

## **Divisions Affected - All**

### **CABINET 15 March 2022**

## **Oxfordshire Plan 2050: Statement of Community Involvement**

**Report by: Corporate Director Environment and Place**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to note the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

### **Executive Summary**

2. This report provides an update on the Oxfordshire Plan Statement of Community Involvement in response to the recent lifting of coronavirus restrictions. The statement sets out how the OP2050 team will consult with people and local organisations in the preparation of this plan.
3. Once adopted, the Oxfordshire Plan will provide a high-level spatial framework to shape the future planning of the county up to 2050 and will sit alongside Local Plan reviews and Neighbourhood Plans.
4. This report asks the county council to note the revised Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Statement of Community Involvement following the lifting of the coronavirus restrictions. It also provides an update on the recent consultation and the next steps. The district and city councils are asked to adopt the SCI at their Cabinets and Executive committees during March, as the OP2050 is their joint plan.
5. The Statement of Community Involvement (see appendix 1) outlines how the community and stakeholders will be consulted during the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan.

### **Background**

6. The Oxfordshire Plan is a joint statutory spatial plan and covers the authorities of Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. These authorities have made a commitment as part of the housing and growth deal agreement with government to prepare the Oxfordshire Plan on a joint basis to guide the future planning and development of the county up to

2050. Once adopted, it will form part of the development plan of each authority and will be an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

7. The Oxfordshire Plan will provide a positive and high-level planning framework to support the delivery of new homes, economic development, and associated infrastructure across Oxfordshire, with a bold vision to confront our climate crisis, build a fairer and more prosperous economy, foster more thriving and accessible neighbourhoods, and support a truly green recovery that protects the future of our wildlife and environment up to 2050.
  8. The Oxfordshire Plan will build on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's strategic vision (further details are provided at <https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org>) and the objectives of other relevant plans and strategies at the county level, including the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy and Oxfordshire Transport and Connectivity Plan. A flow diagram summarising the relationship between the Oxfordshire Plan and other relevant plans and strategies, such as Local Plans, is attached in the draft Statement of Community Involvement at appendix 1. The Oxfordshire Plan, once adopted, will guide and inform the preparation of the Local Plan reviews and other development plan documents, where relevant.
  9. Since July 2021, much progress has been made on the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan, including a further round of public consultation (regulation 18, part 2) and the gathering of supporting evidence. The recent public consultation (July–October 2021) generated significant interest from a wide range of individuals and organisations. We received a total of 3723 individual responses to the consultation, from around 422 individuals and organisations, including statutory consultees, district councils, neighbouring authorities, town and parish councils, major employers, infrastructure providers, developers, landowners and government agencies.
  10. 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.
  11. 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.
  12. 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.
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13. Whilst the county council has been involved in the technical work related to the Plan, it should be remembered that the Plan itself is a joint Plan between the city and district councils.

## **Responses to the Public consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Stage 2)**

14. The Plan team are in the process of analysing the responses to the recent consultation (regulation 18, part 2) on the emerging plan. Officers across the local planning authorities are still reflecting on the feedback from the recent scrutiny committee meetings on the key messages from the regulation 18 (part 2) consultation and will report on the detailed findings and next steps in due course.

## **Relationship between the Oxfordshire Plan and Local Plan reviews**

15. Officers are also reviewing the Oxfordshire Plan work programme in the context of the feedback from the recent consultation and discussions with the government on the timings of future stages. This includes consideration of the inter-relationships between the Oxfordshire Plan and Local Plan reviews and other relevant supporting strategies (e.g. Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy). That detail must be worked through to help inform the next stages of the Oxfordshire Plan process, including the timetable through to adoption, and we will engage with the government (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities).

## **Relationship with the emerging LTCP, LTCP Area Strategies and the OXIS**

16. Overall, the Plan is informed by the agreed Principles for Good Growth as set out in the Future Oxfordshire Partnerships Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire<sup>2</sup>.
17. The Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP) Part 1 outlines a clear vision to deliver a net-zero carbon Oxfordshire transport system that enables the county to thrive whilst protecting the environment and making Oxfordshire a better place to live for all residents. We plan to achieve this by reducing the need to travel, discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle journeys and making walking, cycling, public and shared transport the natural first choice. The policies included in the LTCP are considered necessary to achieve this.
18. The LTCP supports and will inform a range of policies, including those in OP2050, for example by influencing development. It is important to ensure alignment so that we are working towards a common goal. By working closely with the district councils there is an opportunity to shape the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 by embedding relevant LTCP policies, such as 20-minute

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<sup>2</sup> <https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/projects/oxfordshire-strategic-vision/>

neighbourhoods, will help to shape these developments from the outset and contribute to delivery of the vision. The transport user hierarchy policy will guide how the county council responds to planning applications and seeks developer contributions. In this way, walking and cycling will be prioritised, and new developments and settlements as identified through OP2050 will contribute to delivery of the LTCP.

19. The LTCP area strategies will be produced as a 'part 2' in 2022. This will allow for the area strategies to better fit with OP2050.

20. The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Stage 1 sets out a priority 'needs-based' multi-criteria framework for assessment of future infrastructure schemes. For Stage 1, the focus has been on assessment of infrastructure to support current planned local plan development to 2040, set out in detail in the OxIS Stage 1 summary and technical reports that were endorsed by the FOP Board on 25<sup>th</sup> January and planned for consideration by County Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> February.

21. Stage 2 will look ahead to 2050, to see how infrastructure needs and requirements will change in light of additional development proposed as part of the Oxfordshire Plan. The detailed scope of the Stage 2 work is currently being developed alongside considering the next steps for the Oxfordshire Plan, but is expected to need to:

- Support the next stages of Oxon Plan consultation
- Assess infrastructure linkages with agreed planned growth to 2050 (to be set out by the Oxon Plan, but also informed and influenced by the OxIS Stage 1 outcomes)
- Build upon the evidence base work being undertaken for the Oxfordshire Plan that will help to identify priority infrastructure, for example transport assessment and water cycle study
- Use the MCA framework developed in Stage 1 as the basis for infrastructure prioritisation, but review this in the context of any relevant policy and strategy updates
- Be developed in a collaborative way, following similar governance arrangements as Stage 1.

22. The next stage of the plan will also need to be supported by transport evidence base, which is planned to look at more detail on the impacts of planned development proposed in the plan, and appropriate mitigation. This work will need to take into account the strategic policy framework set out in the LTCP, but also the alignment of any proposals being developed through the LTCP area strategies.

23. Work on embedding climate action principles is led by the Pathways to a Carbon Zero Oxfordshire (PAZCO)

## Statement of Community Involvement – its role and purpose

24. The revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is outlined in appendix 1. It replaces the previous version of the statement, adopted in July 2021.
25. This statement sets out Oxfordshire's approach to the effective and meaningful engagement of people and organisations during the next stages of plan preparation. In turn, it will help to ensure that the emerging policies and proposals of the Oxfordshire Plan reflect the needs, aspirations and concerns of residents and businesses across Oxfordshire.
26. The statement has been updated to reflect the government's recent lifting of the coronavirus restrictions (as set out in legislation) and the increased use of social media and other digital engagement tools in the process of preparing the Oxfordshire Plan. It also explains:
- how consultation and engagement on the Oxfordshire Plan will take place;
  - who will be consulted and when; and
  - how future consultation stages will be monitored to ensure they remain effective and meaningful.
27. Please note: the attached statement is specific to the production of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Local planning authorities in Oxfordshire will publish their own individual SCIs related to the production of their local plan reviews and other relevant development plan documents.
28. This statement also outlines the stages of the Oxfordshire Plan preparation process, including the extent and nature of the public consultation activities as well as the role of different organisations and representatives. These stages are as follows:
- Early informal consultation and engagement (regulation 18)
  - Formal consultation on draft plan (regulation 19)
  - Submission and examination (regulations 22 and 34).
  - Adoption (regulation 36).

## Corporate Policies and Priorities

29. Annex 2 to this report sets out a table indicating how the corporate priorities align with the five themes (and accompanying policies) of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The five themes are:
- 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.

## Financial Implications

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

Comments checked by:

Filipp Skiffins, Assistant Finance Business Partner, Environment & Place; C,OD&R; CD,A&I

## Legal Implications

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

Comments checked by:

Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environment Team) (Legal Services), Directorate for Commercial Development, Assets and Investment

## Sustainability, Equality & Inclusion Implications

32. 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.

33. An Equalities Impact Assessment was prepared as part of the evidence base for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Stage 2) Consultation. The Assessment can be found at: <https://oxfordshireplan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Equalities-Impact-Assessment-FINAL-June-2021-JE.pdf>

## Risk Management

34. Some of the key risks associated with the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan have been updated in the light of the recent regulation 18 (part 2) consultation.

## Consultations

35. The Oxfordshire Plan must be prepared in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and Local Development Scheme (LDS)<sup>3</sup>. It must also meet the requirements of the duty to cooperate set out in the Localism Act (2011) and the tests of soundness set out in the NPPF. Failure to demonstrate compliance with the requirements set out in the legislation would render the plan incapable of adoption.

36. The SCI must be kept up-to-date and now needs to be updated to reflect the recent lifting of the coronavirus restrictions and progress on the plan to date. Subject to the approval of the five Oxfordshire cabinets, the updated SCI (in appendix 1) will be formally adopted and made publicly available on the Oxfordshire Plan website.

Bill Cotton, Corporate Director Environment & Place

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Statement of Community Involvement

Appendix 2: Oxfordshire Plan and Alignment with OCC Priorities

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<sup>3</sup> Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004