

Division(s): All

CABINET – 19 MARCH 2019

REG 18 CONSULTATION ON THE OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050 AND THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT: COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Report by Director for Planning & Place

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) note and endorse the draft response to the consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (Vision, Aspirations and Objectives) contained in Annex 2, taking into account any changes agreed at Cabinet;
- (b) note and endorse the draft response to the consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Document, contained in Annex 3, taking into account any changes agreed at Cabinet.

Executive Summary

1. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a formal Development Plan Document (DPD), prepared by the City and District Councils under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), which enables two or more local planning authorities to agree to prepare a joint Plan.
2. On 11 February the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (included at Annex 1) was published for public consultation for a period of six weeks (to 25 March) under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 which requires that various bodies and stakeholders be notified that a planning authority is preparing a Plan. It invites them to comment about what that Plan ought to contain. This stage of consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is focussed on the Vision, Objectives and Aspirations for Oxfordshire to 2050, and is the first stage of consultation.
3. The county council draft consultation response at Annex 2 highlights where the Plan can be further strengthened in key areas, including embedding public health principles, focussing on the need to promote sustainable modes of transport and on other themes of particular interest to the county council, and that align with the Corporate Plan.
4. The draft consultation response to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report also highlights similar themes and suggests additions and alterations to the text where appropriate.

Introduction

5. The six Oxfordshire Councils and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) have agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with Government. Under the terms of the Deal the local authorities have committed to producing an Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination by 31 March 2020 and adoption by 31 March 2021, subject to examination process.
6. The JSSP, now known as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, will provide an Oxfordshire-wide, integrated strategic planning framework and supporting evidence base to support sustainable growth across the county to 2050, including the planned delivery of the new homes and economic development, and the anticipated supporting infrastructure required.
7. Oxfordshire County Council is a Growth Board member, a key statutory consultee, strategic planning authority for Minerals and Waste, and a provider of many essential services to the communities and businesses of Oxfordshire. The County's role as Highway/Transport and Education Authority are particularly relevant, as is its role in public health, children and adults' services, the environment and natural capital and encouraging renewable energy projects. It is important that the County Council supports and provides extensive input to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 preparation process. Future levels of planned growth will enable the county council to realise its vision of Thriving Communities, People and Economy.
8. The timescales for this process are included below.

Early stakeholder engagement	Commenced
Consultation on Issues (Vision, objectives and level of growth) (Reg 18 Part 1)	11 Feb to 25 March 2019
NEW: Consultation on Issues (Broad locations) (Reg 18 Part 2)	Jun/Jul/Aug 2019
Consultation on Proposed Submission Draft Plan (Reg.19)	Oct/Nov/Dec 2019
Submission (Reg.22)	Mar 2020
Examination (Reg.24)	Sep 2020 tbc
Receipt and Publication of Inspector's Report	Dec 2020 tbc
Adoption (Reg.26) by each partner local planning authority	Mar 2021 (subject to examination)

9. Part 2 of the Reg 18 consultation, which will set out options for the broad locations for growth up to 2050, will commence in early summer.

10. On 18 September 2018 Cabinet considered a report by the Director for Planning & Place and it noted and supported:
 - (a) the Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050;
 - (b) the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2018 for the Oxfordshire Plan 2050;
 - (c) the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Scoping Document.
11. On 11 February the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (included at Annex 1) was published for public consultation for a period of six weeks (to 25 March) under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 which requires that various bodies and stakeholders be notified that a planning authority is preparing a plan. It invites them to comment about what that plan ought to contain. This stage of consultation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is focussed on the Vision, Objectives and Aspirations for Oxfordshire to 2050, and is supported by a series of Topic Papers covering themes such as transport & connectivity, public health, energy, spatial strategy, amongst other – please see https://oxfordshireplan.inconsult.uk/consult.ti/Oxfordshire_Plan_Intro/consultationHome
12. At the same time a consultation on the Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report is also underway up to 25 March.

Oxfordshire Plan 2050: Vision, Objectives and Aspirations

The Vision

13. The draft vision is:

In 2050 the people of Oxfordshire are living in sustainable communities with a high quality of life and strong sense of community. The integrity and richness of the county's historic character and natural environment are valued and conserved. A wide range of secure and good quality housing options are within reach for all. Existing and new communities are well connected, integrated, distinct, attractive and desirable places to live; their design and layouts facilitate healthy life-styles and sustainable travel options. Productivity has increased, and residents are well skilled and able to access a wide range of high value job opportunities and share in wealth creation. The private and public sector continue to have the confidence to invest in the county. Oxfordshire has embraced the technological, demographic and lifestyle changes of recent decades and new developments are fit for the future and resilient to climate change. The well-being of residents and workers is enhanced through being part of this special place.

Draft Objectives and Aspirations

14. **Aspiration 1** – protect environmental quality

Objective 1: to maintain and enhance the historic built and natural environment of the county through strategic investment and high-quality design and to capitalise on the benefits these assets contribute to quality of life and economic success;

Objective 2: To protect and enhance the county's distinctive landscape character, recreational and biodiversity value by considering the benefits these assets bring when selecting areas for growth., by optimising densities, by improving connectivity between environmental assets and securing net gain for biodiversity.

15. **Aspiration 2** - Strong and healthy communities

Objective 3: to improve health and well-being by enabling independence, encouraging healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities;

Objective 4: To create sustainable communities by providing good access to employment, housing, open space, transport, education, services and facilities to meet identified needs and that respond to the challenges of climate change.

16. **Aspiration 3** – Support economic growth

Objective 5: to establish the right conditions to sustain and strengthen the role of Oxfordshire in the UK economy by building on our key strengths and assets

Objective 6: to create a prosperous, successful and enterprising economy with benefits felt by all.

17. **Aspiration 4** – Improving housing availability and affordability

Objective 7: to meet the county's identified housing needs, particularly affordable housing and support our selected economic aspirations

Objective 8: to ensure that a range of housing options are available that will cater for a variety of needs and are built for adaptability, energy efficiency and to a high quality.

18. **Aspiration 5** – Improve connectivity and movement

Objective 9: to reduce the need to travel and provide better travel choices, ensuring that walking and cycling are convenient and attractive, and that public transport is preferred by residents to private car ownership and use

Objective 10: To promote development in the most sustainable locations and co-locating homes and jobs; then connecting those less sustainable locations through improved public transport and digital networks.

Potential spatial scenarios

19. The draft Plan puts forward a number of potential spatial scenarios for new development up to 2050 and sets out the perceived pros and cons of each. The scenarios included include:

- Intensification of city, town and district centres

- Intensification of development within existing suburbs
 - Intensification around the edges of larger settlements and strategic extensions
 - Spoke and hub
 - New settlements
 - Dispersal
20. The draft Plan recognises that that the spatial form of development that emerges is likely to follow a combination of the broad scenarios outlined.
21. The Consultation is seeking views on the draft Vision and Objectives, using a number of questions as a framework for responses. Paragraphs 24 to 27 below highlights the key strategic elements of the response. The full draft response is in Annex 2.

Draft County Council response

22. The county council strongly supports the Vision, Aspirations and Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The key themes in the draft response include:
- Overall support for the draft Objectives but 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 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.
23. The response sets out the preferred priority order in relation to the spatial scenarios as set out below:
- 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.
24. In the Infrastructure section, the draft consultation response highlights the need for any future spatial options for new development to be mindful of not adding

unnecessarily to the funding gap already identified in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS).

25. 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.

The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

26. Oxford City Council (on behalf of the five Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities) commissioned LUC in December 2018 to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)) of the Plan.
27. SA is an assessment process designed to identify and communicate the significant sustainability issues and effects of emerging plans and policies, including their reasonable alternatives. SA iteratively informs the plan-making process by helping to inform and refine the contents of such documents, so that they maximise the benefits of sustainable development and avoid or at least minimise the potential for adverse effects.
28. The purpose of a Scoping Report is to provide the context for and determine the scope of the SA of the plan in question and to set out the assessment framework for undertaking the later stages of the SA.
29. The purpose of this consultation on the SA Scoping Report is to seek views, in particular:
 - Whether the scope of the SA is appropriate as set out considering the role of the Oxfordshire Plan to help meet and manage Oxfordshire's growth needs and development ambition;
 - Whether there are any additional plans, policies or programmes that are relevant to the SA policy context that should be included;
 - Whether the existing and emerging baseline information provides a suitable baseline for the SA of the Oxfordshire Plan;
 - Whether there are any additional SA issues relevant to the Plan that should be included;
 - Whether the SA Framework is appropriate and includes a suitable set of SA objectives and appraisal criteria for assessing the effects of the proposed Plan and reasonable alternatives.
30. The detailed response to the SA scoping report is set out in Annex 3 to this report. In essence, the key comments focus around:
 - Further strengthening and reinforcing the importance of the public health agenda throughout the document in line with the emerging Joint Health and Well Being Strategy, which has specific proposals around healthy

place-shaping. In particular, the SA will need to highlight the increasing gap between years lived without disability and/or long-term conditions and overall life expectancy. This has profound implications for the nature of the built environment and the numbers of people who are likely to need varying levels of health and social care support;

- Including a section on the topic of waste to address the safeguarding of waste management sites as required by Policy W11 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, Part 1 – Core Strategy;
- Ensuring the Plan has a key role in promoting sustainable travel options;
- Highlighting the importance of Oxfordshire’s biodiversity assets that are outside of designated sites. The importance of connectivity / fragmentation needs to be emphasised as a key issue in the context that biodiversity has been (with a few exceptions) in continuous decline.

Financial and Staff Implications

31. As part of the Housing and Growth Deal, the government has agreed £2.5million capacity funding over three years to support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The business case will be reviewed in light of the scoping document and timescales set out in the Local Development Scheme with the intention of delivering the project within this funding envelope. Any costs over and above this would be subject to further agreement by the Oxfordshire Authorities. The revised business case will also examine future savings that will result from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and its joint evidence base to the five local planning authorities in their work on future Local Plan reviews.

Equalities Implications

32. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Statement of Community Involvement seeks to ensure opportunities for participation in the Plan process, including fair access for equalities groups. As part of the consultation process the Oxfordshire Plan team commissioned a bus for a road show, visiting key Oxfordshire towns between 18 and 22 February. There are also 65 ‘deposit’ locations where members of the public can view the Plan and the Topic Papers.

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Background papers: The Oxfordshire Plan 2050

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