



Oxfordshire's
Strategic Vision for Long-Term

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This Strategic Vision has been prepared by the collective leadership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formally the Growth Board). The Future Oxfordshire Partnership comprises the six councils of Oxfordshire and key strategic partners. It facilitates collaborative efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

The six Oxfordshire Councils are

- **Cherwell District Council**
- **Oxford City Council**
- **South Oxfordshire District Council**
- **Vale of White Horse District Council**
- **West Oxfordshire District Council**
- **Oxfordshire County Council.**

The partnership's key strategic partners are Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxfordshire Skills Board, Oxford Universities, Homes England,



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OUR VISION FOR OXFORDSHIRE

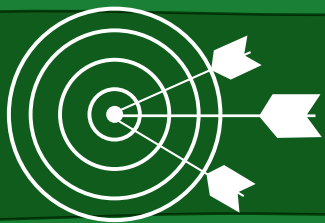


Oxfordshire is a unique location: what we do here matters, not just for the benefit of our residents and communities, but also for the wellbeing of the UK and communities across the globe.

We are at the frontier in addressing and solving the most pressing challenges facing humanity. We want Oxfordshire to thrive so that the lives of current and future generations are improved.

To achieve this will require bold, collaborative, and inclusive thinking to deliver real and lasting change in ways that build resilience and enhance environmental, social, and economic wellbeing. We will draw on our world-class economy, our spirit of discovery and Oxfordshire's global reputation to power this change through the adoption of clean and sustainable technology.





Our aim is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to realise sustainable growth, and shape healthy, resilient communities in which it is possible for all residents to thrive and which can be an exemplar for the rest of the UK and other locations internationally.

If we are successful, by 2050 Oxfordshire will:



be a globally competitive economy which is sustainable, diverse and inclusive, generating high-quality, productive and knowledge-based employment for our communities. It will utilise the county's strengths and resources, including its world-class universities and world-leading research, innovation and technology assets. There will be improved educational attainment and a skills system aligned to the needs of business and communities, helping to provide the conditions in which all Oxfordshire's people can benefit and thrive.



have transformed movement and connectivity within the County and beyond. There will be greater digital connectivity and physical mobility in and between places in ways that enhance environmental, social and economic wellbeing, with an emphasis on sustainable travel, including walking and cycling.



be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than that in which we found it. The natural environment will be more biodiverse, support social, economic and ecological resilience and have the capacity to adapt to change.



have flourishing, diverse and vibrant communities rooted in pride with our local, national and international connections and a strong sense of civic identity. Individuals and families will support each other in partnership with sustainable public services, a thriving voluntary and community sector and be connected to dynamic and socially responsible businesses.



have a healthier and happier population with better physical and mental health. Young people will feel confident, positive and excited about their future and people will spend more of their later life active, in good health and with care available in their communities to meet their changing needs.



have energy efficient, well-designed homes, sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of our growing economy, young people, residents and future generations.



enjoy a built and historic environment which is rich and diverse, comprising high-quality places where people want to live, work, visit and invest. Our rich and distinctive internationally recognised heritage assets, visitor economy and vibrant cultural offer will have been further enhanced and there will be improved access to them.



be a more equal place, supported by inclusive growth that gives everyone a fair chance in life to prosper. Deprivation and disadvantage will have been tackled wherever it manifests itself in our urban and rural areas, and discrimination will have been removed.



have achieved carbon neutral status, and be accelerating towards a carbon negative future, removing more carbon than it emits each year. Energy production will be sustainable.



INTRODUCTION

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1.

Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It has beautiful countryside, high-quality landscapes and areas important for nature conservation, and rich and diverse built and historic environments formed from the fabric of its market towns and villages and the vibrant, diverse cultural offer and historic environment of the City of Oxford.

2. It is home to a cross-section of world-leading institutions and global innovators which help power an extraordinary and unique economy of national and international significance. It is at the frontier in tackling the most difficult challenges facing humanity: from the isolation of penicillin and advancement in surgical technologies which save lives, the revolution in human communications through the creation of lithium-ion batteries, to the development and manufacturing of a vaccine for the world in the fight against COVID-19, and identifying solutions focused on the long-term societal challenges created by climate change.

3. These characteristics, together with its proximity and connections with other places, are key reasons why people choose to live, work, visit and invest here.
4. But there are also challenges. Oxfordshire is one of the fastest growing economies in the UK, powered by its dynamic and innovative businesses which are pioneering across a range of sectors, but it is a County with significant and persistent inequalities. There are also challenges linked to congestion, housing affordability and the natural and built environments. All these impact on Oxfordshire's residents and businesses.
5. Oxfordshire is facing significant changes. Some of these are the results of global trends such as climate change and the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other changes reflect Oxfordshire's status as an international centre of world-leading research and innovation with a hive of knowledge-intensive economic activity at the universities and science, technology and business parks. And we form part of the network of places that together form the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – a key national economic priority.

6. We also now have a better understanding that decisions made as a result of emerging plans and strategies for Oxfordshire have the potential to, and very probably will, impact (positively or negatively) on local, national and global emissions in the short, medium and long term. The pandemic has shown how people in Oxfordshire come together to support one another in their communities, has demonstrated the importance to people's health, of easy access to nature and high-quality green space. It has given us a glimpse of a world less dependent on personal travel and one more reliant on digital connectivity.
7. Recognising these opportunities and challenges leads us to want to ensure that Oxfordshire's plans, strategies and programmes are ambition-led and outcome-focussed. Accordingly, we believe it is timely for Oxfordshire to set out its common and shared Vision for the future based on our unique special assets and heritage.



8. Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire sets out what the county should look like and how we can achieve it. The outcomes we are looking for are set out on page 4 of this document. They will form the basis against which we measure progress. We hope this Strategic Vision will be read by residents and partners within and beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

9. We know from public consultations and stakeholder engagement that within Oxfordshire there is an appetite to see a different approach to place-shaping: one that is more ambitious, radical, innovative and creative¹, embracing social, economic and environmental wellbeing to achieve a happier, healthier, greener future². We have bold and dynamic economic ambitions³ brought to life in an investment plan⁴, and innovative work on inclusive growth⁵ has highlighted a need to actively recognise and address the inequalities of our success and ensure all communities have a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire.

10. This Strategic Vision has been shaped by public discussion and debate. Engagement with our communities and stakeholders revealed strong and wide support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire and for the broad intent of the ambitions set out in an engagement draft document. We have used the detailed feedback we received to further refine and strengthen our Vision.

11. This Strategic Vision is intended to be transformative. Addressing climate change and the health and quality of our natural environment, our globally significant economy will improve the wellbeing of our communities; be an exemplar to the rest of the UK and other international locations. It considers wellbeing in the round based on an understanding that the different dimensions of wellbeing are intrinsically linked.

12.

We want to facilitate a step-change in our approach to planning for and delivering sustainable development for Oxfordshire, challenging the norm and drawing on new ways of thinking to provide the best possible future for our residents. For this reason, our Strategic Vision is positive and optimistic, and we have set our ambition high.

13. Our Strategic Vision is high-level. We fully recognise the rich variety of places that make up Oxfordshire. We value the character of these different settings – our city, towns and villages and our natural and historic environments – and recognise that delivering our shared Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect local circumstances, as well as the nationally significant role Oxfordshire plays in the success of the UK.

1 Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 18 (Part One) Consultation Report, June 2019

2 One Planet Oxfordshire: Our Shared Vision, Bioregional, 2019

3 Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy, 2019

4 Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan, 2020

5 Led by Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership under Oxfordshire's 'Social Contract' and by the City of Oxford



14. Activity to achieve ambitions for zero-carbon and increased biodiversity will need different design solutions in the high-density environments of the city and urban areas than in rural settings. This happens best through inclusive processes and a detailed understanding of places and communities to arrive at solutions that work for them.

15.

This Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the vision for any of our communities or partner organisations but instead provide a balanced framework through which these can be developed.

16. The Strategic Vision is overarching. It cuts across many sectors and is designed to inform a range of plans, strategies and programmes. It complements the plans and strategies already in place and agreed by our partner organisations and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formally the Growth Board). It also forms part of the informal interface between national and local policy, helping to deliver national objectives and priorities, as well as helping to maximise the benefits to Oxfordshire of decisions made by others.

17. Finally, the Strategic Vision recognises that positive change will evolve and take time. Some of what we are seeking to achieve is beyond our direct control. This Strategic Vision is a pathway for long-term change towards a more sustainable future. While our priorities are unlikely to alter over the short to medium-term, our approach needs to be resilient to change over time. Although there is a high level of uncertainty over a 30-year period, particularly around external factors including climate and technological change, new opportunities to align environmental, social and economic needs to deliver sustainable development in different and better ways will emerge. This will position Oxfordshire to challenge and capitalise on the scope for innovation over the longer-term.






**ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC VISION
THROUGH GOOD GROWTH**

1.


Our Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's future is driven by improvements to people's wellbeing. This is reflected in our definition of what 'good growth' will look like in Oxfordshire.

- 2.** National planning policies require Oxfordshire to plan positively for growth in ways that achieve the three overarching objectives of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Growth can be defined narrowly in terms of expansion in numbers of homes and jobs and economic output. But growth can also encompass progress based on improvements in circumstances for individuals and society and in the quality of our environmental assets and natural resources. Rather than seeing economic, social and environmental objectives as competing demands that need to be balanced, our approach for Oxfordshire is to align and integrate these priorities, so that economic progress benefits business, society and the environment. The economy, environment, connectivity, community assets, housing and public services are all key factors in giving Oxfordshire's residents – current and future – the best opportunity to prosper and thrive.
- 3.** We think this is more in line with sustainable development principles and thinking and a better approach to achieving transformative and long-term sustainable development. This is how we will approach growth, delivering change that is distinctively 'Oxfordshire'. Good growth will focus on progress in improving health and wellbeing, look to decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources and transition to a low-carbon future, address inequalities and prioritise our natural and built environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change.
- 4.** We also want this good growth to be genuinely inclusive which means inequality – a pervasive determinant of wellbeing – must be addressed wherever it exists in our diverse county. We will need to tackle deprivation and disadvantage in whatever form throughout the county, be it in the City of Oxford, our towns or in our rural areas.
- 5.** Oxfordshire's economy represents a crucial and unique attribute. The County's position as a global innovation hub brings important opportunities both to local communities and to the future of the UK. We recognise the positive benefits that economic prosperity can bring and the critical interdependencies between a flourishing economy and successful outcomes for local communities, public services and the environment.
- 6.** Economic prosperity is an important part of the roadmap to achieving our ambition for Oxfordshire. Business creates employment opportunities for our residents, including our young people. Business also creates the wealth which sustains and supports public services, and the technological innovation that can be increasingly transformational in shaping places and building sustainable communities. Finally, because so much of Oxfordshire is rural, we must not lose sight of the particularly important role the agricultural sector can play in helping deliver our biodiversity and climate ambitions and in advancing new technologies and innovation in sustainable farming.

'GOOD GROWTH' IN OXFORDSHIRE WILL:




Be clean and green, placing the county at the leading edge of UK and global de-carbonisation efforts by maximising all opportunities to significantly reduce Oxfordshire's carbon footprint, and increasing natural capital across the county.




Build resilience to change, with growth planned in ways that: build on strengths and assets to support communities during periods of change; support economic diversity and can accommodate changes in technology; recognise changes in the way that people live and work and changing demographics; and respond to global impacts, particularly from climate and economic changes.



Support diverse, accessible employment, generating a highly productive and inclusive economy based on our world-class research, innovation and technology.




Be sustainable, focusing development in ways that enhance quality of place and at locations which enable people to live and work nearby, improving digital connectivity and avoiding unnecessary travel in the first instance, but using opportunities to increase movement by sustainable and active modes of travel when needed.




Be healthy and inclusive, with all development addressing inequalities and contributing positively to the overall health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's communities, environment and economy.




Embrace innovation based on our technology sectors and knowledge-intensive activity, and develop new innovative solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, resource management, sustainable design and improved public services.



Facilitate environmental improvements and make efficient use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land.



Enhance and expand access to the county's internationally significant historic environment and cultural and heritage assets.



Expect high-quality development which will have a positive impact on communities in terms of design, energy and water efficiency and public realm, utilises low-impact building and construction methods and materials, and is properly supported by the necessary infrastructure including excellent digital connectivity. Everything we build or design in Oxfordshire will be fit for purpose in the world of 2050, respond to different circumstances, contribute to Oxfordshire's sense of distinctiveness and rich variety, and support connected communities.



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our definition of ‘good growth’ forms the basis for a set of Guiding Principles. Taken together, our outcomes, the definition of ‘good growth’ and the guiding principles form the foundation for our overarching approach to long-term sustainable development for Oxfordshire, and for developing our plans, strategies and programmes.

Guiding Principle 1:

We will reverse the impacts of climate change

We will reduce the impacts of climate change by making climate action a top priority in our decisions. We will maximise opportunities through our plans, strategies and programmes, to reverse the impacts of climate change, demonstrating leadership in carbon reduction, developing nature-based solutions to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, championing more sustainable ways to improve connectivity and supporting emerging transformative technologies and sectors. Our aim is that Oxfordshire will be carbon neutral by 2040, or earlier if possible, and by 2050 will be moving towards a carbon negative future.

Guiding Principle 2:

We will create the conditions to support a world-leading and innovation-rich economy which is clean, prosperous, diverse, inclusive, successful and sustainable

We will work collaboratively with partners to ensure that our spatial, infrastructure and economic priorities are strategically aligned to deliver a globally leading economy, for the benefit of our communities which is pioneering, diverse and high in productivity and which meets the needs of our priority sectors, including our world-leading universities and delivers successful outcomes for the environment, communities and our public services. We will ensure there is improved physical and digital connectivity, and that the right type of premises, land and infrastructure are provided in the right places for businesses to thrive. Inequalities in employment opportunity and access to education, skills and training will be addressed, and life-long learning will be a priority. The aim will be to build a skilled population which has a stake in the future prosperity of Oxfordshire, ensuring that growth is inclusive and supports the health and wellbeing of local communities, whether current or future generations.

Guiding Principle 3:

We will improve our overall health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

We will place overall health and physical and mental wellbeing at the forefront of our decision-making. We will seek to deliver a net increase in the health and wellbeing of people in all our place-shaping decisions and activities, reducing inequalities and helping to enhance the overall quality of life, health and happiness of existing and future residents, recognising the diverse needs within our communities. This will include providing public services to support excellent physical and mental health outcomes, homes to meet all people's needs, jobs to support livelihoods, enhanced access to public and private green spaces, better access to sustainable, inclusive and resilient active and low-carbon transport and improvements in air quality. We have access to some of the greatest health care facilities and minds in the world in Oxfordshire and through working closely with the universities and health organisations, we will ensure we are leading on prevention and healthy place-shaping.

Guiding Principle 4:

We will enhance our natural environment

Key sources of natural capital in Oxfordshire include biodiversity, water, soils, landscape character and tranquillity. Natural capital contributes to a wide range of social, economic and environmental services. It is a key reason why many people choose to live here, many businesses choose to locate here, and tourists choose to visit here. We will grow our natural capital through our plans, strategies and programmes, recognising the significant contribution natural capital makes to our quality of place, the health and wellbeing of our communities, and their value in building resilience to climate change, reducing flood risk, increasing biodiversity and boosting economic productivity. We will value Oxfordshire's countryside, our important habitats and species, our agricultural land, our parks and open spaces, the River Thames and our other rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes, ponds, wetlands and aquifers. We will protect and restore our valuable habitats and species and improve resilience by creating ecological networks. We will improve the quality of our waterways and water bodies and reduce levels of water stress in Oxfordshire.

We will protect where necessary and seek new opportunities to add to and enhance our highly valued countryside, landscape and the greenspaces and environmental assets, including those areas within our city and towns that provide valued recreation space and vital green lungs.

Guiding Principle 5:

We will reflect our distinctive and diverse communities and places

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes reflect the unique and distinctive qualities of places within Oxfordshire, maximising opportunities to deliver the development needed, embracing innovation while enhancing our valuable assets and recognising the diversity of our city, towns and villages, the quality of the historic, natural and built environment, our rich internationally significant cultural and heritage assets, the importance of local identity and the needs of our diverse communities. While we are the most rural county in the South East, most of our population lives in our city, towns and villages. The diversity of our settlements, the synergy between urban and rural and the benefits both bring are critical to our success.

Guiding Principle 6:

We will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations

We will promote the development of new homes that will add to the vitality and vibrancy of our communities while positively contributing to our collective wellbeing. We will tackle the significant challenge of housing affordability in Oxfordshire by delivering more truly affordable homes both for rent and home ownership, and we will deliver homes that allow people to live healthily, happily and independently in their old age. The emphasis will be on place-shaping.

Guiding Principle 7:

We will embrace technological changes

We will ensure that our plans, strategies and programmes are sufficiently agile to embrace the potential offered from new and evolving technology in creating better opportunities and outcomes for people, in addressing inequalities, and in its impact on mobility, communications, energy and water supply, waste management, models of construction and increasing economic productivity.



Guiding Principle 8:

We will expect high-quality development

We will expect all new development to be of the highest sustainable design and construction standards, with particular support given to resilience to climate change, innovative building solutions, sustainable use of natural resources and construction methods, and development that improves the overall built environment and embeds healthy place-shaping principles, promoting good physical and mental wellbeing. New development will contribute to connected communities and improve the local environment.

Guiding Principle 9:

We will help people to help each other by supporting communities and individuals to achieve positive change for themselves

We will help communities to be more cohesive and better able to adapt to change, based on accessible and quality key services and infrastructure, excellent digital connectivity and strong community networks. Communities will be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and wellbeing.

Guiding Principle 10:

We will maximise the benefits of strong collaboration within Oxfordshire

We will build stronger collaboration with our partners to secure a plan-led approach to good growth, delivering strategic development opportunities that are aligned with our shared ambition and long-term investment priorities, particularly where these provide opportunities to enhance our strategic connectivity. And we will create the conditions where people feel involved and empowered, embedding a culture of meaningful involvement and enabling communities to inform and shape local decisions.

Guiding Principle 11:

We will proactively and positively engage and collaborate beyond Oxfordshire

We will foster links with neighbouring areas to facilitate the delivery of good growth through mutually beneficial relationships. Key to this will be ensuring that our strategic priorities inform regional and sub-regional priorities, including the emerging Oxford-Cambridge Arc.



All the Guiding Principles articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the period to 2050 and all will shape our overarching approach. Individual Guiding Principles have not been weighted. Rather, because we are seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic wellbeing in ways which build resilience, and because most of our Guiding Principles are relevant to more than one of our outcomes, the Guiding Principles form an inter-related set of equally important ground rules.



NEXT STEPS DELIVERING THE STRATEGIC VISION



1. The collective leadership of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formally the Growth Board) has developed this Strategic Vision. However, delivering the Vision will require long-term collective commitment and investment by the partners that make up the Future Oxfordshire Partnership but also, crucially, by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partnerships.
2. As a first step in delivering the Strategic Vision, we have identified two work streams:
 - Measuring what matters
 - Developing plans, strategies and investment priorities.

Measuring What Matters

3. The ambition, outcomes and priorities set out in the Strategic Vision have been explicitly designed for the long-term. They are unlikely to change over the short to medium-term and it is not anticipated there will be a need for frequent reviews. To achieve the outcomes we have identified by 2050, will require some trends to be reversed, while for some other trends, where progress is already being made, there will need to be an increase in the pace of change.

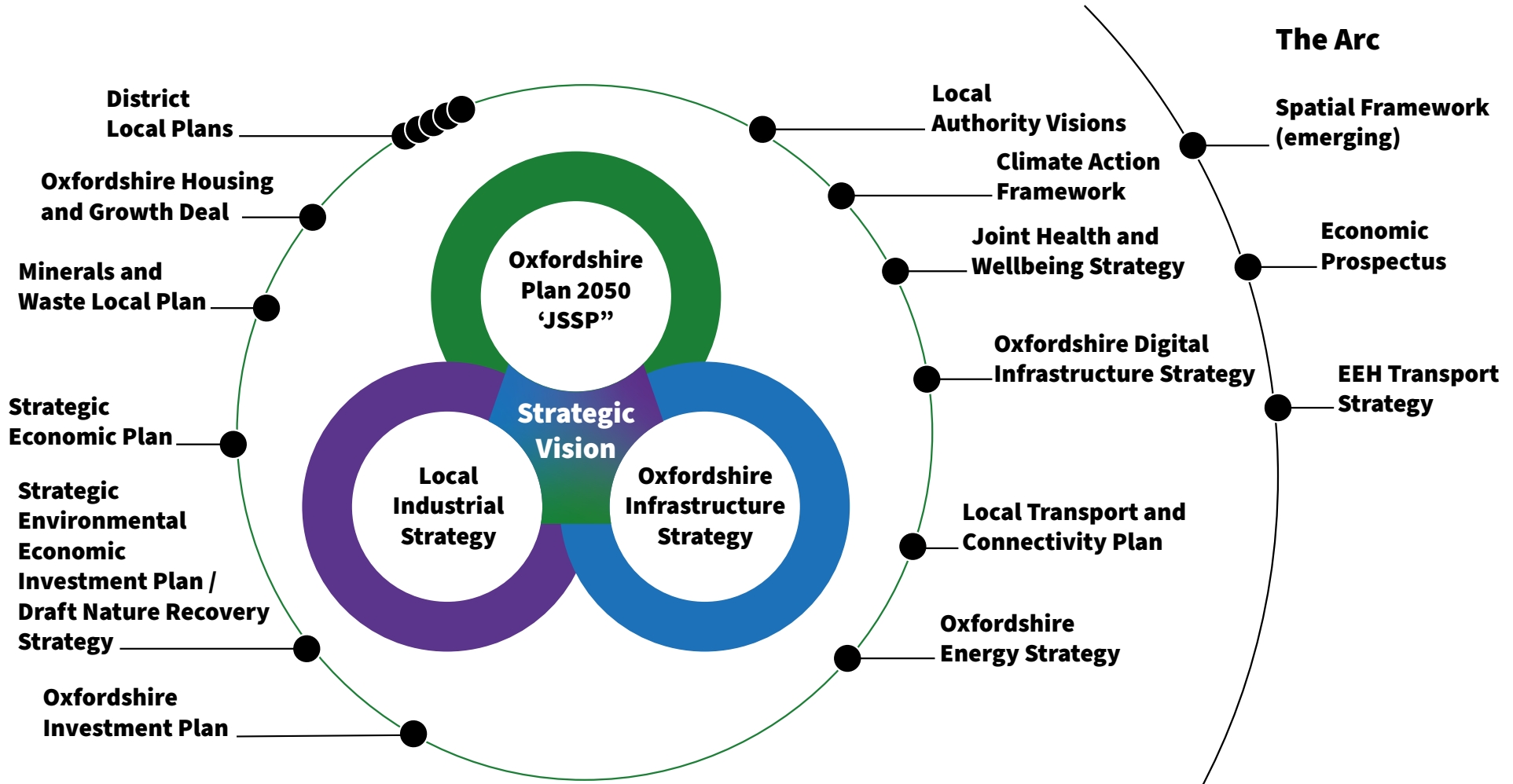
4. Measuring progress, so that we know what responses are needed to achieve continual improvement, will be an important part of our approach to delivering the Strategic Vision. It will also provide a robust basis on which Oxfordshire's communities and stakeholders may hold the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to account. We will measure what matters, based on the strategic outcomes and the definition of Good Growth set out in the Strategic Vision.

Developing Plans, Strategies and Investment Priorities

5. Our wellbeing goals are ambitious. Achieving them will require all those who make future decisions about investment and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire to maximise impact by working collaboratively, based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions.
6. The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire will be delivered by a wide range of plans, strategies and programmes. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is one important example, but not all the outcomes will

be within the sphere of influence of the Oxfordshire Plan. That Plan will deliver parts of the Vision, but as a statutory planning document, it cannot address all aspects involved in delivering this Vision. Local Plans, infrastructure plans, economic strategies and associated plans and programmes will also have important roles to play, responding to different local circumstances and, in some cases, reflecting wider considerations such as economic growth, health and wellbeing and infrastructure that impact on place-making in Oxfordshire. At an Oxfordshire-wide level they include the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, the Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), the Local Industrial Strategy, Oxfordshire Investment Plan and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, while sub-nationally the spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy will have important roles to play.

OXFORDSHIRE'S STRATEGIC MAP



7. There is also an important role for residents and business leaders to help deliver this Strategic Vision.
8. It is vital that we have an agreed set of long-term, strategic, economic, infrastructure and environment investment priorities aligned to the outcomes we are committed to. This will help us to ensure that we are investing in the right infrastructure and other assets in a timely way, maximising the benefits of that investment, and avoiding unnecessary expenditure. It will also better position Oxfordshire to influence the priorities of other relevant organisations. By providing clear strategic leadership and direction through this Vision, we aim to increase public confidence in the delivery of long-term priorities.
9. Oxfordshire's Future Oxfordshire Partnership (formally the Growth Board) will seek that those preparing relevant strategic-level plans, strategies and programmes consider how their policies, proposals and investment decisions deliver against this Strategic Vision. Future responses to these plans, strategies and programmes from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will take these into account.



FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

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