

Annex 2: Oxfordshire Plan 2050: OCC Draft response

General comments

1. The county council strongly supports the Vision, Aspirations and Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Set out below are some key points that would further strengthen the Plan around certain key messages and themes.
2. The Introduction needs to be clearer on who 'we' are. A simple infographic that clearly show the interrelationships between, and responsibilities of, the five Local Planning Authorities, Oxfordshire County Council, OxLEP and the Growth Board would be valuable here.
3. It would be beneficial if it could be demonstrated how the different aspirations are interlinked, and how a genuine partnership approach (public, private, academic and voluntary sectors) is necessary if the Vision is to be realised. At present the aspirations are boxed up separately, implying they are isolated considerations to achieving the aspirations and objectives. Perhaps this could be achieved in the Aspirations section, for example increased digital connectivity = reduce the need to travel; more active modes of travel = healthier lifestyles; advances in technology = reduced carbon and better air quality.
4. The word 'sustainable' appears frequently throughout the Plan. It would be helpful if a definition could be included in future consultations – for example the one in the NPPF: 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs', or from another appropriate source that reflects the long-term nature of the Plan.
5. The Plan could put a particular spotlight on concepts such as charging points for Electric Vehicles into all premises together with full fibre broadband provision. This is vital if we are to reduce congestion, promote healthy lifestyles and adapt to new innovations in energy generation.
6. Air pollution is a significant issue that should be covered in more detail, given it's significant effects on health & well-being and on the environment. It is crucial to ensure that cycling and walking levels and traffic reduction are radically improved to enable sustainable transport to become the mode of choice. While the Plan recognises the need for sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling, which is welcomed, the importance of walking as a distinct mode of transport is not highlighted as much as it could be - in terms of its contribution to increased health and well-being in line with the emerging Health & Well Being Strategy, community cohesion and linking with public transport for longer trips.
7. Whilst it is right to highlight sustainable modes of travel, most people do currently drive, and this therefore needs to be planned for too, particularly in the light of the level of growth planned.

8. Oxfordshire is amongst the very best areas in the country for recycling and waste prevention. The Plan should aspire to retain this status and develop policies that create a circular economy which aims to keep scarce resources in use for longer.
9. Future growth in Oxfordshire needs to be seen in a wider context as it will be coordinated within a wider geography, including the England's Economic Heartland area. This is important in relation to the Oxford to Cambridge Arc and the proposed development of the Expressway, which will have a major impact on the selected broad locations for growth in Oxfordshire in the long term.
10. Outlined below are the key messages that emerged from consulting county council officers. More detailed comments that outline where officers have suggested certain changes to the Vision and Objectives is at Annex 1.

Vision

Does this draft Vision meet your aspirations for the future of Oxfordshire?

11. Overall the Vision is supported, however there are some areas where it is felt that it could be further strengthened, in particular by:
 - Including wording on low carbon and mitigation in line with the objectives of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy;
 - Mentioning healthy and sustainable travel options earlier in the Vision to emphasise its importance in building healthy places of the future;
 - Altering the wording to 'enhance' the quality of the environment;
 - Including wording around the need to create strong regional public transport corridors, i.e. development of the rail network (including East West Rail) and Rapid Transit Routes (including the A40 bus lane). It should also envision well connected and strategic cycle routes across the county;
 - The Vision needs to explicitly refer to the need to reduce traffic congestion.

The Vision could perhaps be much shorter, i.e. just one overall sentence, with a series of bullet points to bring out the themes. As with the suggestion in paragraph 3, this could be illustrated to more effect within an infographic that show the interrelationships.

Objectives

- *Do you feel the draft objectives are appropriate for the Plan?*
 - *Are there any changes or other objectives that you would like to see?*
 - *Should they be bolder?*
 - *Or more specific?*
12. Generally, the draft Objectives are supported for the purposes of developing a framework for future policies. Changes to some of the draft Objectives have been suggested by various teams and these are detailed in the Annex below.

Many of the suggested changes are related to further reinforcing key messages about the need for an increase in sustainable modes of travel, and to enhancing messages around public health and the environment – all of course are inter-connected.

Spatial scenarios

- *Do you agree with the commentary relating to the spatial scenarios illustrated, or do you think there are important considerations we have missed?*
- *Do you consider there are any other potential spatial scenarios we should consider?*
- *Are there any spatial scenarios you think we should avoid (please provide reasons if you can)?*
- *If you have any specific suggestions for broad locations for new development or other policies for the Oxfordshire Plan, please suggest them*

13. The Plan rightly recognises that the final agreed strategy for new development up to 2050 will likely include a combination of the scenarios outlined. In our view, the priority order should be:

- a) Intensification of city, town and district centres as this is most likely to provide the most sustainable option which could impact positively on the retail viability of these centres;
- b) Wheel settlement cluster/spoke and hub focussed on Oxford – expanding the county towns to increase their own sustainability whilst improving rail, bus and cycle links from these towns to Oxford, London and Birmingham and to each other;
- c) Intensification around edges of larger settlements;
- d) String settlement cluster – this is possible in a few locations, for example, Culham;
- e) A new settlement, although this would very much depend on where it was located.

14. A dispersal option would have implications for the delivery of county council services including school provision, waste and digital infrastructure. Furthermore it would be problematic in transport terms as none of the development will likely be large enough to provide transport infrastructure and it is unlikely that areas in which such a development would be located will have strong public transport or sustainable transport connections. This would result in a settlement that is predominantly car dependant.

15. It could be beneficial to point out in the Plan that the best use of existing and planned infrastructure will be made in relation to selecting broad locations for future growth.

Infrastructure

- *Do you agree with the commentary relating to the main infrastructure issues?*
- *Are there any changes or other issues that you would like to see referred to?*

16. The reference to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) is welcome, and in particular the current gap in funding for infrastructure to support new development. Any future spatial options need to ensure it does not add unnecessarily to this gap and be viable and achievable from an infrastructure perspective – this aligns to the point made in paragraph 21 below.
17. The Infrastructure section should highlight alignment with the Local Industrial Strategy in particular with reference to increased digital connectivity. Such infrastructure is critical if Oxfordshire is to achieve the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnerships vision of Oxfordshire as a top three global innovation ecosystem.
18. New development and the resultant increase in the number of residents will add pressure on the existing waste infrastructure, such as Household Waste Recycling Centres. More capacity, and new sites will be required to meet future demand. Waste and resources should be processed within Oxfordshire where possible, so an acknowledgement of the need for these facilities should be referred to.
19. It would be beneficial to have a particular focus on green infrastructure (GI) – the network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. OXIS was very clear that a lack of attention to GI was a shortfall in the county's infrastructure provision. This would also help to tie in the infrastructure needs with the environmental aspiration that have been articulated in the earlier part of the Plan. There is a significant opportunity to consider how to improve the environment and country-side access at a strategic level, including a focus on the rights of way network and their relationship to existing and planned walking and cycling routes.
20. The strong link between GI, active travel and public health is important and the county council would support a more ambitious aspiration to link these three aspects.
21. The county council would encourage the infrastructure section of the Plan to indicate that developer contributions, and a potential range of other funding sources and investment opportunities will be required to fund the infrastructure needed to support new development. This might include a Strategic Infrastructure Tariff approach which would work across administrative boundaries. There are also real opportunities through innovative approaches on development sites, utilising for example the Living Lab concept – this would align with the ambitions of the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy.

Annex 1: Oxfordshire Plan 2050: OCC response – suggested changes and additions to wording

Para	Suggested change
Vision	Existing and new communities are well connected, integrated, distinct, attractive and desirable places to live; their design and layouts facilitate health, low carbon lifestyles and sustainable travel options.
Vision	<p>It is positive that healthy and sustainable travel options are included, but it would be a stronger vision if this could be mentioned more up-front to change the emphasis of this sentence to:</p> <p>Existing and new communities are sustainably connected, integrated, distinct, attractive and desirable places to live; their design and layouts facilitate and encourage healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel options both for short and longer journeys.</p> <p>Oxfordshire has embraced the technological, demographic and lifestyle changes of recent decades and new developments are fit for the future and resilient to and contribute to reducing climate change.</p>
Draft Objective 1	<p>This objective should be reworded to make clear that the historic environment does not only consist of the built environment. We would recommend that a comma be added after the word historic to emphasise this as set out below:</p> <p>‘To maintain, conserve and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the county.....’</p>
Draft Objective 3	Suggest rephrase to: To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging active travel and healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.
Draft Objective 4	Suggest rephrase to: To create sustainable communities by providing good sustainable access to employment, housing, open space, transport, education, services and facilities to meet identified needs and that both mitigate and respond to the challenges of climate change and also support public health priorities .
Draft Objective 6	Suggest rephrase to: To create a prosperous, successful and enterprising economy based on sustainable principles with benefits felt by all
Draft Objective 7	Suggest “To meet the county’s identified housing needs, particularly truly affordable housing and support our selected economic aspirations.” We need to recognise that vulnerable young people are families and low paid workers are excluded from so called “affordable

	housing”.
Draft Objective 8	Suggest “To ensure that a range of housing options are available that will cater for a variety of needs including people with disabilities and older people and are built for adaptability, energy efficiency and to a high-quality housing. (NB much current new housing is not of sufficient quality to support ceiling track hoists required by wheel chair users)
Draft Objective 9	Suggest rephrase to: To reduce the need to travel by vehicles, ensuring that walking, cycling and Door to Door travel are preferred by communities. This can be achieved by providing safe and segregated cycle routes where needed, cheaper and more reliable public transport options
Draft Objective 10	Sounds like travel choice is very limited in places that aren't the most sustainably located. Sustainable travel from relatively less sustainable locations should be encouraged – ie door to door travel that enables a combination of walk/cycle and bus/rail from start to the end of a journey/trip. (perhaps a matrix is needed later in the plan to help define what a 'sustainable location' is) Suggest it is re-written as follows: “To create sustainable communities by providing active and healthy travel facilities for cycling and walking routes to shops, transport hubs and green space. Unsustainable transport such as motorised vehicles should be reduced in the city and town centres to respond to the challenges of air pollution”.