

Divisions Affected - all

CABINET

15 February 2022

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Stage 1

Report by Corporate Director for Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
 - a) Endorse the OxIS Stage 1 as the framework for assessing and identifying strategic infrastructure priorities across the County to 2040, and
 - b) Endorse the use of the OxIS multi-criteria appraisal (MCA) as the basis for the on-going assessment and prioritisation of infrastructure in relevant Council workstreams.

Executive Summary

2. This report introduces the completed, updated first stage of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), which covers the identification and prioritisation of strategic infrastructure needs to 2040. It asks the Cabinet to endorse Stage 1 of OxIS and to recommend its adoption as the basis for infrastructure assessment and prioritisation in other relevant workstreams. OxIS has been undertaken as a partnership project with District Councils and other Stakeholders, and this Cabinet report follows consideration of endorsement of OxIS Stage 1 by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on 25th January.

Introduction

3. The original Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) was endorsed by the then Oxfordshire Growth Board in November 2017. It has helped secure significant investment for infrastructure in Oxfordshire, particularly for transport schemes being funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (the Deal) and the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).
4. A refresh of OxIS was a commitment in the Deal and offers an opportunity to update our infrastructure requirements to reflect, for example submitted and approved local plans and proposals identified by third party infrastructure providers such as utility companies and the Health Service Clinical Commissioning Group.

5. Importantly, the OxIS refresh also allows us to re-evaluate our infrastructure requirements in the context of the current priorities of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, for example to examine them in the light of declared climate change emergencies and a wish to maximise environmental enhancements.
6. The outline scope of the OxIS update was presented and agreed by the then Growth Board in June 2020. This included:
 - A set of five key themes in which to consider infrastructure prioritisation/ investment.
 - The arrangements for overseeing the delivery of the project work, with agreement that the County Council would project manage, alongside the procurement of consultants to undertake technical work.
 - Agreement of the governance arrangements for the project.
 - The need to ensure wide ranging engagement with key infrastructure providers such as the Clinical Commissioning Group, Utilities and Education.
 - The outline budget to undertake the consultancy technical work, drawn from the Growth Deal Capacity Fund.
7. The Board also agreed to split the OxIS project into two parts. The first, Stage 1, an appendix to this report, looks to 2040. The key documents informing this stage are the submitted and adopted local plans and their associated documents, particularly the Infrastructure Delivery Plans.
8. The second stage, OxIS Stage 2, is planned to align with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and will provide an assessment of the strategic infrastructure requirements emanating from the conclusions of this Plan.
9. Following endorsement of the project scope, City Science were appointed as project consultants and began work in Autumn 2020. Stage 1 of the OxIS update is now complete, with commencement of Stage 2 to align with the development of the Oxfordshire Plan.

OxIS Methodology

10. The main elements to stage 1 of OxIS are as follows:
 - An outline of the Oxfordshire spatial and place-based context, including showing those areas where new housing and employment is planned, and consequent areas of focus for consideration of new infrastructure.
 - A summary of currently planned housing and employment as outlined in local plans in Oxfordshire, as well as surrounding areas that could have impacts on Oxfordshire.
 - Identification and baseline description of the different types of infrastructure in Oxfordshire.
 - Identification and description of Oxfordshire's future infrastructure needs to 2040. This also shows the spatial impact of planned schemes, as well as where there are gaps in planned infrastructure against identified needs.
 - The development of a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) framework for assessment of identified infrastructure schemes, detailed in the next section.

- The appraisal and scoring of identified strategic infrastructure schemes - 271 in total - against the MCA and the grouping of these by areas of focus and by spatial impact.
 - An assessment of infrastructure funding issues and opportunities, including the outline funding 'gap'.
11. At the core of the refresh of OxIS is a re-examination of the method used to rank or prioritise infrastructure, the so called Multi Criteria Assessment or MCA. The earlier version of OXIS had a well-developed MCA which the refresh could build upon. It was however a child of its time and no longer reflects the current priorities of Oxfordshire.
 12. The new MCA has been developed to reflect these priorities, placing greater emphasis upon for example either maximising the benefits or where necessary minimising the climate and environmental impacts of the infrastructure. It is closely aligned to the Oxfordshire Vision previously endorsed by the then Growth Board and then approved by its partner councils (including the County Council in April 2021). The revised MCA is built upon the five pillars or themes that the then Growth Board approved in April 2020. These are:
 - Environment,
 - Health,
 - Place-making (updated to be place-shaping in the final report),
 - Productivity
 - Connectivity
 13. Within these five pillars there are a further set of sub-categories against which infrastructure schemes are assessed, a total of 25 in all. The net effect of this is to allow a more sophisticated and comprehensive understanding of the impacts and benefits of proposed infrastructure, beyond how it enables housing growth, and marks a departure from the previous MCA in the previous OxIS which placed heavy emphasis on enabling planned housing growth.
 14. Having established this methodology, the report - in annex 1 - then demonstrates how this is applied to the current infrastructure requirements of Oxfordshire. The MCA also includes assessment of how infrastructure schemes relate to current local plan housing and employment allocations, defined as 'growth' in the matrix. It is proposed the 'growth' label in Stage 1 report is replaced with a 'current alignment with local plans' label to clarify this relates to currently planned development.
 15. To ensure that this illustration of how OxIS would prioritise infrastructure was as current as possible, all partners were asked to ensure that the list of infrastructure projects was as up to date as it could be, with the understanding that these projects needed to be worked to at least an agreed level of detail necessary for accurate assessment to be made.
 16. Where infrastructure projects are promoted by partners but had not yet reached the detail needed for assessment they are noted in the report as such. The

opportunity is there to add these or other projects in the future, subject to the necessary information being available.

17. It is important to note that the purpose of the project was to agree a common MCA methodology for infrastructure assessment, and it is this methodology for which endorsement is sought. To enable this the report offers an illustration - at a point in time - of what the current known infrastructure requirements of Oxfordshire would look like when this prioritisation methodology is applied. Inevitably this list of schemes will change over time.
18. Overall, OxIS Stage 1 provides a comprehensive and up to date assessment of current infrastructure needs in Oxfordshire, as well as giving an updated framework for prioritisation of identified strategic infrastructure schemes.
19. The project has not in itself generated new schemes but has drawn these together from other evidence base documents. Importantly this process has shown that there are gaps in planned schemes against the themes identified. This is particularly the case for the environment and health-based themes.

Project governance arrangements

20. OxIS Stage 1 has been progressed as a partnership project, recognising that all Future Oxfordshire Partnership members have an interest in ensuring that the planning and funding of strategic infrastructure is done in an effective and co-ordinated way. To enable this to happen proper governance was put in place at the outset of the project including:
 - Establishing structured project management processes, including a dedicated project management resource from the County Council.
 - Setting up an officer project working group to oversee the projects delivery, with representatives from all Oxfordshire local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).
 - Providing regular updates to the Growth Deal Programme Board and to the Executive officer Group of FOP.
 - Ensuring that the Infrastructure Advisory Group had political oversight on OxIS progress.
 - Procurement of specialist consultants, City Science, within budget to undertake the technical project work.

Stakeholder engagement

21. To ensure that OxIS Stage 1 took a comprehensive approach to identification of infrastructure needs and schemes, it was recognised at the outset that wider engagement was needed to complete work effectively. This was done in two stages, with focused infrastructure stakeholder engagement early on in the work, followed by wider public/stakeholder engagement on draft report.
22. The first engagement in winter 2020/21 consisted of several themed workshops, which were set up with important infrastructure stakeholders, particularly those involved in infrastructure provision. This ensured that key policy, strategy, and

planning documents were identified, as well as any strategic projects that could be put forward for appraisal.

23. The second engagement was carried out in summer 2021, with a web-based public/stakeholder engagement process, based on the draft Stage 1 report outputs undertaken over 6 weeks. The consultation included utilising an interactive project map that enabled users to identify the location of infrastructure projects and to see how they scored against the 5 themes of OxIS - so as to understand relative priority. It also included a summary of all the key parts of the OxIS report, including summarising the multi-criteria framework and the placed-based approach to categorising infrastructure projects.
24. Overall, around 150 responses were received from individuals and organisations with the key messages being:
 - Strong support for prioritising the environment in any infrastructure considerations, followed by health and place-shaping.
 - An emphasis on ensuring that OxIS supports the urgency or achieving net-zero ambitions.
 - A wish to ensure that future infrastructure requirements recognise the changing ways of working post COVID-19.
 - A request that the connectivity and interrelationship between infrastructure schemes be reflected in the MCA.
25. The consultation has allowed the Stage 1 work to be refined in light of comments, for example taking into account embedded carbon in scheme scoring under environment needs. It has also allowed for more proposed strategic infrastructure schemes to be added to the appraisal process, building on evidence submitted as part of the engagement.

Outcome of work undertaken for Stage 1

26. The outcome of the Stage 1 work is set out in 2 reports, which form the appendices to this report:
 - Stage 1 Technical Report, Dec 2021: This gives full detail on the OxIS process, infrastructure context for all relevant areas, identification of future infrastructure needs, the methodology and outcome of the MCA for all proposed infrastructure schemes.
 - Stage 1 Summary Report: Dec 2021: This gives an overview of the Stage 1 work, including key points from the full technical report.

Key considerations for the County Council

27. As set out above in the governance section, OxIS has been undertaken as a Future Oxfordshire Partnership project. Whilst OxIS covers many different infrastructure areas, many of the currently identified schemes that have been assessed are directly related to County Council responsibilities, particularly transport, education and waste management. For example, for transport there

are many public transport improvement and active travel schemes identified, building off evidence including the Bus Service Improvement Plan and existing Local Cycle and Walking Plans. For education there are many primary and secondary school improvements identified that are needed to support planned new local plan development.

28. OxIS Stage 1 has brought together proposed schemes in one updated list, and set out the multi-criteria framework which shows how schemes in these infrastructure areas relate to wider identified needs and planned new housing and employment development in current local plans. The OxIS framework is therefore a flexible and dynamic tool in understanding the benefits and impacts of proposed schemes. There is also opportunity for the framework to weight assessment within the criteria according to corporate priorities.
29. It should be noted that OxIS stage 1 output is only a point in time, and only assesses schemes identified as strategic infrastructure. There is therefore an opportunity to use the framework more flexibility to look at other smaller schemes in different infrastructure areas as they are planned, as well as new strategic schemes as they come forward. It also gives an opportunity to look at how schemes can be improved or enhanced to meet wider needs.
30. As an example, OxIS is already informing development of a pipeline of transport schemes, which will in turn help develop future year capital programmes and funding bids following further feasibility and scheme design. The multi-criteria framework can be used iteratively as part of the scheme development process, giving an understanding of how schemes relate to wider needs as more detail is known about benefits and impacts.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

31. The needs-based MCA at the heart of OxIS fits well with many of the agreed Fair Deal Alliance priorities, allowing for assessment of infrastructure priorities against these. The key linkages are set out in the table below:

Fair Deal Alliance objectives	Identified OxIS sub themes/ needs (under the themes of Environment (E), Health (H), Place-Shaping (PS), Productivity (P) and Connectivity (C))
Put action to address the climate emergency at the heart of our work	E1: Net Zero Carbon Emissions E2: Resilience to Climate Change
Tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire	H1: Reduced Health Inequalities P2: Reduce Oxfordshire's Socio-economic inequalities
Prioritise the health and well-being of residents	H5: Enhanced Mental Health and Wellbeing PS4: Socially Integrated Places
Support carers and the social care system	H3: Improved Health Service Access PS2: Safe and Secure Communities

Fair Deal Alliance objectives	Identified OxIS sub themes/ needs (under the themes of Environment (E), Health (H), Place-Shaping (PS), Productivity (P) and Connectivity (C))
Invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport system	PS5: Inclusive and Integrated Active Travel C4: Improved Sustainable Transport Connectivity Across Oxfordshire
Improve access to nature and green spaces	H2: Improved Access to Spaces for Physical Activity E3: Enhanced Natural Environment and Bio-diversity
Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential	PS1: Local and Liveable Communities P1: World Class Inclusive Education and Skills Development
Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economic and social benefit	P3: Attract and Retain Talent in Oxfordshire P5: Drive Economic Growth and Productive Employment

Financial Implications

32. The Stage 1 consultancy work undertaken by City Science came to a total cost of £72,650. In addition there was a cost of £5,000 to host and undertake the web-based consultation. The majority of this cost has been met from the Growth Deal Capacity Fund, apart from £4,250 which has been funded from Bus Service Improvement Plan monies, reflecting the need to take into account additional schemes proposed as part of this Plan following the OxIS consultation. There is currently £14,600 left to develop and deliver OxIS Stage 2, although the exact scope of Stage 2 needs to be worked up in more detail linked to the next stage of the Oxfordshire Plan. Project management of OxIS Stage 1 has been undertaken by the Strategic Infrastructure Co-ordinator in the Infrastructure Strategy Team at OCC. It is expected that they will also project manage OxIS Stage 2.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

33. There are no legal implications arising from the endorsement of OxIS Stage 1 by the partnership. OxIS is not a statutory document, and any of the proposed schemes included in the document would have their own decision-making and statutory processes to go through to enable delivery.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

34. Project management of OxIS has been undertaken by staff within the Infrastructure Strategy team, funded from County staffing budgets. It is expected that this staffing resource will also be able to be drawn on to assist embedding OxIS into wider workstreams. Any of the specific projects identified within OxIS would have their own staffing implications that would need planning for separately.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

35. As set out above, the OxIS needs-based MCA specifically includes sub-themes/needs related to equality and inclusion, particularly H1: Reduced Health Inequalities, and P2: Reduce Oxfordshire's Socio-economic Inequalities. This allows for any proposed infrastructure schemes to be easily assessed in relation to equality benefits and impacts.

Sustainability Implications

36. The OxIS needs-based MCA specifically includes sub-themes/ needs related to Climate Action, particularly E1: Net Zero Carbon Emissions and E2: Resilience to Climate Change. This allows for any proposed infrastructure schemes to be easily assessed in relation to climate action benefits and impacts.

Risk Management

37. The OxIS multi-criteria framework recognises risk to delivery of specific projects at a high level through a Red-Amber-Green assessment of 3 delivery criteria- 'relative commitment', 'technological readiness' and 'partnership working required.' The detail of this is set out in chapter 7 of the technical report. However, its recognised that many of the projects in OxIS are at an early stage of development, and each would have their own set of specific risks to delivery that would need to be reviewed in more detail as they are progressed. For example, it is good practice at the County Council that a risk register is set up for schemes progressed through the capital programme.

Consultations

38. The key consultation and public engagement undertaken as part of the OxIS work to date is set out in paras 21-25 above.

NAME

Bill Cotton, Corporate Director for Environment and Place

Annexes:

Annex 1a: Stage 1 Summary report

Annex 1b: Stage 1 Technical report (report published on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership [website](#))

Background papers:

Nil

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