

## **Divisions Affected - All**

### **CABINET 20 July 2021**

## **Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Consultation**

### **Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to

- a) Consider and agree the process for the Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 (Part 2) document for public consultation commencing on 30 July;
- b) Further consider the Plan at its meeting on 21 September after an all member seminar, with a view to making formal representations on the Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 (Part 2) by the closing date of 8 October 2021.

## **Executive Summary**

1. The draft Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Reg 18 (Stage 2) consultation document is being considered for endorsement by all local planning authorities<sup>1</sup> in Oxfordshire in July. Once the draft Plan is endorsed, it will go out for public consultation on 30th July for 10 weeks to 8 October.
2. The draft Plan contains five Themes within which sit a number of strategic policy options. The Plan also sets out five potential spatial options as to where future growth up to 2050 could be located in Oxfordshire, as well as three levels of housing growth.
3. County Council officers have had significant input into shaping the draft Plan over the past two and a half years. The final version of the Plan is attached at Annex 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of the White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council

## **Background**

### **The Partnership**

4. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (OP2050) is being produced by the five local planning authorities in Oxfordshire, working in close partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and OxLEP throughout. The city and district councils formally approve each key stage.
5. A core team was established to co-ordinate the production of the OP2050 working closely with officers at the councils.
6. Development of the consultation document and evidence base has involved the Growth Board's Oxfordshire Plan Members Advisory Group, the Oxfordshire Heads of Planning Group, a technical Liaison Group and specialist officer input throughout the plan-making process.

### **Progress to date**

7. The 2018 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal included a commitment by the Oxfordshire Councils to prepare a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (The Oxfordshire Plan) alongside Government investment of £215m for affordable housing and infrastructure improvements.
8. The first major consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan (covering Plan vision, objectives, aspirations and possible spatial typologies) took place in February and March 2019 (Regulation 18 Part 1), and then a vision for the Oxfordshire Plan was developed in response to the consultation responses.
9. An extensive evidence base was commissioned, and Sustainability Appraisal scoping & ongoing testing has been undertaken.
10. The team also undertook number of further consultation steps including initiating a 'Call for Ideas' (promoted development sites and other project proposals), stakeholder events and engagement with young people.
11. The relationship was considered with other plans & strategies and strategic influencers such as the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Oxfordshire's Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS), Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).
12. Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Growth sits alongside the Oxfordshire Plan's vision and was prepared and approved by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board & has been agreed by all Oxfordshire councils. The vision enables the closer coordination of planning, transport, infrastructure and economic development, amongst others.
13. The core team has also undertaken Duty to Co-operate scoping and continuous engagement with neighbouring Councils. This has included the Oxford City Council and District Councils, the County Council and the LEP, together with

authorities adjoining Oxfordshire including Thames Valley, Bucks and Swindon. It has also included the 'prescribed bodies', such as Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England & NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups.

14. The team have also updated the Local Development Scheme which sets out the key forward dates, prepared a detailed Equalities Statement and a new Statement of Community Involvement, which sets out the basis for engagement with the community, particularly the 'remote and online' arrangements in the time of Covid.

## **Previous reports to Cabinet**

15. The Oxfordshire Plan has been brought to Cabinet on two previous occasions. On 18 September 2018 Cabinet resolved to:

- a. note and support the Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the Joint Strategic Spatial Plan (*JSSP is now referenced as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050*);
- b. note and support the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2018 for the JSSP which will undergo a six-week period of formal public consultation; and
- c. note and support the JSSP.

16. In early 2019 the first consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 took place. This first stage of the plan making process focussed on the Vision, Aspirations and Objectives of the Plan (Regulation 18 Part 1). A report to Cabinet on 19 March 2019 asked Members to consider supporting the Plan. Members referenced:

- Overall support for the draft Objectives and suggested further strengthening key messages about the need for an increase in sustainable modes of travel, and to enhancing messages around public health and the environment;
- Highlighting concepts such as the need for charging points for Electric Vehicles into all premises together with full fibre broadband;
- A real focus on the need to ensure that cycling and walking levels and traffic reduction are radically improved;
- The aspiration to retain Oxfordshire's status as being amongst one of the best areas in the country for recycling and waste prevention;
- A recognition that Oxfordshire is part of a wider region.

17. Cabinet therefore resolved to:

- note and endorse the draft response to the consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (Vision, Aspirations and Objectives);
- note and endorse the draft response to the consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Document.

18. After more than two years of work by the Plan team, the city, district and county councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership, the second stage of Plan

consultation will commence on 30 July once all local authorities have approved the draft Plan at their Cabinet and Executive Committee meetings during July.

## **Developing the Plan**

19. The Oxfordshire Plan is being prepared as a Development Plan under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act 2004 (as amended). Once adopted the Oxfordshire Plan will form part of the Development Plan of each District and where appropriate will carry weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals for development, alongside the adopted Local Plan.
20. The development of the Oxfordshire Plan follows the Local Plan regulations (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as amended).
21. The core team is now at the Regulation 18 stage, with significant discretion on content so long as the proposals are backed by evidence and the Sustainability Appraisal has played a major role in shaping the detail. The Regulation 18 is a consultation stage at which different options can be tested. The Regulation 19 stage (the draft Plan) is where the Plan takes shape with policy detail.
22. A consultation document has been prepared that takes a series of proposals from the Planning Authorities as its foundation. It has been expanded into a full draft consultation document following discussion with Councillors representing each Council on the Advisory Group and officers. The draft consultation document seeks to ensure the content is strategic, setting the framework for Oxfordshire over 30 years (twice the operational length of a normal Local Plan) and shaping future growth, policies and setting the content for new Local Plans.
23. The consultation document sets out to show how joint action at an Oxfordshire level, where issues impact on more than one District, can add to what is already in place in the adopted Local Plans. The document consults on options that have the potential to set a framework for Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, with options on policy criteria with some matters more appropriately left to Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans.
24. The Regulation 18 stage is concerned with considering options on policies and spatial distribution and have sought to present such in the consultation document as 'preferred options' with 'alternative options' where appropriate. This is not the final plan but shows the direction of travel. The Plan sets out how the team intend to progress from Regulation 18 to the Regulation 19 stage. Several local plans have been adopted since the Regulation 18 (Part 1) consultation in February 2019, so the Regulation 18 part 2 takes into account the development already planned in all the adopted Local Plans.

## **Scope of the Plan**

25. As agreed through the 2018 Oxfordshire Growth and Housing Deal, the Oxfordshire Plan is being prepared as a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan covering 2020-2050.

26. The Oxfordshire Plan aims to be a different sort of plan. The Plan aims to be ambitious and transformational and to occupy new policy areas; some require explanation in the plan at this stage; especially on climate change and environmental enhancement. The plan seeks to achieve cleaner, greener growth & higher quality development as a result of the proposed strategy and associated policies.
27. The consultation document describes 32 Policy Options that will be tested at the Regulation 18 stage. The Plan sets out why options are included, what the challenge is and why the response is proposed.
28. Possible policies for the Plan were identified following Reg 18 part 1, which the partnership considered. These have been subsequently expanded through consideration of evidence, such as the Sustainability Appraisal, into new policy proposals judged appropriate for consideration at the Oxfordshire level.
29. The proposed policy content covers strategic, Oxfordshire-wide policy options where issues related to more than one District. The Plan aims to set a long-term, overarching and high-level spatial planning framework for Oxfordshire for the period up to 2050.
30. Policies are in some case establishing an enabling/framework, others are more detailed. Others will be used in formulation of more detailed Local Plan policies.
31. The development approach is set out under 5 themes that will create a county wide long-term framework. 32 strategic policies are proposed across five themes:
- **Theme One:** Addressing climate change.
  - **Theme Two:** Improving environmental quality.
  - **Theme Three:** Creating strong and healthy communities.
  - **Theme Four:** Planning for sustainable travel and connectivity.
  - **Theme Five:** Creating jobs and providing homes.
32. Under these themes county-wide policies are being proposed, including policies on climate change, environmental net gain, health impact assessment and urban renewal due to the retail changes impacting on Oxfordshire's town and city centres, business site intensification and high design standards for new development.
33. The Plan is closely aligned with the development of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the OXIS infrastructure assessment. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan that will accompany the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan will be based on update of OXIS. This will complete before the Regulation 19 stage.
34. The plan will also have a Monitoring Framework at the Regulation 19 stage that is aligned with the OXIS monitoring framework.

35. The options consulted upon at Regulation 18 part 2 will be turned into final proposals by the Regulation 19 stage.

## Strategic Spatial Options

36. The Plan will also establish housing and economic growth requirements to 2050 and broad locations for growth. The Plan proposes consulting on the options for the distribution of growth through spatial options.

37. Five spatial strategy options have been identified. These are to be tested through the Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation.

38. The five spatial strategy options identified are:

- **Option 1:** Focus on opportunities at larger settlements and planned growth locations.
- **Option 2:** Focus on Oxford-led growth.
- **Option 3:** Focus on opportunities in sustainable transport corridors & at strategic transport hubs.
- **Option 4:** Focus on strengthening business locations.
- **Option 5:** Focus on supporting rural communities.

39. The adopted local plans already establish the distribution of significant growth to 2031/35/36 and are taken account of in the spatial strategy and proposed spatial options.

40. At this stage the Plan is not identifying individual options that can necessarily accommodate all of Oxfordshire's growth over next 30 years, nor identifying any one of options taken in isolation as the eventual long-term spatial strategy. At the next stage when a draft Plan is published (Regulation 19) broad locations for growth will be identified, with Local Plans being the mechanism for final site allocations. The eventual long-term spatial strategy is anticipated to draw from all of the five strategic spatial options at this next stage.

## Level of new growth

41. The core team have undertaken an assessment of the growth needs of Oxfordshire up to 2050, the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA), which will be published alongside the Plan given its important role as an evidence document. It sets out three scenarios for housing need:

- One that is based on the Government's standard methodology,
- A mid-range option, and
- A higher one that factors in additional economic growth.

42. The decision on which level of growth will be taken around Christmas 2021 to inform the Regulation 19 stage draft plan. In setting the level of planned housing provision, the OGNA will be one of the factors considered alongside a number of others.

43. The strategy seeks to take account of the five District Local Plans that have been adopted in Oxfordshire and take account of the growth already committed in each District, totalling circa 75,000 houses. The consultation document clarifies that the housing need assessment is just a starting point, the current Local Plan growth up to 2031/35/36 has to be taken into account and leaves a smaller 'residual' figure of new development to be planned for in the Oxfordshire Plan.

## **The relationship with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc**

44. The consultation document also includes a section on the relationship with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. The aspiration is for the work on the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan to strongly inform and influence government's thinking on the Arc Spatial Framework.

45. MHCLG have announced the development of a Spatial Framework for the Arc, to take place in stages:

- Policy Statement – February 2021 (MHCLG announced a focus on brownfield land, new settlements and climate change)
- Vision consultation – Summer 2021
- Options consultation - Spring 2022
- Draft Framework consultation – Autumn 2022

46. The Oxfordshire Plan will help ensure that Oxfordshire has a strong voice in the development of the Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework and that our interests are taken into account.

47. Decisions on the development of the Arc will also feed into the site assessment that is to be undertaken as part of the work to prepare the Regulation 19 draft Plan.

## **County Council officer input into the preparation of the draft Plan**

48. Since the Plan's inception in 2018 county council officers have been significantly involved in plan preparation and working up the evidence base for the Plan. Officers have also attended regular meetings of the OP2050 liaison group consisting of planning policy managers from all authorities. The more senior Heads of Planning meet on a monthly basis.

49. The county council has worked to ensure that the plan work is strongly aligned to the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS), which the County Council has project managed. An officer in the Infrastructure Strategy & Policy team devotes two days a week to lead on the text and policies on transport and connectivity for the draft Plan, as well as leading on the Transport Assessment evidence base for the Plan.

50. A county council Cabinet Member, Cllr Duncan Enright, attends the Growth Board Oxfordshire Plan 2050 sub-group.

51. Other work that the county council has been and continues to be involved include:

- Environment and natural capital evidence base
- Energy
- Healthy place shaping
- Climate Action.

52. Officers from across the county council have been participating in various Expert Groups including:

- Water
- Biodiversity/natural capital and landscape
- Energy and climate change
- Healthy place shaping
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Boat dwellers and Gypsy and Traveller needs.

53. Other Expert Groups will be established including:

- Historic environment
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Urban Design
- Circular economy
- Viability

## **Financial Implications**

54. There are no budgetary implications for the county council. Work on the OP2050 is undertaken within existing officer time.

Rob Finlayson, Finance BP (Communities and C,OD & CDAI)

## **Legal Implications**

55. There are no legal implications for the county council. The Plan is a strategic plan for the four districts and the city council.

Christian Smith, Principal Solicitor Contracts

## **Equality & Inclusion and Sustainability Implications**

56. The draft Plan contains the following Objectives that seek to ensure as far as possible Oxfordshire's residents are able to lead productive and healthy lives:



- To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- To conserve and enhance Oxfordshire's historic, built and natural environments, recognising the benefits these assets contribute to quality of life, local identity and economic success.
- To protect and enhance Oxfordshire's distinctive landscape character, recreational and biodiversity value by identifying strategic green and blue infrastructure, improving connectivity between environmental assets and securing a net gain for biodiversity.
- To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging active and healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.
- To sustain and strengthen Oxfordshire's economic role and reputation by building on our key strengths and relationships.
- To ensure that the benefits and opportunities arising from Oxfordshire's economic success are felt by all of Oxfordshire's communities.
- To meet Oxfordshire's housing needs, including affordable housing, and to ensure that housing delivery is phased appropriately to support the needs of our communities.
- To ensure that new housing is flexible to meet the varied needs of people through all stages of life.
- To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.
- To reduce the need to travel and to support people in making sustainable transport choices by providing inclusive, integrated, safe and convenient pedestrian, cycle and public transport infrastructure linking communities.
- To ensure that communities are digitally connected and that innovative technologies are supported.

## **Communications**

57. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has a website <https://oxfordshireplan.org/> where the Regulation 18 part 2 consultation documents will sit. The website will be the key tool for the engagement during the consultation period.

58. The website will contain:

- Overview text about the Oxfordshire Plan, stage reached and consultation purpose.
- A consultation response form, including a series of questions included.
- A summary leaflet.
- A downloadable Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation document.
- The ability to access the key accompanying documents that the Councils will receive.
- Link to the supporting evidence including the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- Link to the OGNA report

- Link to secondary evidence such as the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and the OXIS which supports the Oxfordshire Plan but which is being consulted upon separately.
- Text confirming that the County Minerals and Waste Plan is separate.
- A download form for proposals to be submitted by site promoters.

### Online events for which dates are being confirmed.

- District-based webinars: 2 per district, 1st to take place in 3rd week of August (from 16th), 2nd to take place in 3rd week of September (commencing 20th)
- CPRE webinar date confirmed as 19<sup>th</sup> August.
- A number of specialist webinars covering Environment and Developers. Each of these is to take place in the week commencing Tuesday 31st August.
- OxLEP Business events: 2 events, one w/c 19th July and one in mid-September
- Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce: July 6<sup>th</sup>.

### The future timetable

59. The scale of the work undertaken at the Regulation 18 (Part 2) stage puts the plan-making process in a good position to meet the future timetable that was agreed with MHCLG in February 2021.

60. Plan stages for the district and city councils:

Stage	Timeline
Cabinet/ Executive Meetings	19th to 22nd July 2021 (County Council Cabinet meeting on 20 July)
Second Regulation 18 Consultation (on options)	30 <sup>th</sup> July - 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
Regulation 19 Consultation (draft plan)	May - June 2022
Submission	September 2022
Examination	November/December 2022
Inspectors Report	February/March 2023
Adoption	May/June 2023
Monitoring	From adoption onwards

NAME: Bill Cotton

Annexes:

1. Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Reg 18 (Stage 2) document

\*\*\* Published separately as Supplementary Documents.\*\*\*

2. Statement of Community Involvement
3. Duty to Co-operate Statement
4. Statement of Common Ground
5. Equalities Impact Assessment
6. Sustainability Appraisal
7. Habitats Regulations Assessment
8. Growth Needs Assessment

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