Vale is one of the UK's most significant concentrations of scientific and technology assets anchored around Harwell, Culham, Milton Park and the Enterprise Zones. It combines world-class R&D capability with large-scale planned growth in homes, infrastructure and employment land Strong growth is also occurring in data centres development Abingdon and Didcot remain more foundation economies, with growth in retail, health, and logistics Science Vale is poorly connected by public transport, constraining labour mobility and ability to attract younger and international workers HIF-funded upgrades will help but pose short-term disruption risks Skills levels are high across the two LAs but employers face shortages in mid-level technical roles	**Unlocking nationally significant innovation cluster** Harwell and Culham are high-growth engines, but current growth is constrained by transport bottlenecks, housing delivery and labour shortages **Moving beyond site-by-site development** Current growth is fragmented, driven by what individual sites can fund, rather than a strategic joined-up Science Vale system **Ensuring labour market access** Public transport weakness reduces access from Oxford City and surrounding towns International firms depend on high mobility and a culturally attractive environment for talent **Strengthening governance and capacity** A coherent triple-helix partnership, shared narrative, and delivery platform are essential to coordinate investment, skills and infrastructure	**Now..** Establish a streamlined Science Vale partnership with representatives from across the triple helix to drive greater impact from the corridor. Utilise the Science Vale partnership to coordinate delivery across existing strategies (including LSIP and Get Oxfordshire Working), align provision with employer need, and support inclusive growth alongside planned physical development Establish a clear interface with the OxCam Arc, showcasing Science Vale opportunity and need. **Next..** Agree and fund a promotion campaign that highlights business opportunities, career pathways, and the area's unique innovation ecosystem. Work with EquinOx to align messaging, share reach, and reinforce rather than duplicate each other. Facilitate cluster and sector development across Oxfordshire's science, business parks and Enterprise Zones, building on the model Harwell has established and expanding across science parks with a strong sector focus. Build deeper relationships between site managers and LA planning & skills leads, to take a forward look at future development and ensure continuity through LGR. Bring this together in a Science Vale investment pipeline. Improve connectivity to key employment sites within Science Vale, building on the Ox Rail 'Science Line' concept, whilst also progressing planned HIF-funded infrastructure at pace Work with skills and FE providers, including key assets such as UTC Oxfordshire, to develop a local labour market strategy, coordinating with the LSIP to align local provision with the high demand for entry- and mid-level technical and engineering roles within both the innovation economy and the expanding built environment sector. **Future…** Invest in Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance for school pupils to showcase local STEM roles and entry routes, increasing the visibility of the science/business parks and their associated opportunities. Prioritise inclusive growth outcomes, with Science Vale acting as an anchor institution. Work with developers, local authorities, transport providers, and local residents to ensure Science Vale develops as a thriving place to live and work. This means prioritising town centre vitality, housing quality and affordability, transport connectivity, and the amenities and evening economy that meet the expectations of those living and working in the area.	Greater agglomeration benefits through coordinated development of Harwell, Culham, Milton Park and towns Increased inward investment and stronger retention of scale-ups Improved access to Science Vale jobs for residents across Oxfordshire Reduce skills gaps in technical and mid-level roles Stronger pipeline connecting FE, HE, and employers Reliable, integrated transport network reducing car dependence and broadening catchment areas Stronger, more vibrant towns that retain young workers and attract talent Unified, strategic leadership structure capable of driving delivery Stronger narrative and identity for Science Vale as a global innovation hub

Why now?	***Science Vale holds national-level potential for science-driven growth, but this cannot be fully realised without addressing connectivity, coordination, workforce access and place attractiveness***

West Oxfordshire

West Oxfordshire is a rural economy, with populations clustered around key towns



West Oxfordshire is home to approximately 114,200 people (2021), with residents clustered around its four main towns: Witney, Carterton, Burford and Chipping Norton

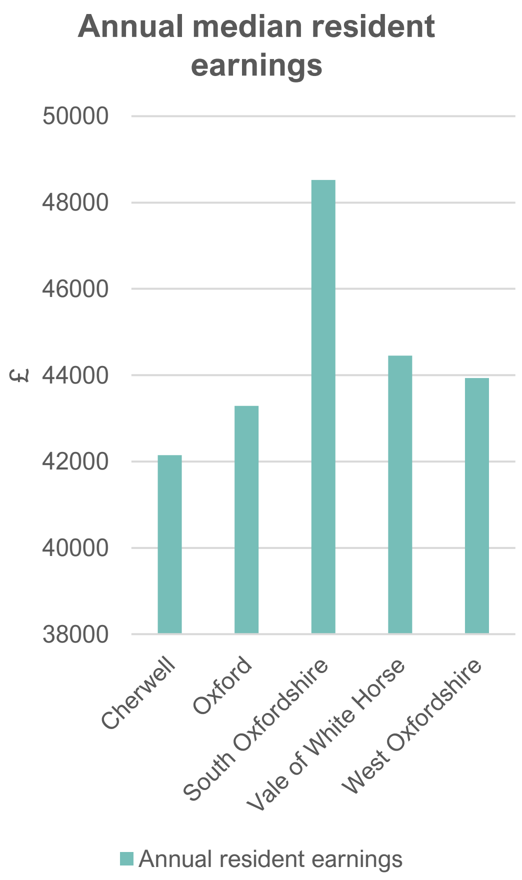
A **higher proportion of the population are over 65** than national and regional average – this is set to rise in the future

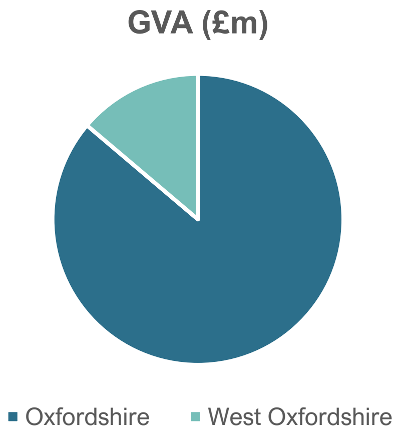
The **majority of the population are established families**, with younger families and settled seniors clustered around key towns

West Oxfordshire ranks 301st out of 317 local authorities for deprivation, making it one of the **least deprived areas nationally**

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021

Despite its small size, economic indicators around productivity and earnings are relatively robust





Despite accounting for just 16% of Oxfordshire's Gross Value Added (GVA), West Oxfordshire demonstrates notably strong average productivity levels, exceeding the overall Oxfordshire average by approximately £400. This higher productivity reflects positively on the economic performance of the area.

As a result, residents of West Oxfordshire enjoy robust earnings, positioning the district among the top earners in the county. Only the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts report higher average resident incomes than West Oxfordshire, underscoring the area's economic vitality and the benefits experienced by its workforce.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Regional GVA, 2023

West Oxfordshire's sector strengths leans toward foundational sectors, specialising in leisure, hospitality and farming

Unlike the rest of Oxfordshire, where the majority of employment is dominated by Education and Professional Services, the **majority of West Oxfordshire residents are employed in Leisure, Retail and Health and Social Care**

Life Science and Digital are growing in West Oxfordshire but from a lower base than neighbouring authority's

Sector grouping	Sum of Emp_23	Emp_CAGR	Sum of Bus_23	Bus_CAGR	Sum of GVA_23	GVA_CAGR	Productivity_23	Prod_CAGR	Avg_con_23	Avg_con_change
Leisure & Hospitality	8440	4.7%	425	2.30%	£304	-0.02%	£36,050	-4.5%	1.3	7.4%
Retail & Wholesale	6760	-1.1%	680	-0.10%	£209	-2.05%	£30,940	-1.0%	0.9	-3.6%
Health and Social Care	4750	1.8%	200	0.50%	£176	1.18%	£37,053	-0.7%	0.8	-0.2%
Education	4500	1.2%	110	1.90%	£226	7.70%	£50,166	6.4%	1.1	2.4%
Digital and Technologies	3160	1.6%	505	-1.70%	£132	3.03%	£41,815	1.4%	1.1	6.8%
Professional Business Services	3150	-4.5%	1010	-0.90%	£123	-2.62%	£39,016	1.9%	0.8	-9.0%
Construction	2950	1.3%	860	1.60%	£224	7.10%	£75,932	5.7%	1.1	-2.6%
Other Services	2565	0.6%	390	1.90%	£139	4.56%	£54,279	4.0%	1.0	-1.3%
Life Sciences	2245	4.4%	20	14.90%	£187	0.25%	£83,155	-4.0%	7.5	5.7%
Manufacturing	2090	-0.2%	135	0.00%	£121	-1.94%	£57,991	-1.7%	1.1	2.9%
Other Transport activities	1440	-1.1%	80	5.90%	£86	0.42%	£59,826	1.6%	0.7	-7.5%
Real Estate	1335	6.1%	240	3.20%	£562	0.00%	£420,974	-5.7%	1.2	9.3%
Farming	1170	0.3%	395	-0.50%	£93	1.10%	£79,508	0.8%	1.6	2.6%
Financial Services	1055	3.8%	75	0.00%	£17	9.10%	£16,114	5.1%	0.6	5.7%
Public Administration	745	1.3%	45	0.00%	£497	0.41%	£667,114	-0.8%	1.5	-7.5%
Advanced Manufacturing	690	7.5%	20	-7.80%	£90	7.87%	£129,748	0.3%	0.9	-7.3%
Creative Industries	660	-1.4%	275	3.20%	£33	-1.28%	£50,077	0.2%	1.1	1.1%
Ports and Logistics	465	-3.1%	60	0.00%	£25	0.52%	£54,190	3.8%	0.5	-17.1%
Utilities	410	-8.7%	20	-4.40%	£33	-0.75%	£80,298	8.7%	0.9	-37.9%
Digital Manufacturing	365	13.9%	15	-9.70%	£53	14.12%	£145,213	0.2%	1.7	0.8%
Digital and Creative	355	-0.3%	120	2.70%	£16	-8.23%	£46,255	-8.0%	0.9	-2.6%
Agri-Food	305	-1.0%	20	14.90%	£20	-5.10%	£64,656	-4.2%	0.7	27.6%
Clean Energy	270	1.1%	5	0.00%	£39	1.79%	£145,213	0.6%	0.8	4.1%
Fossil Fuels	180	4.4%	5	0.00%	£6	4.38%	£36,085	0.0%	1.0	27.9%
Mining	50	14.9%	5	0.00%	£4	15.83%	£79,508	0.8%	3.5	724.2%
Defence	0	0.0%	0	0.00%	£0	0.00%		0.0%	0.0	0.0%

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of BRES 2025 and Regional GVA, 2025

Like Cherwell, West Oxfordshire's growth is driven by local effects

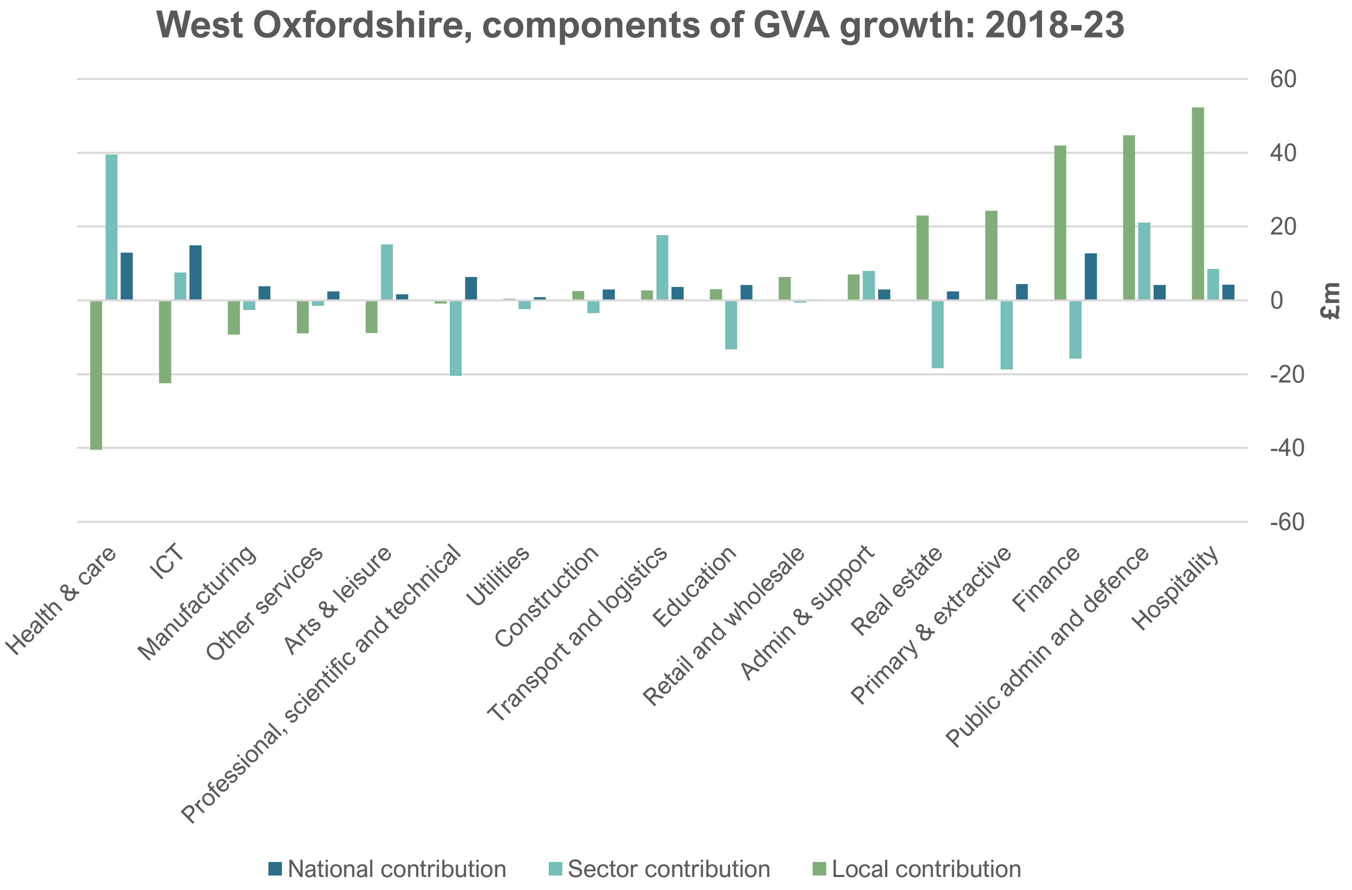
West Oxfordshire's economy outgrew national GVA trends over the period.

Of this, very little was due to the district being concentrated in fast-growing sectors at the national level.

Instead, the majority of additional GVA growth reflects stronger-than-expected performance within sectors relative to national and sector-specific benchmarks.

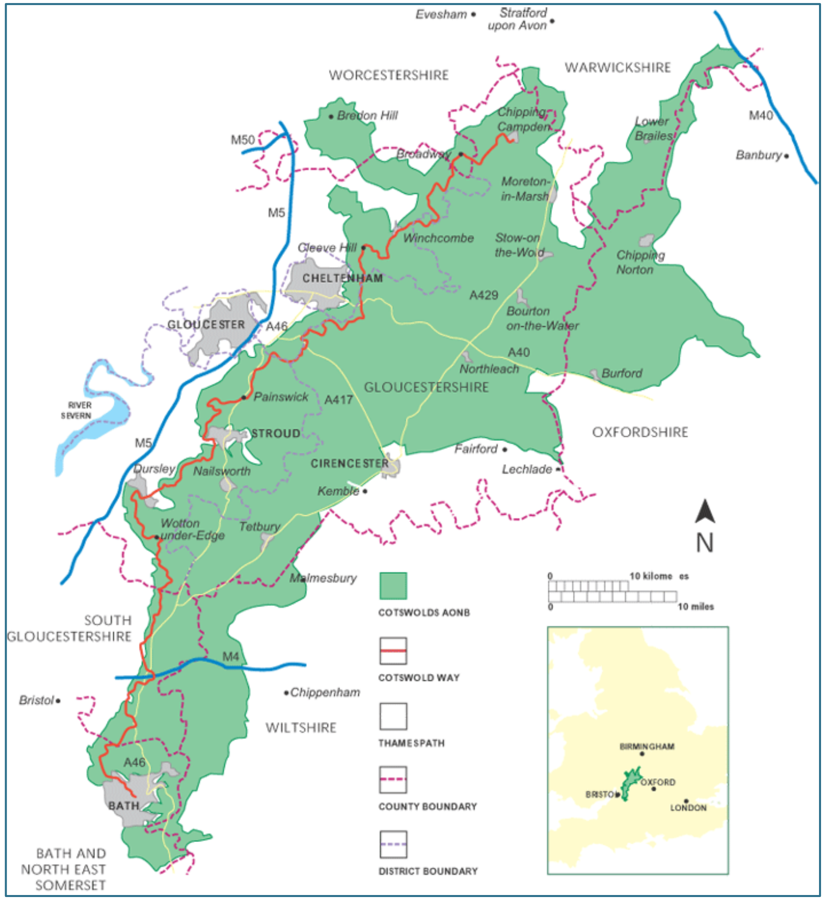
Across sectors:

- Strong local outperformance in hospitality, public administration and financial services
- Weaker performance relative to benchmarks in health and ICT activities



Above average employment in tourism industries is connected to West Oxfordshire's natural assets and visitor attractions

West Oxfordshire Visitor Economy (2024)	
Staying visitor trips	487,600
Day visits	3,101,000
Total visitor related spend	£260m
FTE employment	2,567
Proportion of all employment	6%



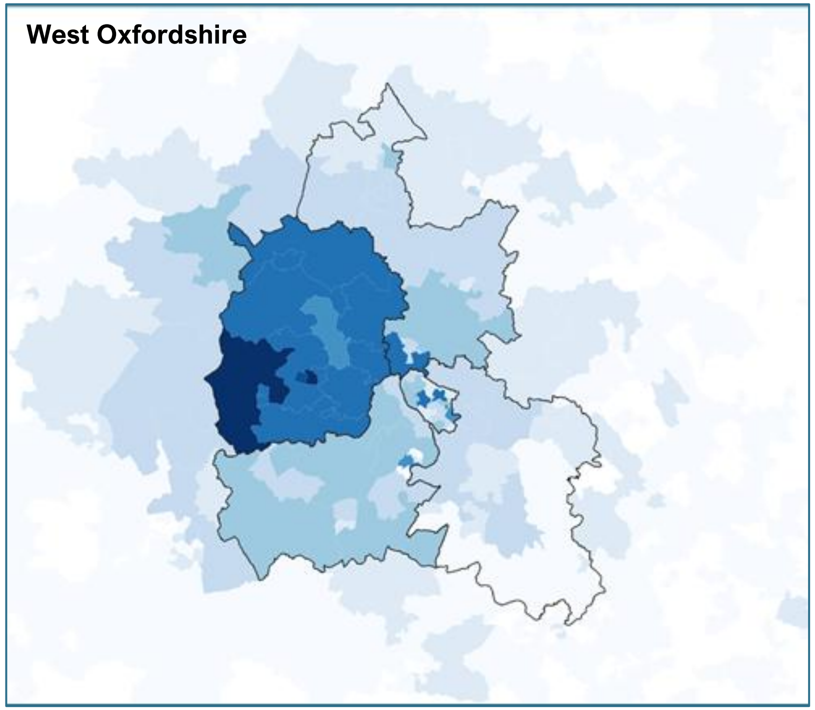
West Oxfordshire's visitor economy is a major contributor to the Cotswolds brand; As part of Cotswold Plus, the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) led by Cotswolds Tourism, West Oxfordshire is covered by the partnership's remit for responsible marketing and coordinated destination management, ensuring the district's visitor economy is integrated into a wider strategic framework across the Cotswolds

West Oxfordshire's visitor offer includes major heritage attractions such as **Blenheim Palace**, alongside high-quality accommodation, nature-based experiences, and independent retail. These assets are also marketed via Experience Oxfordshire

The Cotswolds Destination Management Plan highlights key growth opportunities around strengthening sustainable tourism, widening the region's appeal beyond its iconic villages, enhancing year-round visitor experiences, and improving digital-first marketing and partnership working

Source: Cotswolds Tourism Destination Management Plan, Economic Impact of West Oxfordshire's Visitor Economy 2024

Transport times are a constraint on growth



Travel Time Indexed to England 2019	Travel time in minutes to nearest employment centre with 100-499 jobs				Travel time in minutes to nearest employment centre with 500-4999 jobs			
	Public Transport	Cycle	Car	Walking	Public Transport	Cycle	Car	Walking
England	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oxfordshire	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.6	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1
West Oxfordshire	1.6	1.5	1.2	2.3	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.5

Commuting data shows that West Oxfordshire is generally a self-contained labour market, with some linkages to Oxford City. There are weaker labour market ties with Cherwell and Vale, as well as westward into the Cotswolds.

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 identifies that 80% of all commuting journeys are made by car, which has implications on congestion and air quality. This high car reliance is driven by poor public transport connectivity to key employment sites.

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of Census 2021, DfT Transport Data and West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

The primary challenge for residents is housing affordability, compounded by the slow pace of new developments

Housing purchase affordability ratios						
Local authority name	1998/99	2004/05	2009/10	2014/15	2019/20	2023/24
West Oxfordshire	5.13	8.95	9.19	8.94	9.49	9.09
England	4.37	7.67	7.59	7.6	7.98	7.89

House Delivery against LHN Standard Method			
LA	**Actual Net Additional Dwellings (2024/25)**	**Difference to old LHN Standard Method**	**Difference to new LHN Standard Method**
West Oxfordshire	304	-245	-601

Housing affordability in West Oxfordshire has declined over the past twenty years, mirroring trends across Oxfordshire. At present, only Oxford and South Oxfordshire have greater affordability challenges.

Historically, **West Oxfordshire has underperformed in housing delivery**, constructing fewer homes than the previous national targets required. The revised NPPF has further increased this shortfall, with only Oxford showing a poorer housing delivery record.

According to the Oxford Growth Commission, West Oxfordshire is committed to meeting minimum housing targets outlined in its Local Plan. Significant projects like Salt Cross contribute positively, but issues such as **fragmented land ownership continue to hinder timely delivery**

Source: Metro Dynamics analysis of MHCLG data sets, Oxford Growth Commission, 2025

Engagement Summary

Transport. As a rural district, West Oxfordshire is heavily reliant on car commuting. There is an emerging opportunity around a proposed A40 Mass Rapid Transit looking to connect Witney and surrounding towns with Oxford, as outlined in the OxRail plan.

Visitor Economy. With 12% of the district falling within the Cotswolds, there is high visitor interest and a strong existing offer. There is an opportunity to better link this into the education system and wider visitor economy assets, including the incoming Puy du Fou attraction.

Sectors. Brize Norton represents an underutilised specialised workforce with limited spin-out into a wider cluster to date. The area also has connections into Motorsport Valley, with an F1 team based north of Chipping Norton, offering further potential to build on the area’s future mobility strengths.

Place Quality. Housing delivery has been slow, though the area remains highly desirable. West Oxfordshire's towns have a strong community of local businesses across retail and hospitality that have worked to improve the general attractiveness of the area - a very strong foundation to build on.

Spatial Area	West Oxfordshire		
Objective	Enable West Oxfordshire to sustain high productivity and resilience by unlocking housing delivery, strengthening foundational and visitor economies, and better integrating its assets into Oxfordshire’s wider innovation and labour market		
Context ⇒	**Rationale ⇒**	**Priorities ⇒**	**Impacts**
West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural economy, with activity clustered around Witney, Carterton, Burford and Chipping Norton The district accounts for around 16% of Oxfordshire’s GVA, yet demonstrates above-average productivity relative to the county average and strong resident earnings (third highest in the county) Employment is concentrated in foundational sectors: leisure & hospitality, retail, health & social care, education, and farming. Life sciences, digital, and advanced manufacturing are present and growing, but from a lower base than neighbouring districts The visitor economy is a major asset, strongly linked to the Cotswolds brand, generating substantial visitor spend and employment West Oxfordshire has an older population profile and relatively low deprivation compared to nationally Housing affordability is a growing constraint, with declining affordability over time and persistent under-delivery of housing against targets Transport connectivity is weak, with high car dependency and limited public transport access to key employment centres, including Oxford and Science Vale. Many of West Oxfordshire’s market towns show strong sense of civic pride, with local businesses and stakeholders taking an active involvement in place-shaping; however, local capacity is inconsistent across certain areas.	**Housing is a binding constraint** Limited housing delivery and affordability pressures restrict labour supply, workforce retention and inward migration, undermining otherwise strong productivity performance **Key assets offer opportunities for spillover effects** Strategic assets (e.g. RAF Brize Norton, farming and land-based activities, and proximity to Motorsports Valley and future mobility clusters) provide a strong foundation for deeper integration with the wider county innovation economy **Connectivity challenges** Poor public transport limits access to higher-value jobs elsewhere in Oxfordshire, reinforcing car dependency and constraining inclusive growth	**Now…** Position housing delivery as a core economic enabler by accelerating priority sites and explicitly linking new homes to workforce retention, affordability pressures and West Oxfordshire’s role in supporting the wider Oxfordshire labour market Strengthen productivity and resilience in the foundational and visitor economy by targeting SME support toward tourism, hospitality, retail and land-based businesses, building on strong local business networks to support year-round trading and local vibrancy **Next…** Develop targeted workforce and skills pathways linked to RAF Brize Norton to ensure that skills & contractor demand benefits the local labour market & supply chains and creates opportunities for the exiting workforce to remain and progress within West Oxfordshire Strengthen connections with Motorsports Valley and the emerging future mobility cluster across north Oxfordshire to position West Oxfordshire as a complementary location for high-value engineering, supply-chain activity and specialist skills Strengthen collaboration between Cotswold Plus LVEP and Experience Oxfordshire to better join up West Oxfordshire’s visitor economy with emerging event and theme park-based attractions in Cherwell in order to extend visitor stays and increase spend **Future…** Improve connectivity and labour-market integration by championing the Carterton–Witney–Oxford corridor and other strategic transport improvements, reducing car dependency and widening access to higher-value employment opportunities across the county Embed West Oxfordshire as a complementary pillar of Oxfordshire’s innovation economy in areas such as land-based industries by aligning its high-quality living environment, workforce supply, visitor economy and specialist skills with the county’s science, technology and advanced manufacturing strengths	Sustained high productivity with improved resilience of the local economy Stronger spillovers between rural, visitor and innovation economies. Improved housing affordability Better access to employment opportunities across Oxfordshire through enhanced connectivity West Oxfordshire functions as a complementary pillar of the Oxfordshire economy Improved SME capability and resilience in tourism and foundational sectors Clearer pathways between West Oxfordshire assets and county-wide innovation clusters Greater visibility of local skills and employment opportunities
Why now?	**Housing affordability pressures, constrained connectivity and growing demand from Oxfordshire’s innovation economy mean that action is needed now to prevent workforce constraints from undermining West Oxfordshire’s strong productivity base**		

Next Steps

Next steps to mobilise this strategy and delivery framework

This report has been prepared for Oxfordshire County Council and is intended to support collective economic development action by OCC, Enterprise Oxfordshire and District Council partners. As such, the following next steps are recommended:

- One of the biggest takeaways from this work is the recognition that Oxfordshire is a complex economic geography, with county-wide constraints (set out in Report 2A) and spatial growth opportunities (Report 2B). In a time of change, with local government reorganisation underway and a potential devolution settlement, it is important to focus on the functions, integration, and leadership required at the county level to deliver the economic growth priorities. Stewarding collaboration around a set of goals and functions with agreed pan-county resource is especially important through the transition. Planning out and agreeing the resource and what funding is required is a sensible next step (e.g. enterprise zone monies). Enterprise Oxfordshire, as a Teckal company of the county council, is an important vehicle for delivery. EquinOx was mentioned at various points of the work, and we have built it into some of the spatial priorities around inward investment. These are good examples of pan-county forms that deliver the economic growth functions regardless of future administrative boundaries.
- Several stakeholders raised the significant number of existing groups, partnership boards and other collaboration mechanisms that are overlapping in function and purpose. Establishing new partnerships to deliver the actions set out in this report risks adding to this already busy and confusing picture and we suggest mapping the existing partnerships to understand the role and responsibilities of each in delivering these priorities.
- The four spatial priorities each have now, next and future priorities to focus on. Whilst these should collectively be championed at county-level, each requires different partners to bring forward. It is recommended that you start with mobilising a small and focused group around one spatial area to agree a joint plan, actions and owners. Working with partners on a plan could then highlight groups that are duplicating or no longer required, and incremental action taken to streamline from this.

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Metro —— Dynamics

3 Waterhouse Square
138 Holborn
London
EC1N 2SW

020 3865 3082

1 St Peter's Square
Manchester
M2 3DE

0161 8833736