Oxfordshire Plan –
Regulation 18 (Part 2) Consultation Document

VERSION 30 (Full Text) with paragraph numbers
At 23 July 2021

Foreword

1. Oxfordshire is a unique and special place shaped by its beautiful and varied landscapes, rich cultural heritage and areas important to nature conservation. Its towns, villages and the City of Oxford form part of a dynamic network of places that have grown to support an innovation-driven economy that is nationally and internationally significant, with Oxfordshire forming part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. These characteristics, together with Oxfordshire's connections to other places, mean that, for many, Oxfordshire is a prosperous and healthy place to live. But there are also persistent, multi-faceted inequalities in some of our places, and challenges linked to climate change, congestion, housing affordability and threats to the natural, built and historic environments.

2. The Oxfordshire Plan will change the way we plan for Oxfordshire's future. To fully make the most of our opportunities and to more effectively tackle the challenges that Oxfordshire faces requires a new partnership-based approach to planning: one that continues to value the vital role played by local and neighbourhood plans, but which also recognises that some issues require transformative change through concerted effort over the medium and longer-term, are better considered on a wider geographical scale and best tackled through joined-up policy responses that build resilience.

3. Climate change is one example. Decisions made locally have the potential to impact on outcomes in that area, but also more widely within Oxfordshire as well as beyond the county's boundaries. We also understand there are important linkages between climate change, where development is located, Oxfordshire's status as an international centre of world-leading innovation and research, movement and connectivity, the wellbeing of the natural environment, people's health and the importance of enhanced resilience across all these areas. Likewise, there are many factors that impact on people's wellbeing including housing, their physical and mental health, employment, income, education, the built and natural environment, access to green space and cultural facilities and a sense of community.

4. Not all these issues are within the sphere of influence of a statutory development plan, but statutory planning does have an important role to play. This strategic plan for Oxfordshire has been jointly prepared by the four district councils – Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council – and Oxford City Council, working in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

5. Oxfordshire has a global reputation for innovation. We want our Plan to be bold and ambitious, setting out challenging policies that place Oxfordshire at the forefront of sustainable development because we want Oxfordshire to be an even better-quality place to live, work, visit and invest in 2050. Realising our ambition will require a step-change in Oxfordshire's approach to place-shaping: one that is transformational. This document sets out an innovative strategy that plans positively and collaboratively for inclusive growth in ways that fully align and integrate sustainability objectives, providing a framework for local plans. Our aim is to enhance environmental, social and economic wellbeing through 'good growth' in ways that are distinctively 'Oxfordshire' and deliver the best possible

outcomes for our communities, environment and businesses, benefitting current and future generations.

6. We hope the public and stakeholders will support our new approach to planning for Oxfordshire.

Contents

Map of Oxfordshire

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

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Introduction and Overview

Why produce a joint plan for Oxfordshire?

7. Oxfordshire is a place of unique opportunities and assets, but there are also challenges.

8. Oxfordshire is taking a strategic approach to planning its future. We think this is the best way to realise the transformational opportunities that exist to tackle climate change, improve the environment, secure social justice and support long-term, sustainable, innovation-led economic growth. Addressing these issues to secure better outcomes requires a long-term co-ordinated approach across Oxfordshire. One of the particular opportunities associated with this approach to planning is that it helps create certainty for those making future decisions about investment, and offers greater potential that strategic infrastructure – physical, social and environmental – will be delivered in a co-ordinated way that helps ensure that growth is truly sustainable and inclusive.

9. This joint approach to planning builds on earlier collective work undertaken in Oxfordshire to agree how to accommodate the level of housing growth, including Oxford's unmet housing needs, identified in the 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment. That work highlighted the importance of deeper and closer engagement and a broader-based approach to planning for Oxfordshire.

10. The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is one of the commitments made by the six Oxfordshire authorities as part of the ambitious 2018 Housing and Growth Deal with Government. The Plan is being prepared by a core team working in close partnership with Oxfordshire's District Councils, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and through the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

What is the Oxfordshire Plan?

11. The Oxfordshire Plan is a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (or JSSP). It is a formal Development Plan Document being prepared under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). Once adopted, the Plan will form part of the Development Plan for Oxford City Council ('the City Council') and each District Council ('the District Councils') in Oxfordshire: Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

12. The Oxfordshire Plan will set out the long-term, overarching and high-level spatial planning framework for Oxfordshire for the period to 2050. It will be used in the formulation of more detailed local plans and neighbourhood development plans and, where appropriate, its policies will carry weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals for development. It will also provide a spatial framework for a wide range of other plans, strategies and programmes relevant to Oxfordshire that have a bearing on the use of land. These include (but are not limited to) the Local Industrial Strategy, Oxfordshire's Infrastructure Strategy, the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Looking more widely, the Oxfordshire Plan will play an important role in helping shape the emerging Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

13. Key factors in the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan are its scope and the appropriate level of detail. The Plan will only contain policies that are appropriate to its overarching role as part of Oxfordshire's portfolio approach to plan-making and strategy development. It will not, for example, include policies that are more appropriately made in local or neighbourhood plans, and its policies will add value by being Oxfordshire-specific and not simply replicating national policy. Following further consideration since the initial scoping published in 2018, it is proposed the Plan will include policies relating to:

- Oxfordshire's spatial strategy;
- tackling climate change;
- improving environmental quality;
- priorities for new infrastructure;
- the scale and broad location of new development;
- healthy place-shaping; and
- urban renewal.

14. Some policies will apply across Oxfordshire, while other policies will apply only to large-scale developments and/or to broad locations for new development. The Oxfordshire Plan should be read as a whole.

15. The policies in the Oxfordshire Plan will cover 30 years and reflect the changing levels of certainty there are over this period. While there is greater certainty over the earlier part of the Plan period, there is also less scope to effect transformational change. Uncertainty increases further into the plan period, particularly around external factors such as climate and technological change, together with future changes to planning legislation and national policy, but so too does the scope for emergence of new opportunities to deliver sustainable development in different and better ways. The Oxfordshire Plan has an important role to play in setting Oxfordshire on the pathway to deliver transformational change based on a different approach to place-making.

16. The City and District councils in Oxfordshire each have their own adopted local plans.

Cherwell District Council	Adopted July 2015	2011-2031
Cherwell District Council	Part 1 Partial Review: Oxford's Unmet Housing Need Adopted September 2020	2011-2031
Oxford City Council	Adopted June 2020	2016-2036
South Oxfordshire District Council	Adopted December 2020	2011-2035
Vale of White Horse District Council	Adopted December 2016	2011-2031
West Oxfordshire District Council	Adopted September 2018	2011-2031

17. The committed growth in these existing adopted local plans will be particularly important in influencing the policies for the first ten to fifteen years of the Oxfordshire Plan from 2020 to the early 2030s. The Oxfordshire Plan will set the policy framework for future local plans in each of the four Districts and the City of Oxford that follow the current round of plans.

18. Oxfordshire also has a Minerals and Waste Local Plan which is prepared by Oxfordshire County Council. Part 1 of that Plan was adopted in 2017. Part 2 (Site Allocations) is in preparation[1].

19. The Oxfordshire Plan does not cover proposals that are defined as Nationally Significant Infrastructure. A separate planning process will apply in those cases as set down by the 2008 Planning Act, and the relevant supporting National Policy Statements.

20. The Oxfordshire Plan is being developed with a substantial technical evidence base and has been subject to testing through Sustainability Appraisal (SA) at key stages and to early Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening. The SA and HRA work continue to influence the development of the Plan.

21. The Plan is also being shaped by public and stakeholder engagement. An initial formal Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation 'Introducing the Oxfordshire Plan' took place in February & March 2019[2]. That consultation sought views on what the Plan's vision, aspirations, objectives and broad spatial strategy should be. The public's response to that consultation is set out in the Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation report[3]. Taken together, the responses gave a very clear overall steer that there is an appetite for an approach that:

- is ambitious, radical, innovative and creative,
- is Oxfordshire-specific and reflective of local people's views,
- prioritises climate change, and
- focusses on social, economic and environmental wellbeing, and not solely on a narrow definition of growth.

22. This Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation document has responded to these earlier comments by setting out an ambitious and innovative set of policy approaches based on five themes (addressing climate change, improving environmental quality, creating strong and healthy communities, planning for sustainable travel and connectivity and creating jobs and providing homes) and a set of spatial strategy options.

What is the Oxfordshire Plan seeking to achieve?

23. National planning policies require that Oxfordshire plans positively for growth in ways that achieve the three overarching objectives of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These overarching objectives of sustainable development are intrinsically linked.

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[1] New Minerals and Waste Local Plan | Oxfordshire County Council
[2] Introducing_the_Oxfordshire_Plan_Feb_2019.pdf (oxfordshireplan.org)
[3] Reg-18-Part-1-Consultation-Summary.pdf (oxfordshireplan.org)

24. The approach proposed in this consultation document seeks to deliver real and lasting positive change in Oxfordshire by creating the right environmental, social and economic conditions and by building resilience. The emerging Plan: contributes to protecting and enhancing our **natural, managed, built and historic environment** by making prudent use of natural resources (including our land), improving biodiversity, improving air quality, tackling, mitigating and adapting to climate change and supporting low-carbon solutions; helps support **economic prosperity** by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places at the right times with timely provision of infrastructure to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's world-leading economy; supports our **communities** by planning for energy efficient homes sufficient in number and of the right tenures, types and sizes to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's residents – current and future – in well-designed communities with accessible, inclusive, high quality and accessible services and public spaces and in ways that support communities' health, social and cultural wellbeing.

25. Rather than seeing environmental, economic and social objectives as competing demands that need to be balanced, the approach proposed in the Oxfordshire Plan is to align and integrate these priorities so that they are mutually supportive. The emerging Plan recognises that the environment, economy, connectivity, social inclusion, housing and community assets are all key to Oxfordshire's wellbeing. The Oxfordshire Plan will be a key tool in achieving our ambitions for transformative and long-term sustainable development in ways that are distinctive to Oxfordshire and reflect local circumstances across the county. The aim for Oxfordshire is to deliver *'good growth'*.

26. What Oxfordshire means by 'good growth' is defined in the Oxfordshire Growth Board's 'Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development 2050'[4] that has been adopted by each Council. This definition of 'Good Growth' is a 'golden thread' that will run through the Oxfordshire Plan. The definition has been assessed as part of the Sustainability Appraisal of the emerging Oxfordshire Plan.

'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.

- 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.

- 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.

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[4] [Sustainable Development (oxfordshiregrowthboard.org)](oxfordshiregrowthboard.org)

- 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.

- 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**.

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

- 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.

- 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.

Source: Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development, 2021

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development

27. The Strategic Vision was prepared and approved by the collective leadership of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and has been agreed by each of the Oxfordshire councils. The Strategic Vision was shaped by engagement with Oxfordshire's communities and stakeholders on a draft Strategic Vision (November 2020) and by expert, informal sustainability testing. The Strategic Vision sets out what Oxfordshire should look like in 2050 and how it can be achieved through a range of strategies acting together. It is a positive statement of shared strategic priorities designed to facilitate a step-change in the approach to planning for and delivering sustainable development in Oxfordshire, challenging the norm and drawing on new ways of thinking.

28. The ambition for Oxfordshire has been set high. The Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's future is outcome-focussed, driven by improvements to people's wellbeing and recognises that the future of Oxfordshire has the potential to benefit not just the wellbeing of its own residents and communities, but also the wellbeing of the UK and communities across the globe.

Strategic Vision 2050: Outcomes for Oxfordshire

By 2050, Oxfordshire will:

- 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.

- 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 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

29. The Strategic Vision's definition of 'good growth' forms the basis for a set of Guiding Principles.
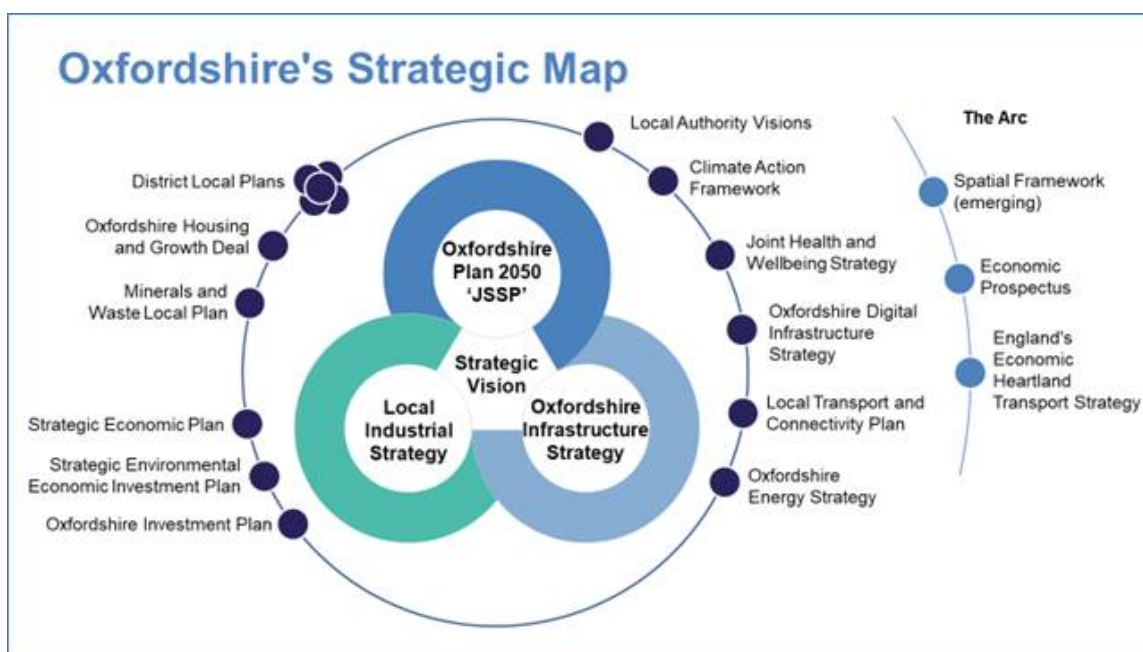
Strategic Vision 2050 Guiding Principles: Headlines

1. We will reverse the impacts of climate change.

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

3. We will improve our overall health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

4. We will enhance our natural environment.

5. We will reflect our distinctive and diverse communities and places.

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

7. We will embrace technological changes.

8. We will expect high-quality development.

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

10. We will maximise the benefits of strong collaboration within Oxfordshire.

11. We will proactively and positively engage and collaborate beyond Oxfordshire.

30. Taken together, the Strategic Vision outcomes, the definition of 'good growth' and the Guiding Principles form the foundation for Oxfordshire's over-arching approach to long-term sustainable development for Oxfordshire and for developing plans, strategies and programmes.

31. The Strategic Vision will be delivered by a wide range of plans, strategies and programmes, including the Oxfordshire Plan.

32. The Strategic Vision does not define what its ambition looks like spatially because that is the role of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. However, the Strategic Vision's definition of 'good growth' and the Guiding Principles help define the role that place-making might play in delivering the Strategic Vision outcomes. The Strategic Vision is being used as a tool – built on a wide consensus – to inform development of the policies, spatial options and overall spatial strategy in the

Oxfordshire Plan, with appropriate weight attached to it and as part of the process of demonstrating that the Oxfordshire Plan's overall strategy is being selected against reasonable alternatives on a robust, consistent and objective basis.

Relationship with other plans and strategies

33. There are already other plans, strategies, policies and investment programmes (in existence or emerging), as well as legislative requirements, that will influence strategic-level place-shaping in Oxfordshire, including where development should take place. The Strategic Vision refers to these as 'strategic influencers'. We have 'mapped' the main strategic influencers in the following diagram.

34. This context will continue to evolve as new strategic influencers emerge at national, sub-national or local level, or as others change. Oxfordshire will be shaped by these strategic influencers to varying degrees over the next 30 years and this is reflected in the emerging Oxfordshire Plan. In many cases the relationships between these strategic influencers and the Oxfordshire Plan is a two, rather than one-way process.

35. The existing local plans will be particularly important in influencing the first 10-15 years of the Oxfordshire Plan. The Oxfordshire Plan will act as the framework for the next generation of local plans that are prepared for each District and the City of Oxford.

36. Once adopted, the Oxfordshire 2050 plan will set a policy and growth framework for Oxfordshire. It will form part of the Development Plan for each District and once adopted will be a material consideration for LPAs to consider in the formulation of more detailed plans locally and, where appropriate, its policies will carry weight in the determination of planning applications and appeals for development.
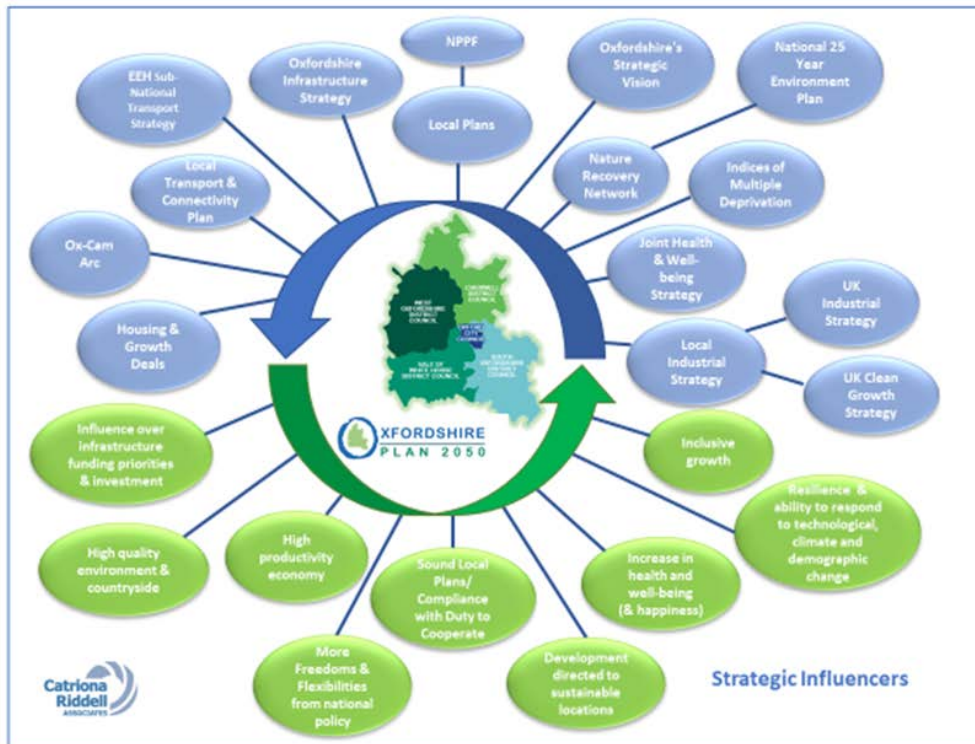
Oxford-Cambridge Arc

37. In the medium to longer-term, Oxfordshire's role within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (the Arc) is likely to be an increasingly important influence. The Arc is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge, forming a key national economic priority based on UK and world-leading innovation. Taken together, the Arc area houses one of the fastest growing economies in England, supporting over 2 million jobs and adding over £110 billion to the economy every year. The whole of Oxfordshire, with its world-class universities and world-leading research, innovation and technology assets, forms the western part of the Arc.

38. The Arc has generated close cooperation between Councils, LEPs and Universities across the Arc and the Oxfordshire Growth Board has played an active role in developing the Arc since its inception.

39. The Arc is becoming a focus for shared economic activity, joint working and shared prosperity and considering the joint infrastructure across a large area which has a major potential for GDP growth, based on its economic strengthens in key sectors, its universities, innovation and intellectual capital.

40. The Arc provides a forum for joint work to deliver on zero carbon commitments, address water stress and increase electricity supply through local provision and support for renewables. Likewise, the emerging Oxfordshire Plan places an emphasis on tackling climate change, enhancing the environment, strengthening communities and securing sustainable transport as well as the quality of new growth that results.

41. The Government's ambition is to build a better economic, social and environmental future for the Arc, with high-quality, well-connected and sustainable communities making the Arc an even more beautiful place to live, work and visit.

42. To achieve this ambition, the Government, alongside local partners, is developing a Spatial Framework for the Arc. This will be a long-term strategic plan that helps co-ordinate infrastructure, environment and new developments in the area. The Arc Spatial Framework is being led by Government. In February 2021 the Government published its 'Introduction to the Arc Spatial Framework'[5] and announced its intention to explore the establishment of an Arc Growth Body to 'give a clear economic leadership voice to the area'.

43. The February 2021 document sets out the opportunities and challenges for the Arc and establishes a set of core principles that will underpin development of the Framework. The Framework will form a fully integrated single land use and infrastructure plan comprising both planning and transport policies. The Framework is likely to include policies relating to employment space, policies to enable new settlements to come forward, policies to support habitat recovery and provision of green space, policies relating to brownfield development and expansion of existing settlements, policies enabling housing needs to be met in full, strategic transport policies, climate resilience and air quality policies and strategic policies to facilitate utilities investment.

44. Once complete, the Framework will have the status of national planning policy. This will give the Arc Framework significant weight in the planning system for guiding local plan preparation and in decision-making, sitting alongside the NPPF as an important 'material consideration'. The Arc will also have national transport policy status, allowing it to guide the plans prepared by local transport bodies.

45. The Introduction to the Framework includes an indicative timeline. The timeline does not include a publication date for the final Spatial Framework, but the intention is to publish a draft for consultation in
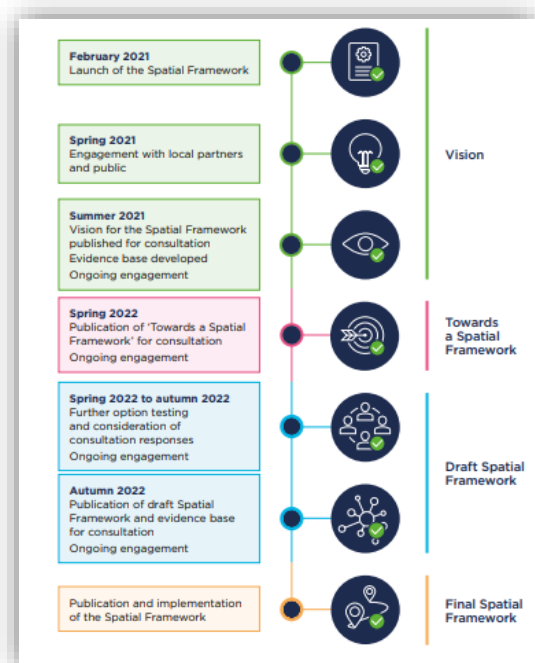
[5] Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Autumn 2022. The next key stage is publication of a Vision for the Spatial Framework in summer 2021 following engagement with local partners and the public.

46. The respective timetables for the Oxfordshire Plan and the Arc Spatial Framework mean that the Oxfordshire Plan – together with the Strategic Vision – will be able to help ensure that Oxfordshire has a strong voice in the development of the Arc Spatial Framework and that its interests are taken into account. Likewise, as work on the Arc Spatial Framework gathers pace, it will help inform the choice of options to be considered at the next stage (Regulation 19) of the Oxfordshire Plan process.

47. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc Economic Prospectus was published in Autumn 2020[6]. This sets the collective ambition of the Arc Leadership Group, the Arc Universities Group and the Arc Local Enterprise Partnerships Group.
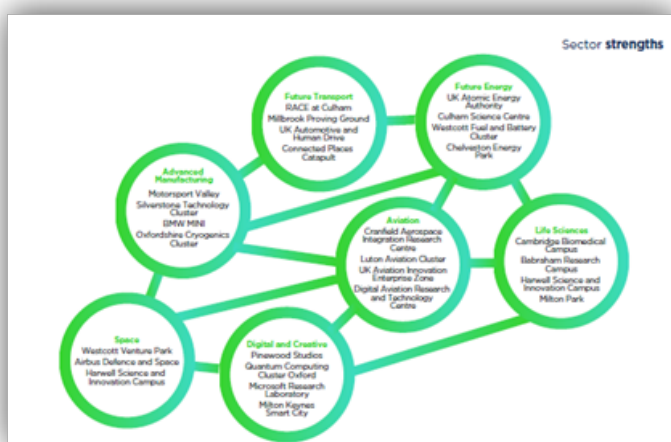
48. The ambition is that *'By 2050, the Arc will be the world leading place for high-value growth, innovation and productivity. A global hub where ideas and companies are generated and thrive, home to exemplary models of 21st century development, with a high-quality environment and outstanding quality of life, and with a strong economic focus that drives inclusive clean growth'.*

Links with other neighbouring areas and the Duty to Co-operate

49. As a formal Development Plan document, the Oxfordshire Plan is being prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Duty to Co-operate. The Duty to Co-operate is a legal requirement set out in section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as inserted by section 110 of the Localism Act 2011. The Duty is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019[7] (paragraphs 24-27).

50. The City Council and District Councils have worked constructively, actively and on an on-going basis with the County Council and LEP under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and other partners within and beyond Oxfordshire to

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[6] Oxford-Cambridge Arc economic prospectus | Oxford City Council
[7] National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

develop policies for strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries as an integral part of the preparation of a positive and justified strategy.

51. Whilst the Oxfordshire Plan focuses on the county of Oxfordshire, it is important to recognise that social, environmental and economic relationships do not stop at Oxfordshire's boundary. For example, many people travel in and out of Oxfordshire for work or to access services such as education and healthcare. We are engaging with the authorities that adjoin Oxfordshire to make sure that these relationships are given appropriate consideration throughout the plan-making process as we recognise that change in Oxfordshire will also be influenced by links with neighbouring areas such as the Thames Valley, Gloucestershire, Buckinghamshire and Swindon.

52. We are also working closely with organisations known as 'prescribed bodies' in producing the Oxfordshire Plan, to ensure that cross-boundary strategic planning matters are appropriately addressed. This includes Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England, Highways England and NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups.

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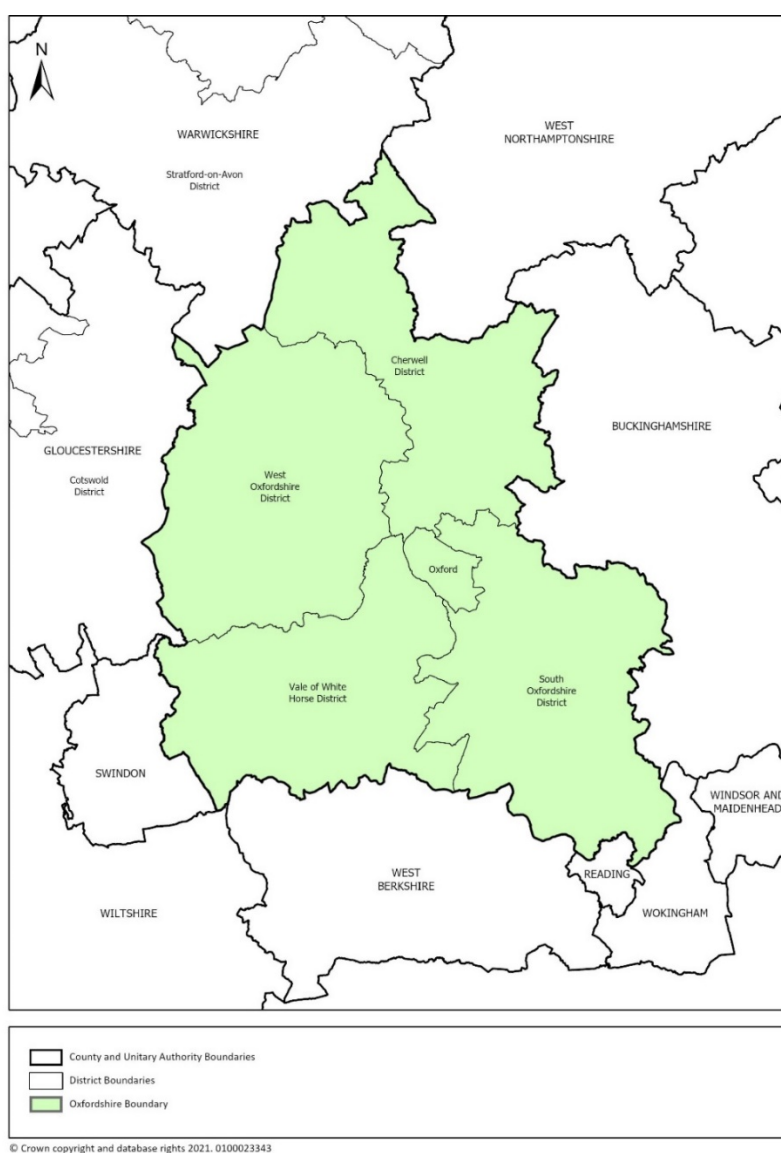
53. It is important to note that the Oxfordshire Plan intends to meet Oxfordshire's development needs within the Oxfordshire boundary. We are not looking to

neighbouring authorities to accommodate any of Oxfordshire's development needs; in particular we are not looking to neighbouring authorities to accommodate any of our housing needs. Engagement with adjoining authorities has confirmed that Oxfordshire is not being asked to accommodate any unmet development needs from elsewhere.

54. Further detail on how we are engaging with neighbouring authorities and prescribed bodies can be found in the Duty to Co-operate Statement. This engagement will continue throughout the plan-making process.

55. In addition, a Statement of Common Ground has been agreed by each of the Oxfordshire authorities and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership which sets out how the partners are working together to address strategic planning matters in Oxfordshire.

Notes on reading this consultation document

This consultation document sets out different approaches that the Oxfordshire Plan might take. It has been produced so that we can share our current thinking with communities and stakeholders, and so that we can ask for views on what the Oxfordshire Plan should do.

This document sets out the different approaches that the Oxfordshire Plan might take in two ways:

1. The Policy Options

The Oxfordshire Plan will set out policies that will guide new development in Oxfordshire. These policies will be based around five key themes:

  i.   Addressing climate change;
  ii.   Improving environmental quality;
  iii. Creating strong and healthy communities;
  iv.   Planning for sustainable travel and connectivity; and
  v.   Creating jobs and providing homes.

This document sets out different options for policies that might be included in the Oxfordshire Plan. There are two types of option:

Preferred Policy Option – This is what we think the Oxfordshire Plan should do, based on the evidence that we have and the engagement that we have undertaken with communities and stakeholders so far.

Alternative Policy Option – This is a different approach that the Oxfordshire Plan could take, that we also need to consider.

Some policy options are quite high-level and set out a broad approach that we might take. Other policy options are more detailed and suggest specific requirements for new development.

Viability

It is important to remember that we will be producing further evidence to inform the continued development of the Oxfordshire Plan, including an assessment of how

different policy options might affect the financial viability of development, both individually and as a set. This will be completed during the preparation of the Regulation 19 document. We need to make sure that the policies in the Oxfordshire Plan are deliverable.

2. The Spatial Options

The Oxfordshire Plan won't allocate sites for development, but it will set out broad locations for growth in Oxfordshire over the next 30 years. This document sets out five high-level options for how we might look to distribute development in Oxfordshire.

We want to know what you think about the different policy and spatial options in this document. Your views will help us to decide what is included in the Oxfordshire Plan.

Purpose of this consultation & how to get involved

This is an important step in the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan.

We have previously consulted the public and stakeholders on what the Plan's vision, aspirations, objectives and broad spatial strategy should be, consulted on a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and invited submissions in response to a 'Call for Ideas', which included ideas on strategic locations. In addition, the Oxfordshire Growth Board's informal Open Thought initiative added to the debate and ideas by tapping into the wealth of knowledge in Oxfordshire to help identify solutions to accommodate changes in how we will live and work, how we will connect with each other and how we will manage and respond to climate change.

We have now reached the next stage of formal consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan: Regulation 18 Part 2. This document sets out options for thematic-based policies and a number of spatial strategy options that will shape the future of Oxfordshire. We are seeking the public's and stakeholder views on these options and whether there are other options that the Oxfordshire Plan should consider.

Our consultation will run for 10 weeks from the 30th of July to 8th October 2021.

Based on the responses received, we will propose our preferred policies and strategy for growth in Oxfordshire (in a Regulation 19 stage Draft Plan), with a further round of consultation in May 2022, prior to the Oxfordshire Plan being submitted for independent Examination.

We are also inviting 'Call for Ideas' submissions. This is because it is important that up-to-date information is available on sites to inform development of the Regulation 19 stage Draft Plan.

Responding to the consultation

Anyone wishing to respond during the consultation can do so at www.oxfordshireopenthought.org

Visitors will find all the details of the emerging Plan online, including the five key themes of addressing climate change, improving environmental quality, creating strong and healthy communities, planning for sustainable travel and connectivity and

creating jobs and providing homes. There will also be options for how much we grow and where that growth might happen.

The consultation document is available for download in Word format.

People can give their views via the interactive form on the Open Thought website.

People can give their views via the interactive form on the Open Thought website. Alternatively, if they wish to submit their thoughts in writing, they can send them by email to info@oxfordshireplan.org or can post them to Oxfordshire Plan 2050, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford, OX1 1NE.

Oxfordshire Plan Vision and Objectives

56. A draft vision for the Oxfordshire Plan was consulted upon at the Regulation 18 Part 1 stage:

57. *'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 lifestyles 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 wellbeing of residents and workers is enhanced through being part of this special place'.*

58. The following objectives for the Oxfordshire Plan were formed following the Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation:

Oxfordshire Plan Objectives

1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging active and healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.

5. To sustain and strengthen Oxfordshire's economic role and reputation by building on our key strengths and relationships.

6. To ensure that the benefits and opportunities arising from Oxfordshire's economic success are felt by all of Oxfordshire's communities.

7. 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.

8. To ensure that new housing is flexible to meet the varied needs of people through all stages of life.

9. To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.

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10. 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.

11. To ensure that communities are digitally connected and that innovative technologies are supported.

Themes and Policies

Theme One: Addressing Climate Change

59. Climate change is the most significant threat facing humankind today, with the threat of increased flood risk, severe drought and more extreme weather patterns resulting from greenhouse gas emissions and global warming. Such threats will have serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of communities without taking proactive steps to address the causes and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

60. It is essential that climate change considerations run through the Oxfordshire Plan strategy, to support the integrity and resilience of the natural environment and Oxfordshire's communities.

61. Climate change is central to each of the Oxfordshire Plan themes and policies, as to properly address climate change, a coherent, joined-up approach encompassing development standards, transport and infrastructure and healthy ecosystems is required.

62. Recent years have seen stronger national commitments to address the causes of climate change with strategies to accelerate clean growth and reduce greenhouse gas emissions becoming increasingly more prevalent.

63. In 2019, the UK became the first major economy to pass net zero emissions law in an attempt to end the UK's contribution to global warming by 2050. Amendments to the Climate Change Act 2008 commit the UK Government to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 100% (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. The UK's 2050 net zero target is one of the most ambitious in the world and key to meeting the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature increases to no more than 1.5°c above pre-industrial levels and sets a long-term goal of net zero carbon emissions[8].

64. It is recognised that local areas will play a key role in developing opportunities for low carbon energy and in making efforts to meet national and international commitments to tackling climate change.

65. The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy[9] is a key strategic influencer on the Oxfordshire Plan and sets objectives to;

- Secure smart, modern, clean energy infrastructure to support planned housing, industrial and commercial growth and

- Lead nationally and internationally to reduce county-wide emissions by 50% by 2030, on 2008 levels and set a pathway to achieve zero carbon by 2050.

66. Since the adoption of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, all Oxfordshire authorities, including the County Council have declared climate emergencies which recognise the importance of addressing climate change, by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, with commitments for net zero carbon emissions.

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[8] Paris Climate Agreement (2015) UNFCCC
[9] https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/energystrategy

	Date of Declaration	Council operations Target	District wide target
Cherwell District Council	25/07/2019	2030	2030
Oxford City Council	28/01/2019	2030	2040
South Oxfordshire District Council	03/04/2019	2025	2030
Vale of White Horse District Council	13/02/2019	2030	2045
West Oxfordshire District Council	26/06/2019	2030	2050
Oxfordshire County Council	02/04/2019	2030	2050

67. The Climate Emergency declarations provide an impetus for Oxfordshire's local authorities to strive for carbon reductions in their own operations and through those things that they can influence such as planning for development within their areas.

68. One of the main mechanisms for addressing county-wide emissions arising from development is the county's planning framework, with adopted local and neighbourhood plans setting the vision, objectives and policies for sustainable development.

69. The adopted local plans for Oxfordshire set clear objectives for addressing climate change and achieving net zero carbon development, particularly the recently adopted Oxford Local Plan 2036 and South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 which set clear pathways for achieving net zero residential development by 2030, using a combination of low carbon technology, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

70. There is a varied policy approach taken across local plans, however, with some deferring to buildings regulations to determine standards for the design and construction of buildings.

71. Achieving net zero in Oxfordshire will require reductions in emissions from all sources and it is the intention of the Oxfordshire Plan to drive these down as far as possible. The Oxfordshire Plan will also seek to establish a framework in which environmental enhancements can be directed to where they can be most effective in mitigating the impacts of climate change and offsetting any residual carbon emissions that cannot be eradicated at source.

72. It is important that the Oxfordshire Plan takes a proactive approach to addressing climate change and supporting the transition to a low carbon future as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. It is considered that taking a proactive approach to guiding development and environmental enhancements will be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of communities and in supporting a green recovery in Oxfordshire. There are a wealth of business and organisations driving innovation in the green economy and many more involved in the supply chains and supporting business sectors. Driving up standards in the Oxfordshire Plan and setting clear ambitions for addressing the causes, building resilience to

and mitigating the impacts of climate change will bring multiple benefits to the county, provided the right investments can be made in the right places at the right time and the necessary skills and opportunities are built within our communities.

73. The Oxfordshire Plan aims to deliver against its climate change ambitions through a range of approaches including a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (improved building standards, increased renewable energy generation) and minimising vulnerability to and improving the resilience of communities and the natural environment (Natural Capital, Nature Recovery, Water Environment and biodiversity net gain).

Theme One – Meets the following Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan

No 1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

No 2. 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.

No 9. To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.

Policy Option 01 - Sustainable Design and Construction

74. Central to Oxfordshire's efforts to achieve net zero carbon, in accordance with challenging targets will be to address the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire.

75. An assessment undertaken as part of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy identifies the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Oxfordshire as road transport and housing.

76. The diagram below illustrates the contribution that a number of key sectors have historically made to overall carbon dioxide emissions in Oxfordshire[10]. Although there has been a decrease in overall emissions since 2008, they remain high with road transport, residential development, public services and commercial services contributing the majority of these.

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[10] Aether, Oxfordshire Greenhouse Gas emission projections, 2018 update

Oxfordshire CO_2 emissions by sector, 2008 to 2018
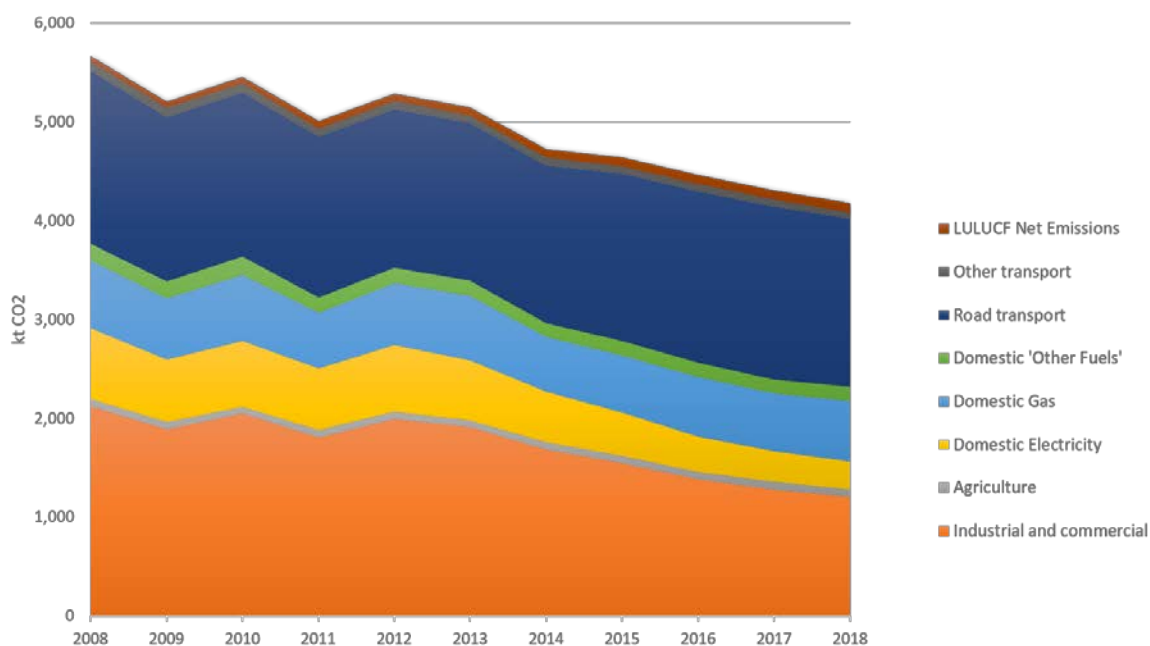
77. To successfully achieve net zero carbon emissions, the focus needs to be on the highest emitters in a way that ensures targets are met, without impacting on the delivery of necessary infrastructure and services to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's communities.

78. It is essential that the Oxfordshire Plan takes steps to mitigate the impact of new development by reducing its carbon footprint.

79. There are a significant number of planned houses in the pipeline that will be constructed to existing building standards and will therefore contribute less to achieving the ambitious national and local carbon reductions targets that have been set.

80. The Government have confirmed[11] that from 2025, the Future Homes Standard will ensure that new homes produce at least 75% lower CO2 emissions compared to those built to current standards. In the short-term this represents a considerable improvement in the energy efficiency standards for new homes. Homes built under the Future Homes Standard will be 'zero carbon ready', which means that in the longer-term, no further retrofit work for energy efficiency will be necessary to enable them to become zero carbon homes as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

81. From 2021, new homes will be expected to produce 31% less CO2 emissions compared to current standards. This will deliver high-quality homes that are in line with our broader housing commitments and encourage homes that are future-proofed for the longer-term.

82. Notwithstanding the Government commitment to improve building regulations, it is important to note that local authorities have the ability to set local targets for

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[11] https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Future-Homes-Standard-Government-response.pdf

the design and construction of new buildings. The NPPF does not prevent local authorities from setting higher ambitions particularly in relation to energy efficiency standards that exceed Building Regulations.

83. There is already evidence of Oxfordshire authorities setting a clear pathway to zero carbon through their local plan policies, as well as examples of individual developments and strategic growth locations achieving far greater carbon reductions than comparable scale developments within the same localities.

84. Such achievements are a clear signal that net zero carbon can be achieved in developments at a range of scales, when there are strong policies in place and when developers have an opportunity to test construction techniques and use of materials supported by sufficient investment.

85. For Oxfordshire to go further than existing and proposed Government standards, a consistent county-wide definition of net zero carbon needs to be established. This requires consideration of existing and emerging definitions for net zero carbon.

The Eco Town Definition

The definition of zero carbon for eco-towns set out in the Planning Policy Statement (2009) is that ,over a year, the net carbon dioxide emissions from all energy use within the buildings on the eco-town development, as a whole, are zero or below. The initial planning application and all subsequent planning applications for the development of the eco-town should demonstrate how this will be achieved.

The definition excludes embodied carbon and emissions from transport but includes all buildings – not just houses but also commercial and public sector buildings which are built as part of the eco-town development.

UKGBC Net Zero Carbon Buildings – A Framework Definition (UK Green Building Council)

From November 2018 to March 2019, UKGBC brought together an extensive range of industry stakeholders, including a task group[12], to build consensus on a framework definition for net zero carbon buildings in the UK[13].

The primary focus of the framework is to set in place a path to achieve net zero carbon buildings in both construction and operation (in-use energy consumption), whilst beginning to provide direction for addressing whole-life carbon in the industry.

The Framework definition of Net Zero Carbon Buildings consists of two definitions:

1. Net zero carbon – construction (for new buildings and major renovations). When the amount of carbon emissions associated with a building's product and

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[12] https://www.ukgbc.org/uncategorised/zerocarbontaskgroup
[13] https://www.ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Net zero-Carbon-Buildings-A-framework-definition.pdf

construction stages up to practical completion is zero or negative, through the use of offsets or the net export of on-site renewable energy.

2. Net zero carbon – operational energy (for all buildings in operation). When the amount of carbon emissions associated with the building's operational energy on an annual basis is zero or negative. A net zero carbon building is highly energy efficient and powered from on-site and/or off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset.

A third definition, 'new zero carbon – whole-life' is also proposed at a high level, but further work is needed to develop the detail of this approach.

The framework includes five steps, shown in diagram below. Some of the steps are relevant to the definition for construction and some to the definition for operational energy. However, a building targeting net zero carbon for construction should be designed to achieve net zero carbon for operational energy.

Each step has a set of principles that have been ordered in terms of priority and should be reviewed in that order. Each principle sets out the approach that should be followed, including a rationale for the principle, associated technical requirements and, where relevant, any areas for future development.

Broadly speaking the definitions seek to:

- ensure that a whole-life carbon assessment is undertaken,
- prioritise reductions in energy demand and consumption over all other measures,
- report annually on in-use energy consumption,
- prioritise on-site renewable energy sources and require any off-site renewable energy to demonstrate additionality,
- offset any remaining carbon using a recognised offsetting framework and publicly disclose this.

Steps to Achieving a Net Zero Carbon Building

1. Establish Net Zero Carbon Scope*

1.1   Net zero carbon – **construction**

1.2   Net zero carbon – **operational energy**

2. Reduce Construction Impacts

2.1   A whole life carbon assessment should be undertaken and disclosed for all construction projects to drive carbon reductions

2.2   The embodied carbon impacts from the product and construction stages should be measured and offset at practical completion

3. Reduce Operational Energy Use

3.1   Reductions in energy demand and consumption should be prioritised over all other measures.

3.2   In-use energy consumption should be calculated and publicly disclosed on an annual basis.

4. Increase Renewable Energy Supply

4.1   On-site renewable energy source should be prioritised

4.2   Off-site renewables should demonstrate additionality

5. Offset Any Remaining Carbon

5.1   Any remaining carbon should be offset using a recognised offsetting framework

5.2   The amount of offsets used should be publicly disclosed

(D)   New buildings and major refurbishments targeting net zero carbon for construction should be designed to achieve net zero carbon for operational energy by considering these principles.

*   Please also note, a further scope for net zero whole life carbon (1.3) will be developed in the future.

Source: Net zero carbon buildings – A framework definition (UKGBC, April 2019)

London Energy Transformation Initiative

The London Energy Transformation Initiative (LETI) was established in 2017 to support the transition of London's built environment to net zero carbon, providing guidance that could be applied to the rest of the UK.

A network of over 1,000 built environment professionals have worked collaboratively to compile evidence-based recommendations for London Plan and London Environment Strategy policies. The LETI Climate Emergency Design Guide defines what good looks like in context of the climate emergency for new buildings.

The guidance focusses on delivering net zero carbon new buildings which means having regard to whole-life carbon, which in the context of the document means;

- Operational carbon – net zero operational carbon means that buildings burn no fossil fuels, are 100% powered by renewable energy and achieve a high level of energy performance in line with national climate change targets.

- Embodied carbon – The carbon emissions emitted producing a building's materials, their transport and installation as well as disposal at the end of life.

A key recommendation of the guidance is that the Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of a building should replace carbon emission reductions as the primary metric used in policy, regulations and design decisions. EUI is an annual measure of the total energy consumed in a building. EUI is regarded as a good metric as it depends on how the building performs in use.

EUI includes all the energy consumed in the building including regulated energy (heating, hot water, cooling, ventilation and lighting) and unregulated energy (plug loads and equipment e.g. kitchen white goods, ICT and AV equipment). It does not however include charging of electric vehicles.

The guidance makes recommendations for operational energy which includes the fabric efficiency of building materials, window areas and energy consumption. It also makes recommendations for embodied carbon emissions.

To achieve Net Zero Operational Carbon, LETI propose ten key requirements for new buildings:

1. Total energy use of different building typologies not to exceed Energy Use Intensity (EUI) targets for energy uses in buildings including regulated and unregulated energy.
2. A fabric first approach ensuring that space heating demand for all building types is below 15kWh/m^2/yr.
3. Annual energy use and renewable energy generation to reported for the first year post completion as part of a measurement and verification process.
4. Embodied carbon of construction materials should be assessed to reduce impacts of construction process.
5. Heating and hot water should not be generated from fossil fuels.

6. Average annual carbon content of heat supplied (gCO2/kWh) should be reported.

7. On-site renewable electricity should be maximised.

8. Energy demand response and storage measures should be incorporated, and the building annual peak energy demand should be reported.

9. An annual carbon balance calculation should be undertaken to demonstrate that a building achieves a net zero carbon balance.

10. Any energy use not met on-site should be met by investment into additional renewable energy capacity off-site.
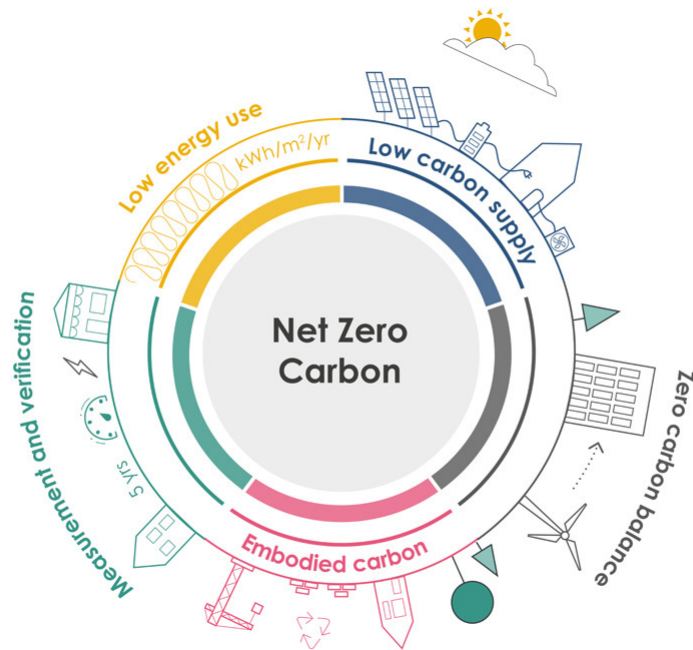
Source: London Energy Transformation Initiative

The Circular Economy

In addition to different definitions for net zero carbon development, it is also useful to consider circular economy principles and how these relate to resource consumption, waste and carbon emissions.

A circular economy keeps products, components and materials at their highest use and value. In a circular economy, every item or material is useful and valuable to another part of the economy. It provides an alternative to the current 'linear' economy – in which we make, use and dispose of products, components and materials and recover little value from them.

Significant greenhouse gas emissions arise from consumption habits in society. A circular economy seeks to shift away from a linear pattern of resource extraction, use and wastage to one in which products and materials are retained and used at their highest use value for longer through maintenance, repairs and upgrades.

As construction waste accounts for the largest proportion of waste within the Oxfordshire waste cycle[14], circular economy principles are relevant to the Oxfordshire Plan, particularly efforts to achieving net zero carbon emissions through the design and construction of new development.

The use of natural or recycled materials in construction, designing buildings for adaptability and changing uses over time as well as the ability to dismantle and recover materials at the end of a building's life would all help to minimise resource extraction and waste arising from construction in Oxfordshire. This would help to minimise carbon emissions associated with construction and development over the lifetime of the Plan.

Consideration of circular economy principles through the Oxfordshire Plan has potential to deliver a wide range of benefits beyond tackling waste and reducing carbon emissions with positive social implications, new jobs, improved skills and new business opportunities[15].

Source – Useful Projects – Circular Economy in construction

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[14] https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/planning-minerals-and-waste/AnnualMonitoringReport2018.pdf
[15] https://usefulprojects.co.uk/circular-economy-in-construction/

86. The Government's proposals to strengthen Building Regulations and to define future standards for new buildings have the potential to deliver a consistent approach for the delivery of zero carbon buildings and take a big step on the pathway to net zero carbon. However, they may not be ambitious enough to meet targets for achieving net zero carbon in Oxfordshire.

87. Consideration should be given to elements of other emerging design standards which could assist in accelerating our efforts, particularly where better regard is had to the whole-life carbon of buildings, including embodied carbon, operational energy use and renewable energy generation.

88. The various industry consensus definitions developed by LETI and the UKGBC are more ambitious in scope compared to recently adopted local plan policies which focus on achieving carbon reductions rather than addressing whole-life carbon.

89. Well-designed places are those that respond to the impacts of climate change through energy efficiency, minimising greenhouse gas emissions and embodied carbon, as well as adapting to anticipated events such as rising temperatures and increased flood risk.

Policy Options

90. The preferred policy approach is to define an Oxfordshire-wide definition for net zero carbon design and construction for development in Oxfordshire. This will assist in achieving the County's objectives in achieving net zero carbon emissions over the lifetime of the Oxfordshire Plan with multiple benefits including supporting the health and wellbeing of communities and encouraging clean growth and innovation, consistent with Strategic Vision and Oxfordshire Plan objectives.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 01: Sustainable Design and Construction

To include in the Oxfordshire Plan a policy setting out sustainable design and construction requirements to be applied to major residential and non-residential developments within Oxfordshire.

This policy would be subject to viability and deliverability testing but with the objective to achieve net zero whole-life carbon for both residential and non-residential buildings, taking account of embodied carbon, low energy use and renewable energy supply.

Developments should be fossil fuel free and fossil fuels should not be used to provide space heating, hot water or fuel for cooking. Demand for energy should be balanced by the provision of on-site renewable energy generation.

Carbon offsetting would only be permitted where it is demonstrable that net zero carbon cannot be achieved on site.

A financial contribution based on defined calculation would be made to carbon offsetting projects including off-site renewable energy generation or carbon sequestration consistent with defined natural capital and nature recovery approaches defined in the Plan.

Buildings should be designed to be resilient to the effects of a changing climate, including overheating.

New buildings should be designed to be durable but flexible and adaptable to changing needs over time.

Residential and non-residential buildings should be designed and built to maximise the use of natural or recycled material in construction and to enable disassembly at the end of a building's life in accordance with circular economy principles.

Alternative Policy Option 01-1

91. One alternative policy option is to defer standards for the design and construction of new buildings to district local plans. National policy does not prevent local authorities from setting higher ambitions, particularly in relation to energy efficiency standards that exceed Building Regulations.

92. This is not a preferred option as different targets and timescales for achieving net zero carbon development in local plans could hinder efforts to achieve net zero carbon emissions in Oxfordshire during the lifetime of the Plan.

Alternative Policy Option 01-2

93. Another alternative is to defer guidance on sustainable design and construction to building regulations and the Future Homes and Future Buildings Standards.

94. This is not a preferred option as failure to introduce more stringent national standards for the design and construction of new development could hinder Oxfordshire's efforts to achieve net zero carbon emissions during the lifetime of the Plan.

Policy Option 02 - Energy

95. Building standards can contribute significantly to carbon emissions reductions, by reducing the amount of energy required to operate a building and reducing the amount of energy lost through the fabric performance of a building.

96. In order to achieve net zero targets however, it is necessary to consider the net zero carbon energy balance, to ensure that there is sufficient renewable energy to meet energy requirements of development.

97. It is important to consider the future of energy infrastructure as part of the Oxfordshire Plan as the energy system, the generation and transmission and amount of electricity consumed, are likely to be very different by 2050. The electrification of heat, rise in the use of electric vehicles and increases in

renewable energy generation will place new and significant burdens on an already constrained electricity network.

98. The Government's Energy White Paper (December 2020)[16] builds on their Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution (November 2020)[17] and establishes the Government's goal of a decisive shift from fossil fuels to clean energy in power, buildings and industry, while creating jobs and growing the economy and keeping energy bills affordable. It addresses how and why our energy system needs to evolve to deliver this goal and provides a foundation for the detailed actions to be taken.

99. The way in which we produce and use energy is at the heart of the Energy White Paper. Meeting challenging targets for net zero carbon emissions will mean eliminating the use of fossil fuels to power the economy and heat our homes and an increase in clean electricity which will become the predominant form of energy.

100.   Existing energy infrastructure in Oxfordshire covers the generation, transmission and distribution of energy and includes gas, electricity and renewable energy. Homes and businesses across the county are served energy from a variety of different sources with varying proportions across all energy types.

101.   There is already a significant amount of energy generated in Oxfordshire from a range of renewable sources, but with substantial variations in type and volume across the districts. The following diagram illustrates this:
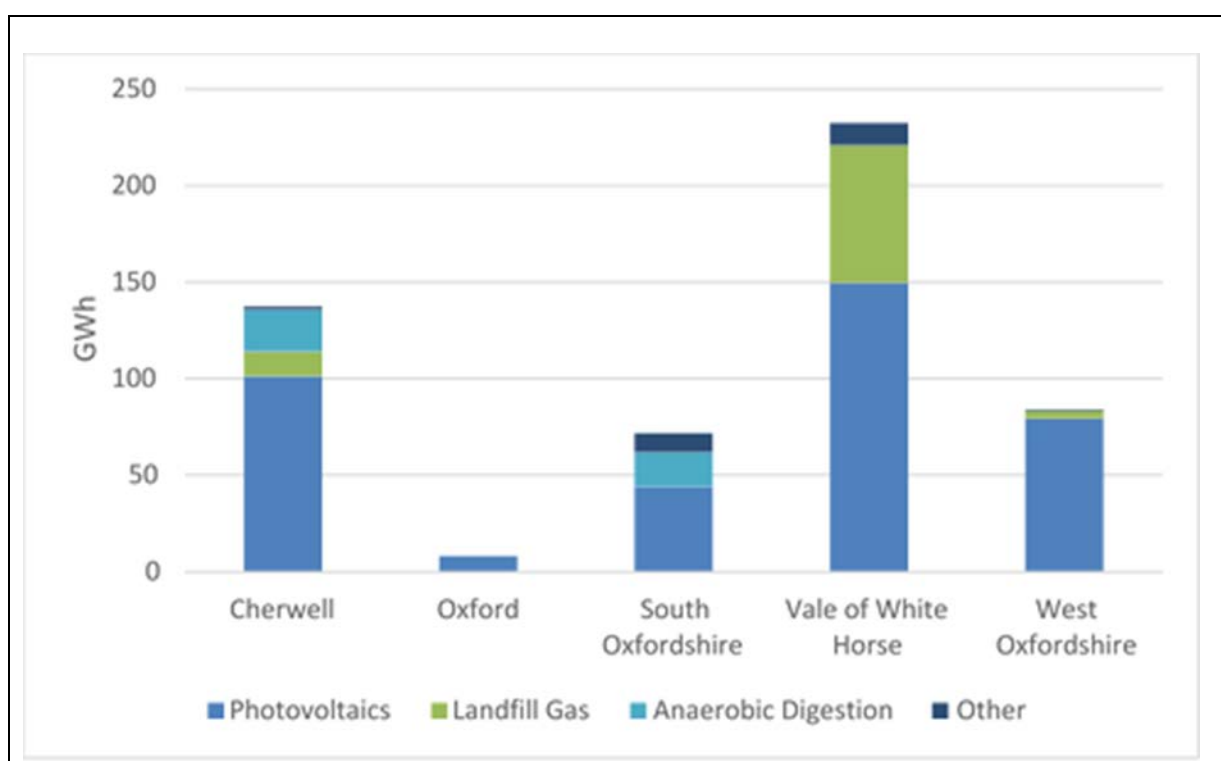
102.   Electricity network operators in Oxfordshire are transitioning from Distribution Network Operators (DNO) to Distribution System Operators (DSO)

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[16] Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future
[17] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution

to accommodate the changes that will be required to enable net zero carbon. This transition requires flexibility in the management of the electricity network to ensure that the supply and demand for electricity are balanced. It has implications for spatial planning in Oxfordshire and will influence the distribution of future development.

103. The Climate Change Committee (CCC)[18] has forecast that by 2050 demand on electricity networks could treble as the UK moves toward its net zero carbon emissions future. Key to delivering the ambitions of the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy is to ensure that the local network infrastructure is sufficient for new generation and demand.

104. High level analysis of capacity at primary electricity sub stations in Oxfordshire[19] identified a number of major electricity infrastructure projects which still required funding, to support the level of planned housing and employment growth to 2031.

105. The capacity of existing infrastructure and the cost and complexity of future upgrades to support planned growth in Oxfordshire are important considerations for the future planning of the county, both in terms of how much growth can be accommodated and where.

106. The significant demand that Oxford's substations already face undermines the feasibility of connecting new sources of generation to the distribution network. This could either stop new renewable generation from being deployed or make it prohibitively expensive.

107. Energy consumption analysis by local authority area in Oxfordshire shows relatively consistent levels as well as consistent fuel type proportions over the past 10 years, with bioenergy and wastes only partially replacing other traditional fuel sources. Oxfordshire's reliance on petroleum products and gas must reduce at a fast rate in order to meet national 2030 targets and clean energy goals.

108. This need is exacerbated by the population growth expected in the county. Electricity consumption has shown a reduction between 2008 and 2019 in all local authority areas through efficiency gains. However, alongside population growth, other factors will result in a need to address electricity consumption (e.g. transition to electric vehicles and decarbonisation of heat). Targets for electric vehicle use raise specific concerns over the requirements for large-scale investment in the electrical grid and network infrastructure.

109. Oxfordshire is home to two national demonstrator projects part funded by the UK's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund[20] with investment in industry and research to accelerate innovation in smart local energy systems.

- Energy Superhub Oxford is focused on the electric vehicle (EV) charging network with a transmission-connected network of rapid electric vehicle charging, hybrid battery energy storage, low carbon heating and smart energy management technologies that reduces stress on local grids.

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[18] https://www.theccc.org.uk/
[19] https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20Energy%20Strategy.pdf
[20] https://www.ukri.org/our-work/our-main-funds/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund/clean-growth/prospering-from-the-energy-revolution-challenge/

- Project Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO) is one of the most ambitious, wide-ranging, innovative, and holistic smart grid trials ever conducted in the UK. LEO will improve our understanding of how opportunities can be maximised and unlocked from the transition to a smarter, flexible electricity system and how households, businesses and communities can realise its benefits.
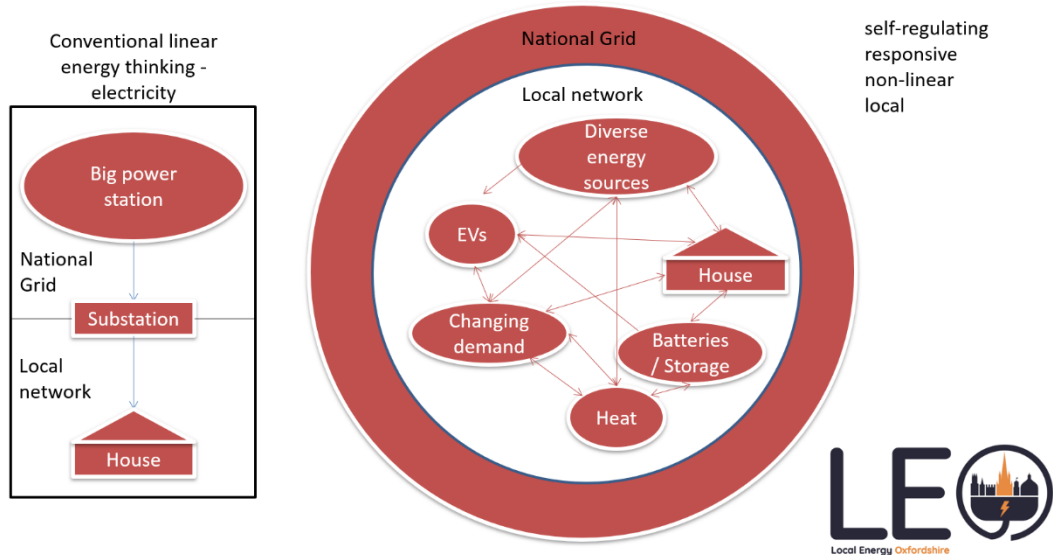
110. Both projects are important in demonstrating how integrated, intelligent local systems can deliver power, heat and mobility to users in new and better ways. The lessons learned will be influential in shaping the Oxfordshire Plan strategy including the distribution of development and investment in infrastructure.

111. The economic benefits of a low carbon transition in Oxfordshire will be realised by supporting ambitious and innovative clean generation projects across the county and supporting projects that reduce energy demand across all sectors and increase energy efficiency for domestic, industrial and commercial buildings.

112. The Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to develop new ways of partnership working and to deliver innovative projects in the county. Establishing local smart energy networks will ensure that housing and economic growth is supported by clean energy and contributes to meeting net zero carbon targets.

113. There is a need to significantly increase the proportion of renewable electricity generated within the county to achieve a net zero carbon energy balance. Energy systems and the grid must adapt, to operate in a way that allows growth and supports the de-carbonisation of both heat and transport and takes account of implications for electricity demand and distribution.

114. The future of energy in Oxfordshire may have implications for the future distribution of development, and delivery of strategic scale renewable energy generation will have land use implications.

115. It is important for the Oxfordshire Plan to consider future infrastructure needs and land use implications of future energy infrastructure, particularly

increases in renewable energy generation capacity, to set a framework for delivery as part of a sustainable spatial strategy for Oxfordshire.

Policy Options

116.   The preferred policy option is to maximise the use of renewable energy in new developments in Oxfordshire, to ensure that rising demands for electricity are matched with zero carbon energy provision, to achieve a net zero carbon energy balance and to support efforts to achieve net zero carbon emissions over the lifetime of the Oxfordshire Plan.

117.   This is considered to be a strategic matter, as to ensure there is sufficient renewable energy generation capacity in the county may require land to accommodate renewable energy generation technology.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 02: Energy

The Oxfordshire Plan would seek to minimise energy demand and maximise the use of renewable energy, where viable, meeting all demands for heat and power without increasing carbon emissions.

Target for 100% of energy needs for major developments to be met from renewable energy sources.

Developments would be required to maximise energy efficiency whilst integrating renewable and smart energy technologies in order to minimise energy demand.

Installation and integration of these technologies should be delivered at the development stage to avoid more costly retrofitting after completion.

The Oxfordshire Plan would support the delivery of strategic and community scale renewable energy schemes, particularly where their establishment can support development and the transition to a smart, local energy system for Oxfordshire.

Alternative Policy Option 02-1

118.   One alternative policy option is to not set county-wide targets for renewable energy in new developments and to defer to local plans and individual developments.

119.   This option is not preferred, as establishing different approaches to renewable energy generation for new developments through local plans could undermine efforts to achieve targets for net zero carbon emissions in Oxfordshire over the lifetime of the Oxfordshire Plan.

Alternative Policy Option 02-2

120.   Another alternative policy option is to set a percentage target for renewable energy generation in new developments e.g. minimum 10%.

121.   This option is reasonable as the continued decarbonisation of the National Grid will help to ensure that a zero carbon energy balance could be achieved nationally and locally during the lifetime of the Plan, particularly with increased renewable energy generation locally. It is not the preferred option as a lower target would potentially fall short of local targets of net zero carbon emissions during the lifetime of the Oxfordshire Plan.

Policy Option 03 - Water Efficiency

122.   It is essential that Oxfordshire's communities, natural environment and businesses have access to the water they need, both now and in the future.

123.   Water resources serving Oxfordshire and the wider South East region are under increasing pressure. This is due to a range of factors including climate change, population growth and limitations on the amount of water that can be taken from rivers and aquifers to avoid harm to the natural environment.

124.   Thames Water's current Water Resource Management Plan forecasts that, without action, there will be a substantial shortfall between water supply and water demand within the next 25 years, significantly increasing the possibility of droughts.[21]

125.   The Oxfordshire authorities are working closely with Thames Water, the Environment Agency and other key stakeholders to understand water resource issues to 2050 and beyond. This engagement has fed into the production of the Water Cycle Study which will inform the Oxfordshire Plan. (A Phase 1 Scoping Study has been published as part of this consultation and a further, more detailed assessment will be undertaken prior to Regulation 19.) The evidence is clear that we need to make best possible use of Oxfordshire's water resources.

126.   Water efficiency standards for new development are set out in the Building Regulations.[22] Currently, for new homes, water consumption must not exceed 125 litres per person per day. (On average, a person in England uses 141 litres of water per day.[23]) However, local planning authorities can, where there is a clear local need, require new homes to meet a higher optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day.[24] All adopted local plans in Oxfordshire apply the optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day.

127.   In 2019, the Government consulted on the possibility of introducing a more ambitious national water efficiency standard for residential development.[25] However, the outcome of that consultation is not yet known.

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[21] Thames Water (April 2020) Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2100
[22] HM Government (2015, with 2016 amendments) The Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document G; Sanitation, Hot Water Safety and Water Efficiency; Requirement G2 and Regulation 36
[23] DEFRA (July 2019) Consultation on Measures to Reduce Personal Water Use.
[24] MHCLG (March 2015) Planning Practice Guidance; Housing: Optional Technical Standards; Paragraph: 014; Reference ID: 56-014-20150327
[25] DEFRA (July 2019) Consultation on Measures to Reduce Personal Water Use.

128.   The Building Regulations do not set specific water efficiency standards for non-residential development, but state that reasonable provision must be made to prevent undue water consumption.

129.   There are examples of best practice that we can also look to. For example, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has developed a set of performance targets as part of their '2030 Climate Challenge'. '*The performance targets align with the future legislative horizon and set out a challenging but achievable trajectory to realise the significant reductions necessary by 2030 in order to have a realistic prospect of achieving net zero carbon for the whole UK building stock by 2050'*. This includes water use performance targets for different types of development (homes, offices and schools).[26]

130.   Measures to improve water efficiency include rainwater harvesting (the collection of rainwater directly from the surface it falls on) and grey water recycling (the collection and treatment of used water from baths, showers and bathroom taps). Once collected, treated and stored, this water can be used for non-potable purposes such as toilet flushing, garden watering and clothes washing using a washing machine. Evidence suggests that rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling schemes are more efficient, cost effective and have a lower carbon footprint when they operate at a 'community-scale'.[27]

131.   In planning to 2050, it is reasonable to assume that more ambitious water efficiency standards may become achievable as technology, design and construction methods evolve and become more affordable over time.

132.   Ambitious policies in the Oxfordshire Plan are consistent with the opportunity that the Oxfordshire Plan represents to secure the transformational change that the Plan is seeking to achieve.

Policy Options

133.   One option is to not have a strategic policy on water efficiency in the Oxfordshire Plan and to instead leave it to local plans to set policies in relation to water efficiency. However, responding to county-wide and regional pressures on water resources is a strategic cross-boundary planning matter. It is therefore considered appropriate to include a county-wide strategic water efficiency policy in the Oxfordshire Plan.

134.   If it were left to local plans to set policies on water efficiency, there is a risk that different approaches might be taken. This could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around the delivery of transformational change, addressing the impacts of climate change and responding to county-wide and regional pressures on water resources.

135.   For this policy option there is a preferred policy option and two alternatives that follow the text box.

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[26] RIBA (2021) 2030 Climate Challenge (Version 2)
[27] Artesia Consulting on behalf of OFWAT (April 2018) The Long Term Potential for Deep Reductions in Household Water Demand

Preferred Policy Option

136.   The preferred approach is for the Oxfordshire Plan to set ambitious minimum water efficiency standards for new development in Oxfordshire. This would help to ensure a consistent approach across the county. It is considered appropriate given increasing pressures on water resources, both within Oxfordshire and across the wider region. Setting ambitious policies in the Oxfordshire Plan is consistent with the opportunity that the Oxfordshire Plan represents to deliver long-term transformational change and to address the impacts of climate change. Local plans could provide further detail as appropriate.

Policy Option 03: Water Efficiency

The Oxfordshire Plan would seek to require the most ambitious minimum water efficiency standards possible for new development.

For residential development, this would include exploring the potential to go beyond the current optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day. (For example, RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge Targets of 75 litres per person per day.)

For non-residential development, this would include exploring the potential to set minimum water efficiency standards for some uses. (For example, RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge Targets or BREEAM standards.)

The Oxfordshire Plan would also require development at strategic growth locations to maximise water efficiency through the delivery of community-scale rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling schemes.

It would be important for the Oxfordshire Plan to provide flexibility to adapt to any new, more ambitious water efficiency standards that may be introduced or become achievable over the plan period.

Alternative Policy Option 03-1

137.   Require water neutrality in Oxfordshire. (This is when the total demand for water is the same after new development is built, as it was before. It means that any new demand for water would be offset by making existing homes and buildings in Oxfordshire more water efficient.)

138.   This approach could be implemented alongside the preferred option of setting ambitious minimum water efficiency standards. It would represent transformational change and would further help to address the impacts of climate change. However, this is not a preferred option as at it is unclear how this approach could be delivered, funded and monitored.

Alternative Policy Option 03-2

139.   Set less ambitious water efficiency standards in the Oxfordshire Plan. For example:

i.   align with the current optional requirement of 110 litres per person per day for new homes;
ii.   do not set water efficiency standards for non-residential development; and/or
iii.   encourage (rather than require) development at strategic growth locations to maximise water efficiency through the delivery of community-scale rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling schemes.

140.   This is not a preferred policy option as it would not deliver transformational change. There are opportunities to do more to address the impacts of climate

change and to respond to county-wide and regional pressures on water resources.

Policy Option 04 - Flood Risk

141.   Many communities across Oxfordshire have been affected by flooding. Flooding causes both immediate and long-term disruption to people's lives, businesses and wildlife.

142.   The risk of flooding is expected to increase in future years, with climate change altering weather patterns and increasing the severity and frequency of extreme weather events. It is important to ensure that the impacts of climate change on flood risk are appropriately managed and mitigated so that Oxfordshire's communities, businesses and natural environment are resilient, with the ability to adapt and thrive in the long-term, to 2050 and beyond.

143.   The Oxfordshire Authorities are commissioning a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. The SFRA will provide up-to-date information on flood risk, from all sources, and will be based upon the latest evidence and modelling, including the latest climate change projections. The SFRA will consider the individual and cumulative impacts on flood risk of growth proposed through the Oxfordshire Plan in combination with growth proposed in other plans (including Oxfordshire's adopted local plans and plans for adjoining areas as appropriate). Information in the SFRA will be used to apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development. It will also identify infrastructure and other adaptations necessary to manage flood risk to 2050 and beyond. The SFRA will be published at the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19).

144.   In considering flood risk management and adaptation in Oxfordshire, the priority will be to work with natural processes wherever possible, utilising natural flood management methods. This approach can help to deliver wider benefits for people and wildlife by helping to restore habitats, improve water quality and increasing resilience to climate change.

145.   As natural flood management works best when a 'catchment-based approach' is taken (where efforts are coordinated to manage the flow of water along the whole length of a river catchment from its source to sea), the Oxfordshire authorities will work with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to implement this approach.

146.   Ambitious policies in the Oxfordshire Plan would enable the local planning authorities to work together to secure a transformational change across the entire Thames catchment.

Policy Options

147.   We could leave it to local plans to set policies in relation to flood risk; but increasing resilience to climate change is a strategic cross-boundary planning matter. It is considered appropriate to include a county-wide flood risk management policy in the Oxfordshire Plan. This is not the preferred option as there is a risk that local plans might take different approaches to flood risk. This

could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around the delivery of transformational change and increasing resilience to climate change.

Preferred Policy Option

148.	The preferred approach is for the Oxfordshire Plan to provide a strategic planning framework for managing flood risk in Oxfordshire. This framework would set out flood risk management and drainage requirements relevant to development across Oxfordshire. It would be consistent with the opportunity that the Oxfordshire Plan represents to deliver long-term transformational change and to address the impacts of climate change, with a specific emphasis on nature-based solutions.

149.	There is a significant amount of existing development in the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) in Oxfordshire. The preferred policy approach incorporates recommendations from the Environment Agency to increase the resilience of existing development in Flood Zone 3b. In taking this approach, the impact on design (specifically building heights) needs to be considered. However, given the severity of the risks associated with flood risk, the preferred approach prioritises flood resilience. If this approach is consistently applied, then over time building heights would become more aligned as increasing numbers of homes are rebuilt or raised. Local plans could provide further detail as appropriate.

Policy Option 04: Flood Risk

The Oxfordshire Plan would require the following:

1)	Development to take account of both its impact on flood risk and the potential impacts of flood risk on the development and its future occupiers/users.

2)	Development to utilise natural flood management and drainage methods, including:

- the use of appropriate green infrastructure;
- the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- the use of design measures (such as the use of permeable external surface materials);
- maximising opportunities to restore natural river flows and floodplains;
- avoiding building over or culverting watercourses; and
- removing existing culverts wherever possible.

3)	Major development to comply with Oxfordshire County Council's Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire (published November 2018)[28] or any subsequent standards/guidance which might supersede this. Additional SuDS features may be required where there are impact pathways on habitats of national and international importance.

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[28] https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/LOCAL-STANDARDS-AND-GUIDANCE-FOR-SURFACE-WATER-DRAINAGE-ON-MAJOR-DEVELOPMENT-IN-OXFORDSHIRE.pdf

4) Where existing built development in Flood Zone 3b is proposed to be redeveloped or extended, opportunities would be taken to ensure that the new development is resilient to flooding over its lifetime. Replacement buildings in Flood Zone 3b to have finished floor levels above the 1 in 100 year flood level, plus an allowance for climate change.

5) Flood risk evidence to support local plans to identify areas of the functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) where householder development and small non-residential extensions are having a cumulative impact on flood risk. Opportunities to manage development in Flood Zone 3b that would otherwise be permitted under the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) to be considered.

6) The Oxfordshire authorities to work with the Environment Agency and other stakeholders to support a catchment-based approach to flood risk management across the Thames catchment area. Schemes that utilise natural flood management methods and deliver wider benefits for Oxfordshire's communities, wildlife and businesses would be supported and prioritised.

7) Flood risk management and mitigation measures identified within the SFRA to be incorporated within the policy framework as appropriate.

Alternative Policy Option 04-1

150.   Include a strategic flood risk policy in the Oxfordshire Plan but reduce the scope of this policy. For example:

i.   Support the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) but do not require compliance with specific local guidance/standards; and/or

ii.   Support increasing the resilience of existing development in Flood Zone 3b, but do not set specific requirements.

151.   This is not a preferred option as there is a risk that local plans might set different flood risk management and drainage requirements across Oxfordshire. This could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around the delivery of transformational change and addressing the impacts of climate change.

Theme Two: Improving Environmental Quality

152.   Oxfordshire's natural, historic and built environments are what makes Oxfordshire distinct and special, attracting people to live and stay in Oxfordshire and underpinning the health and wellbeing, quality of life and sense of identity of Oxfordshire's communities.

153.   The natural environment is the foundation of Oxfordshire's prosperity and through its varied ecosystems, geodiversity and landscapes provide people with a range of benefits upon which human wellbeing depends. Such benefits include thriving wildlife, food, clean water and air and reduced risks from environmental hazards, such as flooding and drought.

154.   Protection and enhancement of all-natural assets is needed to build resilience in nature and within our communities and it therefore needs to be central to plan-making in Oxfordshire.

155.   From the county-wide landscape scale to the individual development and community scale, nature is important to the health and resilience of people and wildlife.

Theme Two – Meets the following Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan

No 1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

No 2. 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.

No 3. 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.

Policy Option 05: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Characters

156.   Oxfordshire's landscapes are particularly important in defining the character of the county and what makes it distinctive.

157.   The protected landscapes of the Chilterns, Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty cover over a quarter of the land area of the county. These distinctive and varied landscapes, defined by their underlying geology, land use practices and the many water courses that cross them are highly valued and protected for their natural beauty, distinctiveness and tranquillity.

158.   Great weight has been given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings in Oxfordshire and this has shaped the pattern of development in the county over time.

159.   The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas, and the Oxfordshire Plan will continue to support this, as AONBs continue to have the highest level of protection in relation to their landscape and scenic beauty.
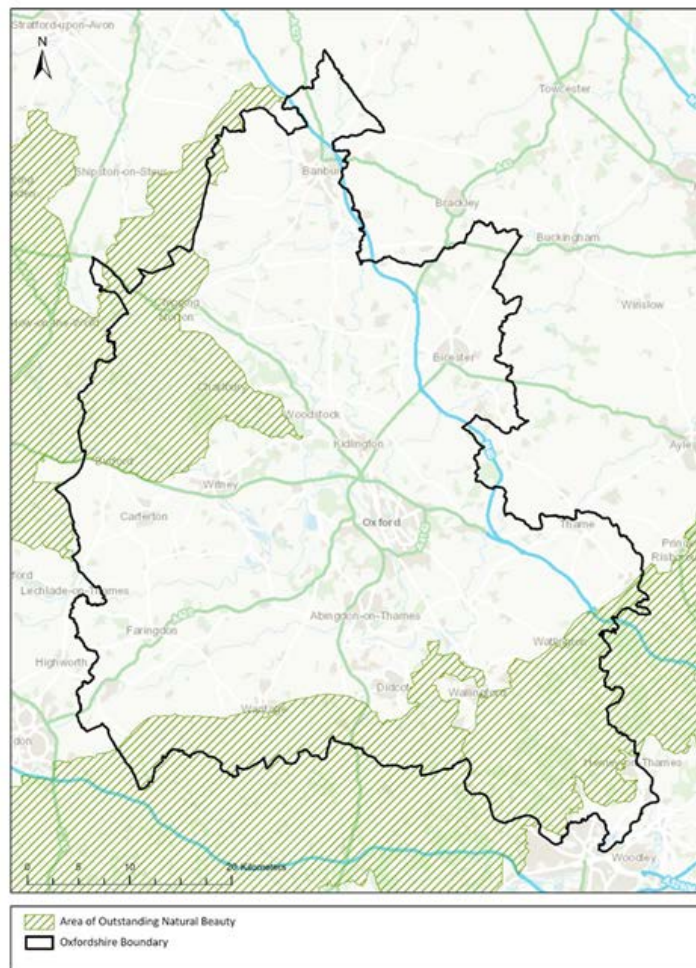
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

160.   Oxfordshire has many attractive landscapes and townscapes of distinct character, which are valued by residents and visitors alike. The National Landscape Character map of England shows Oxfordshire to be covered by eight different National Character Areas, which are defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history and cultural and economic activity.

161.   At a county level, these areas are reflected in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) as regional character areas. In addition, OWLS define a number of landscape types which are recognisable by common characteristics defined by geology, topography, landcover and settlement pattern.

Preferred Policy Option

162.   Landscape protection and enhancement is an important factor in plan-making and as such, is a key objective of the Oxfordshire Plan. The significance of any impacts on landscape are dependent on the sensitivity of landscape and the nature of any changes proposed. An understanding of such sensitivities will be central in guiding the Oxfordshire Plan spatial strategy.

163.   The preferred policy option is to establish a positive strategy for the protection and enhancement of landscape and townscape features in Oxfordshire, due to the significance and importance of these features on the identity, sense of place, health and wellbeing and prosperity of Oxfordshire's communities. These factors drive Oxfordshire's visitor economy.

164.   It is necessary for the Oxfordshire Plan to have regard to the landscape and townscape character of the county in terms of shaping policies, defining the spatial strategy and determining the spatial distribution of growth. Further detailed evidence on landscape sensitivity and impacts will be required as the Oxfordshire Plan evolves, but it is important to recognise the importance landscape and townscape character will have on determining the overarching spatial strategy for the Oxfordshire Plan.

Policy Option 05: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Characters

The Oxfordshire Plan would establish a positive strategy for the conservation and enhancement of landscape and townscape features at a county-wide landscape scale, taking account of topography, vegetation, tranquillity, light pollution, dark skies, settlement pattern and landscape protection status.

Landscape character and visual impact assessments would be required to support major new developments and urban extensions as well as the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan itself and subsequent plans and strategies guiding development in Oxfordshire.

Regard should be had to the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study and relevant landscape character studies relating to parts of Oxfordshire.

Policy Option 06: Protection and Enhancement of Historic Environment

165.   Oxfordshire has a rich and varied cultural heritage that defines the distinctive character of the county with a wealth of heritage sites, from the prehistoric, the Roman occupation and the Saxon, Norman, Medieval, post-medieval and Victorian periods.

166.   There are numerous fine examples of heritage assets throughout the Oxfordshire landscape include the Neolithic long barrow at Wayland Smithy, the Iron Age hillforts such as Uffington Castle and Sinodin Hill, Roman temples at Frilford, Wiggington and the Lowbury Hill and the chalk figure of the Uffington White Horse, one of the most iconic examples of Iron Age art in the world.

167.   In addition, the county contains the internationally renowned medieval collages and buildings of Oxford, one of the region's most important tourist destinations. Other significant heritage assets include Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, Rousham Park and former RAF Upper Heyford. These heritage assets, as well as locally listed buildings, form a valued and important resource that underpins Oxfordshire's distinctiveness and sense of place.

168.   It is vital that the Oxfordshire Plan recognises the importance of the county's cultural heritage, not just in defining the sense of place and identity, but for the value that it brings to the local economy, supporting the enterprise base and attracting significant tourist spending through the visitor economy.

169.   These archaeological and historic heritage assets are a finite resource that are highly valued by the local community as well as both nationally and internationally. They form an important backdrop to the characteristic sense of place of Oxfordshire that makes it such a vibrant and attractive place to live and work. The historic environment also plays an important role in community identity. These irreplaceable historic assets are easily disturbed and destroyed by unsympathetic development unless carefully managed.
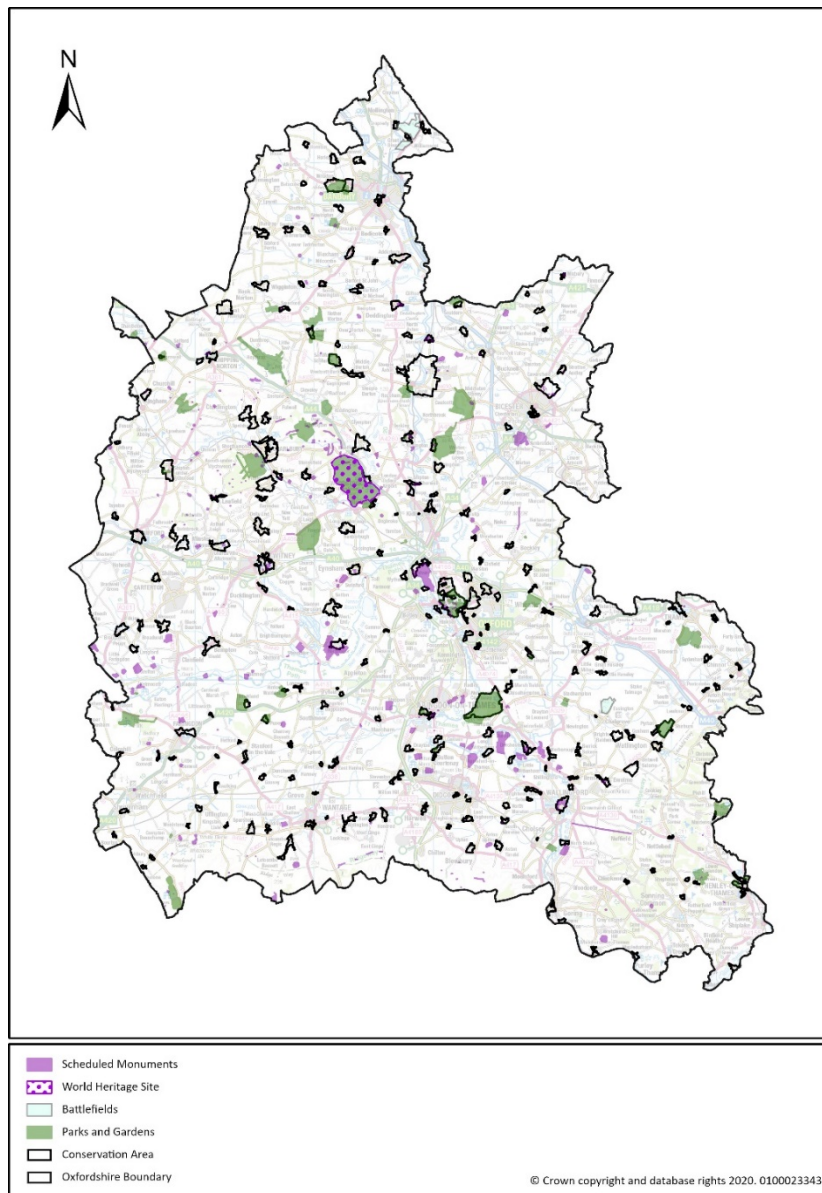
Oxfordshire Heritage Assets

170.   Approaches to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and heritage assets are well established in national and local policy through local plans. The Oxfordshire Plan has the potential to add value by setting a positive strategy for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment at a landscape scale.

171.   Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies specific characteristics of an area or to better understand what makes a place special or distinct and helps to build an understanding of sensitivity, vulnerability and capacity for change. Historic landscape characterisation mapping has been undertaken for the whole of Oxfordshire in order to identify broad historic landscape types across the county.

172.   This assessment gives a broad understanding of the county's historic character and indicates patterns of historic and current land use. As the assessment covers the whole of the Oxfordshire landscape, it also gives an understanding of archaeological potential within different parts of the county as well as the potential to support biodiversity, so there are synergies with other parts of the Plan relating to climate change and the natural environment.

173.   An understanding of the historic importance of landscapes can help shape the Oxfordshire Plan spatial strategy to ensure that they are protected and enhanced for the value that they bring in terms of recreation, education, sense of place and historic character.
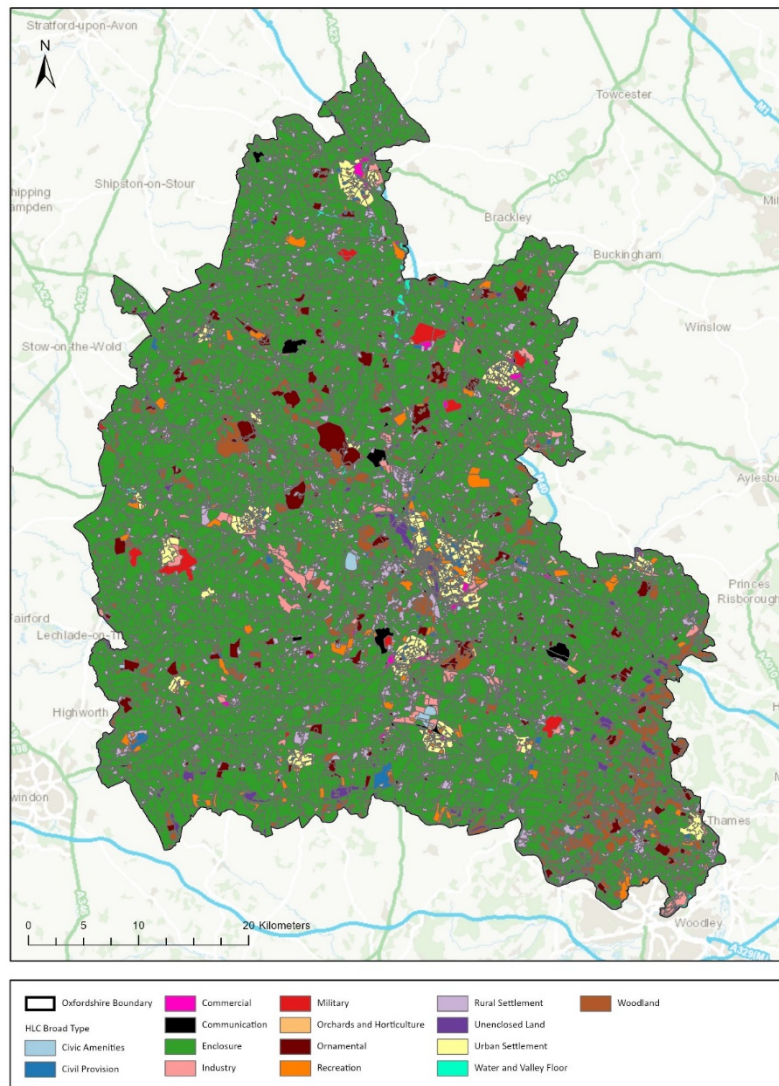
Historic Landscape Characterisation Broad Types

Preferred Policy Option

174.   The preferred policy option is to establish a positive strategy for the conservation and enhancement of Oxfordshire's historic environment, due to the significance and importance of Oxfordshire's historic environment on the identity, sense of place, health and wellbeing and prosperity of Oxfordshire's communities.

175.   The Oxfordshire Plan should have regard to the location, scale and importance of Oxfordshire's heritage assets in terms of shaping policies, defining the spatial strategy and determining the spatial distribution of growth. Further detailed evidence on heritage impact will be required as the Oxfordshire Plan evolves.

Policy Option 06: Protection and Enhancement of Historic Environment

The Oxfordshire Plan would establish a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of Oxfordshire's historic environment at the strategic scale, taking account of the county's historic environment and heritage assets including historic landscapes, archaeology, Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Site, Historic Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings and their settings.

Development proposals would be required to assess the impact on the historic environment and heritage assets including both known and potential heritage assets including assessing the likelihood of currently unidentified assets being identified.

Regard would be had to the county's Historic Environment Record and local assessments relating to heritage assets including important views, conservation areas and locally listed buildings.

Detailed historic characterisation work would be required to assess the impact of major development, including new settlements, urban extensions or rural development including proposals for the Oxfordshire Plan and spatial strategy on the significance of heritage assets.

Development should conserve and enhance the historic environment and the setting of heritage assets.

Policy Option 07 - Nature Recovery

176.   It is recognised that nature is declining around the world at unprecedented rates and that there has been continued decline of biodiversity nationally and locally over the past decade. Although there have been some conservation successes in Oxfordshire, nature is still in decline.

177.   A key finding of the 2017 'State of Nature in Oxfordshire' report[29] was that there is continued fragmentation and loss of connectivity across the county's landscapes, affecting the future viability of habitats and species. Long-term decline in woodland and farmland biodiversity in particular has continued, threatening a number of associated species with extinction.

178.   Historically, agricultural changes have been one of the main contributing factors to habitat degradation and fragmentation with losses of semi-natural grasslands and floodplain meadows resulting from more intensive agricultural methods.
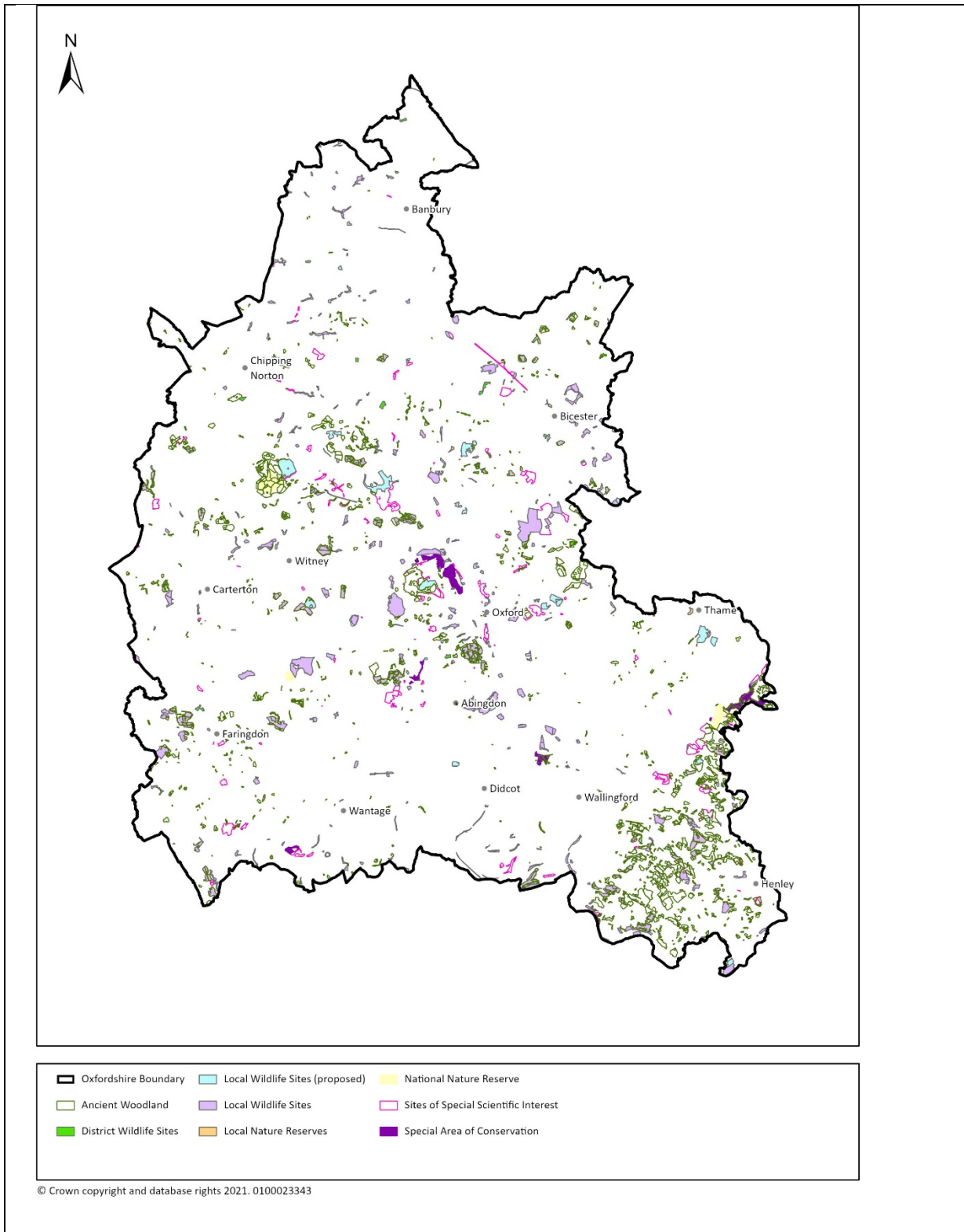
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[29] State of Nature in Oxfordshire 2017, Wild Oxfordshire

179.   Climate change is also a significant contributory factor with changes in temperature and rainfall resulting in negative impacts on species composition and the integrity of habitats. Pollution and growing urbanisation and invasive species are also known to contribute to species decline.

180.   Despite widespread degradation and loss of habitats, Oxfordshire retains some of the finest and rarest habitats anywhere in the country such as the wet grasslands of Otmoor. It is important that the Oxfordshire Plan aims to protect all that is good and valuable while aiming to repair and recover that which has been lost through harmful land use practices in recent years.

181.   Key actions identified for Oxfordshire in the State of Nature Report included the need to create larger and more connected areas of high-quality habitat and to assist landowners and farmers in identifying financially viable ways of managing land in a more nature friendly way. Better planning for green and blue infrastructure is regarded as being beneficial for both people and nature.

182.   The Oxfordshire Plan has an opportunity to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking account of flood risk, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures.

183.   It is proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan takes a holistic approach to nature recovery and environmental enhancement, enabled by the Plan's county-wide coverage. This allows the plan to look at threats and opportunities for the natural environment at the landscape scale which isn't necessarily possible for district-level local plans.

184.   The Oxfordshire Plan aims to protect and enhance the natural environment of Oxfordshire, including its natural capital assets, landscapes and wildlife. A key focus of this approach is on minimising impacts on and delivering net gains for biodiversity.

185.   Supporting the health and resilience of habitats and species and supporting biodiversity is fundamental to the delivery of ecosystems services for the multiple benefits that they bring to the health and wellbeing of the planet and the human populations that comprise Oxfordshire's communities.

186.   There is a wide distribution of wildlife rich, protected sites across Oxfordshire. Such sites benefit from protected status, meaning that national policy and adopted local plan policy steers harmful uses away from such sites and aims to deliver enhancements where possible.

187.   This well-established approach may have been successful in protecting individual sites but less successful in arresting the fragmentation of habitats and building resilience amongst species to a changing climate. Wildlife within protected habitats cannot survive indefinitely in isolation but need to be part of a wider network of habitats connected at the landscape scale.

188.   Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) were introduced to Oxfordshire in 2006 to identify areas where targeted conservation action could deliver the greatest benefits. There are currently 37 CTAs in Oxfordshire, covering over 20% of the

county providing a focus for co-ordinated delivery of agri-environment schemes and biodiversity enhancements delivered through the planning system.

189.   The Oxfordshire Plan presents an opportunity to build on the CTA approach, to map and plan for ecological connectivity and enhancement at a landscape scale and to link key wildlife sites to achieve measurable gains in biodiversity.

190.   The establishment of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for Oxfordshire is considered to be an important step in defining the key spatial elements required to deliver more coherent and robust ecological networks for the county and to ensure that future development avoids harmful impacts on nature and makes a meaningful contribution to nature's recovery.

191.   For nature to recover it is important to look beyond currently protected sites and take action to extend and link existing sites, both to support wildlife and to recover the range of economic and social benefits that nature provides.

192.   Looking at ecological networks at the landscape scale, provides an opportunity to consider where existing habitats can be improved and increased in size, to improve connectivity between patches of habitat and to restore natural processes.

193.   The primary role of a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire would be to support abundant wildlife but should also enhance natural beauty, conserve geodiversity and provide opportunities and benefits for people including flood alleviation, recreation and climate change resilience and adaptation.

194.   The map below shows the distribution of many of the protected wildlife sites across Oxfordshire. Although these sites benefit from protected status and many sit in a rural setting surrounded by countryside, they are not necessarily resilient to change and are in many cases disjointed from other similar habitat types as a result of intervening land uses. Species living within such sites may be threatened by not being able to migrate under changing environmental conditions. It should be noted that the map is not exhaustive and does not include all protected sites and habitats in Oxfordshire, such as all local designations.

Legend:
- ▢ Oxfordshire Boundary
- ▢ Ancient Woodland
- ■ District Wildlife Sites
- ▢ Local Wildlife Sites (proposed)
- ▢ Local Wildlife Sites
- ▢ Local Nature Reserves
- ▢ National Nature Reserve
- ▢ Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- ■ Special Area of Conservation

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195.   The following map illustrates how protected sites for wildlife are set within the existing network of Conservation Target Areas in Oxfordshire.

196.   Conservation Target Areas were first established in Oxfordshire in 2006 and since then have been recognised in local plans as a focal point for conservation work and deliver biodiversity net gains in a more co-ordinated manner. Local plans in Oxfordshire ensure that the aims of CTAs are considered as part of the plan-making and decision-taking process for changing land uses in Oxfordshire.
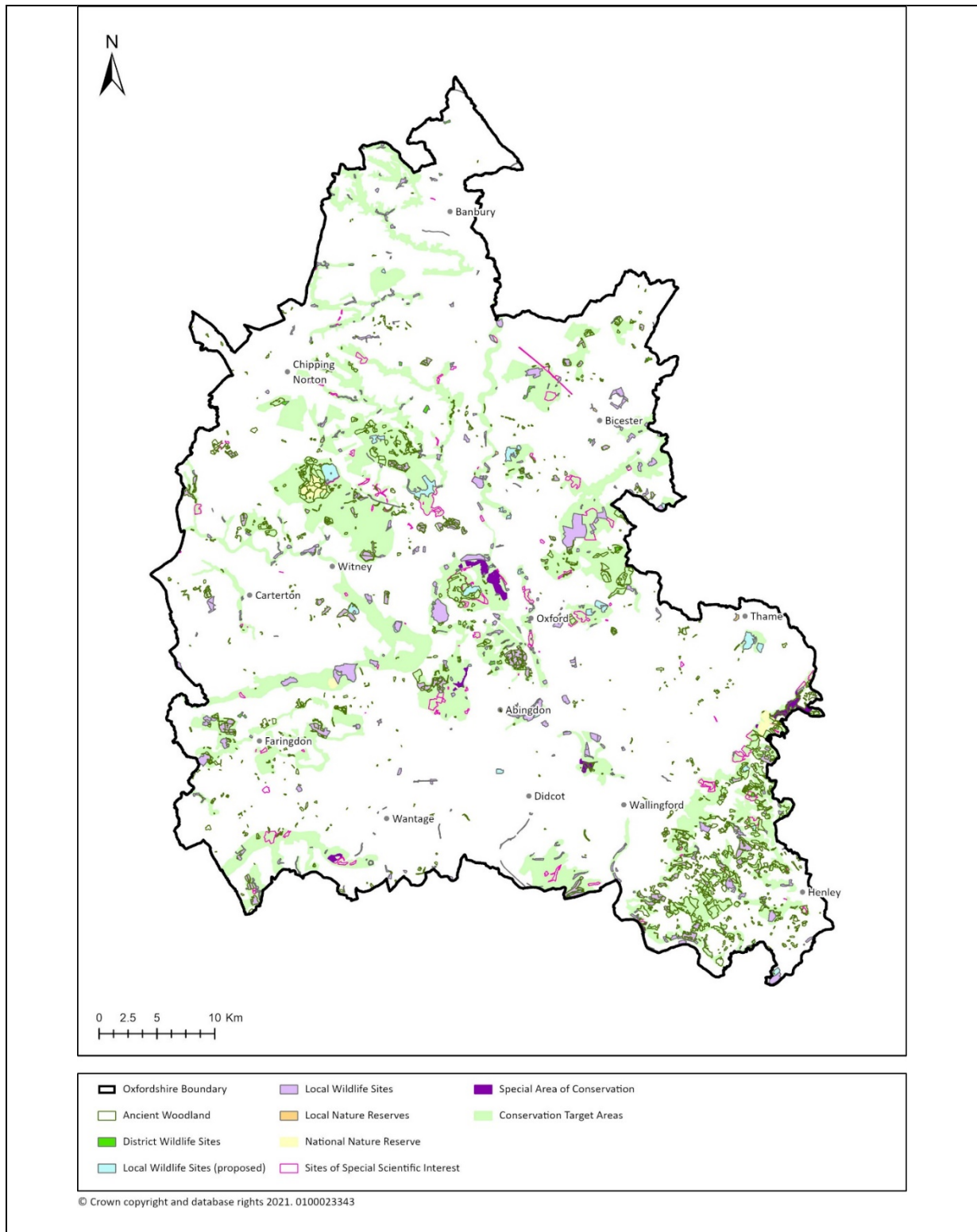
197.   Establishing a Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire could build on the foundation of the CTAs and expand to include important freshwater areas, to ensure that the network includes both aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

198.   Important freshwater areas[30] are those areas that are most important for freshwater wildlife. In order to identify coherent ecological networks to be protected through plans and strategies, it is necessary to understand the extent and geographical distribution of such areas. Important freshwater areas are illustrated on the map below.
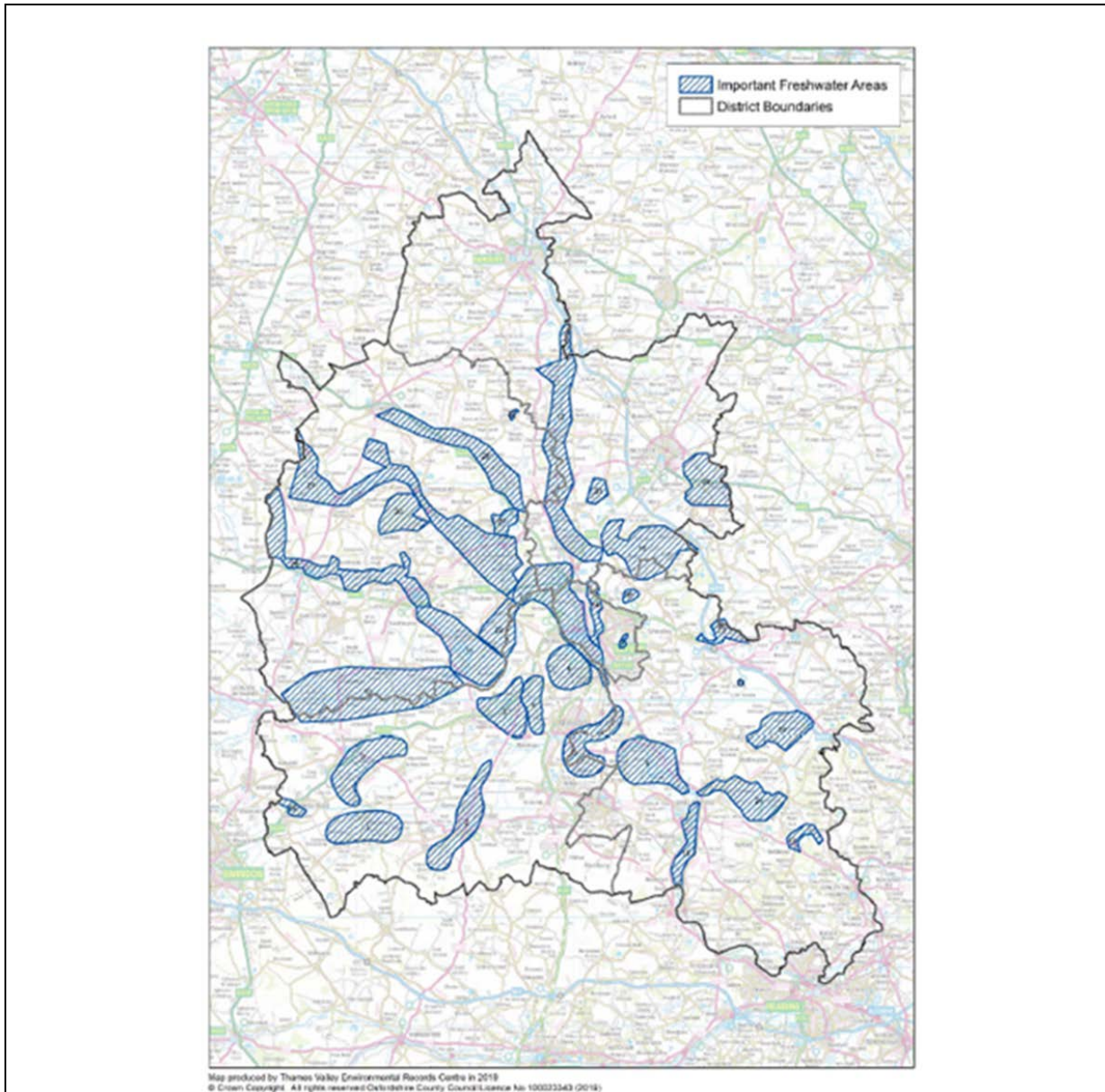
199.   There is significant overlap between the CTAs and Important Freshwater Areas, emphasising that aquatic and terrestrial habitats should be considered in tandem in identifying ecological networks and making space for nature. For freshwater networks, there are a number of terrestrial habitats that are important to the health of freshwater areas, such as woodlands in the upper catchments of river systems, which regulate both the flow and quality of water entering rivers systems.

200.   There are several catchment management plans already in place in Oxfordshire which guide conservation and flood management and improved

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[30] https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/research/important-freshwater-areas/

water quality along water courses in the county. Such management plans consider the interaction between land uses in river catchments with a focus on how nature-based solutions can deliver benefits to both people and nature. Examples of such work include natural flood risk management schemes which aim to reconnect rivers with their floodplains, remove blockages to wildlife and delay the responsiveness of river channels to rainfall and to slow and store surface water runoff. Further work is required to tackle sewerage discharges.

201.   Combining both Conservation Target Areas and Important Freshwater Areas provides a strong spatial overview of where conservation efforts could be targeted in Oxfordshire to deliver multiple benefits, reducing fragmentation of sites and waterbodies and helping to build climate change resilience in the natural environment.

202.   Building a greater understanding of how these valuable areas for biodiversity can be better connected, will assist in the formation of a coherent ecological network for Oxfordshire, setting the framework for future planning for development and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

203.   Analysis has been undertaken in Oxfordshire to identify the most important areas for biodiversity and the areas that are most important for connecting these together[31]. The analysis has enabled the identification of a draft Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire. A draft NRN has been refined through a process of engagement and consultation to define three distinct zones in Oxfordshire with 'soft boundaries' that can be subject to further refinement through the process of creating a future nature recovery strategy.

204.   The draft NRN for Oxfordshire comprises the following components and the map which follows indicates the extent of the areas.

Core Zone:

The Core zone of the NRN contains the most important sites for biodiversity in the county. The identification of the core zone of the NRN does not diminish the protection afforded to such sites through existing national and local policy, which will continue to benefit from a high level of protection.

Special Protection Areas	Cherwell District Wildlife Sites
Special Areas for Conservation,	Oxford City Wildlife Sites
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	BBOWT reserves
Ramsar sites	Woodland Trust woodlands
Local Nature Reserves	Other sites of local importance for
Local Wildlife Sites (including	nature conservation
proposed)	All priority habitats

The core of the NRN is the main priority for nature conservation. Actions within the core zone should focus on the protection and management of important sites to support the greatest amount of biodiversity.

Recovery Zone:

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[31] Link to TVERC technical report.

The recovery zone consists of Conservation Target Areas, Important Freshwater Areas and a freshwater network, with additional areas of land added to provide better connectivity.

The recovery zone is where new habitat creation and habitat restoration should be focussed. Habitat creation and restoration in this zone will better link parts of the core network, either by buffering and connecting core sites or by providing corridors or stepping-stones between core sites.

Wider Landscape Zone:

The wider countryside is still important for nature's recovery. The focus within the wider landscape zone should be on strengthening landscape character and making room for nature, including hedgerow restoration and creation, managing farmland with nature in mind or improving access to the countryside.

Map legend:

□ Oxfordshire Boundary

NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK
- Core Zone
- Recovery Zone
- Wider Landscape Zone

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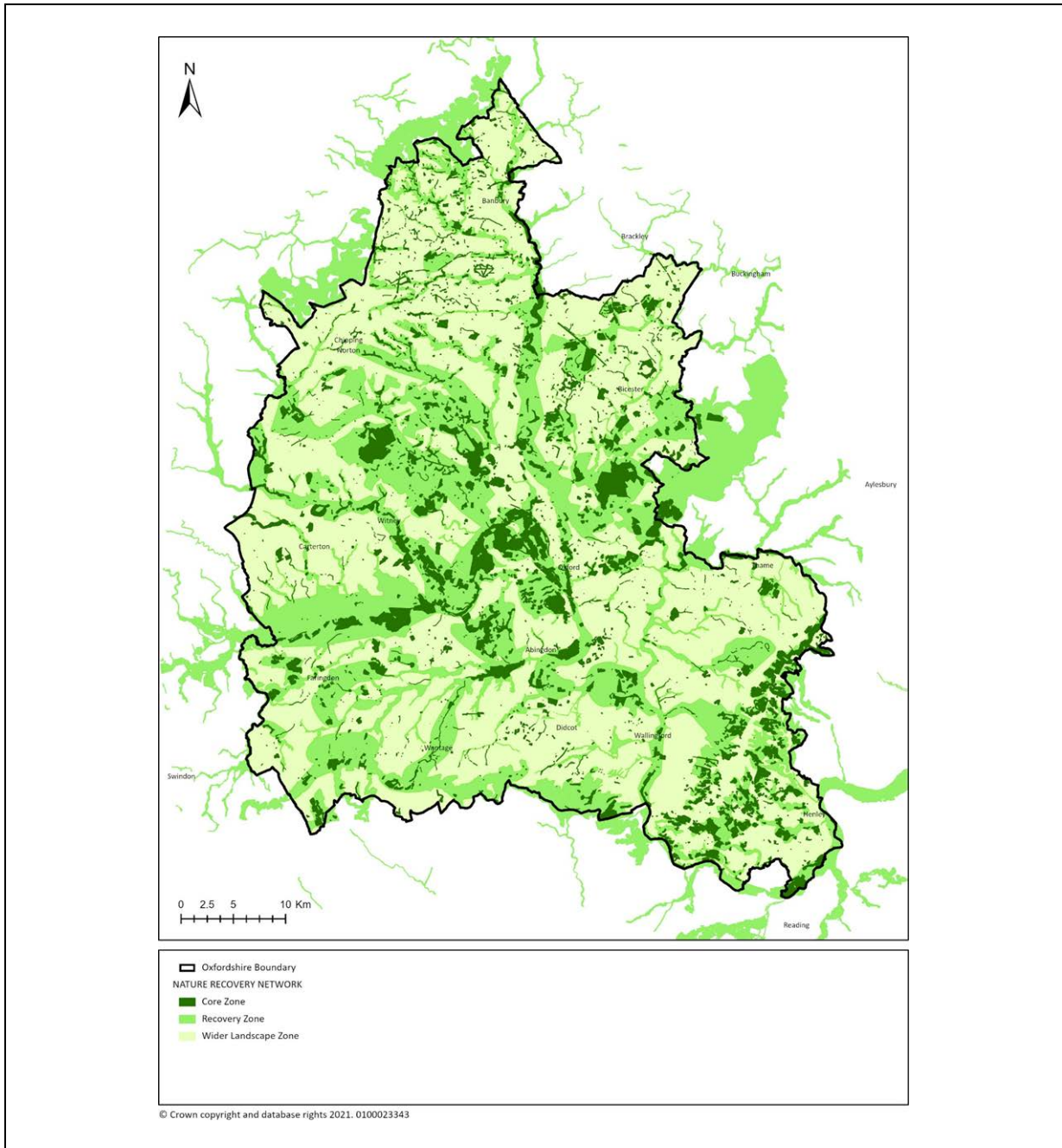
Policy Options

Preferred Policy Option

205.   The preferred option is to identify those parts of the county that are important for establishing a well-connected ecological network and to use this mapped resource to shape the policies, define the spatial strategy and determine the spatial distribution of development in the Oxfordshire Plan. Utilising the draft Nature Recovery Network to shape the Oxfordshire Plan will ensure that future development and ecological enhancements are directed to locations where they can minimise harm and secure the greatest benefits in supporting nature's recovery and building resilience in communities and ecosystems to climate change.

Policy Option 07: Nature Recovery

The Oxfordshire Plan would utilise the draft Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire to guide the spatial distribution of sustainable development and the spatial strategy for the Oxfordshire Plan, as part of a commitment to strengthening ecological networks, delivering biodiversity net gains and building resilience to climate change in Oxfordshire, recognising the importance of the county's habitats, natural resources and landscapes in supporting biodiversity, connecting habitats and aiding nature's recovery.

The Nature Recovery Network would build on the established CTAs for Oxfordshire and would not diminish any of the protections afforded to protected sites, habitats or species but will seek to better connect them.

The proposed draft Nature Recovery Network would be comprised of three zones:

- *Core Zone* - the most important sites for biodiversity in Oxfordshire - including all nationally and locally designated sites, nature reserves, priority habitats and ancient woodland.
- *Recovery Zone* - comprising the Conservation Target Areas, Important Freshwater Areas and additional areas added to provide better habitat connectivity.
- *Wider Landscape Zone* - covering the rest of the county, recognising the important contribution that agricultural and urban landscapes beyond the Recovery zone can make to nature's recovery.

The draft Nature Recovery Network would provide a framework for future plan-making (Including the Oxfordshire Plan) and decision-taking, ensuring that future developments do not undermine efforts to connect habitats and to make landscapes more permeable to biodiversity.

The Nature Recovery Network provides a spatial illustration of a connected ecological network for Oxfordshire and sets the context for a future Nature Recovery Strategy in accordance with the 25 Year Environment Plan. The Oxfordshire Plan would support the establishment of a Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire.

The Nature Recovery Network would provide a focus for biodiversity net gains and wider environmental net gains as part of a co-ordinated approach to environmental protection and enhancement for Oxfordshire.

Alternative Policy Option 07-1

206.   One discounted policy option has been to not progress the development of the Nature Recovery Network map in the Oxfordshire Plan and to leave it to the subsequent Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire to define. This would defer to the established approach of site, species and habitat protection, Conservation Target Areas and application of mitigation hierarchy for biodiversity to be applied through local plans.

207.   This option is not preferred as the Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to plan more holistically for ecological connectivity at the landscape scale. Not utilising the draft Nature Recovery Network to shape the Oxfordshire Plan spatial strategy might undermine future efforts to establish ecological networks and to plan for nature recovery through a future Nature Recovery Strategy.

Policy Option 08 - Biodiversity Gain

208.   Biodiversity net gain is an approach which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than before.

209.   Oxfordshire has a diverse and distinctive landscape which supports a variety of habitats. The Oxfordshire State of Nature report (2017)[32] found that there continues to be long-term declines in farmland and woodland biodiversity and that there is continued fragmentation and loss of connectivity across the county's landscape, affecting the future viability of habitats and species.

210.   Such issues of fragmentation and ecological connectivity can be addressed to a significant extent through the establishment of a Nature Recovery Network.

211.   In order to account for past losses and degradation of the natural environment however, achieving significant biodiversity net gains through planning are likely to be desirable.

212.   Preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to set high level ambitions for biodiversity and wider environmental net gains in the county and to set a consistent approach and framework for plan-making and decision taking across the county.

213.   Approaches to biodiversity net gain have already been developed in parts of Oxfordshire with local plans setting requirements and targets for biodiversity net gain through new development as well as varying targets set at individual site level for planned garden communities. The use of biodiversity metrics is recognised as an important mechanism through which the biodiversity value of land pre- and post-development is measured.

214.   The Oxfordshire Plan has the potential to add value and perform a key role in achieving biodiversity net gain through new developments through to 2050, which is key to reducing harmful impacts on wildlife, supporting recovery of nature, reversing long-term declines in biodiversity and addressing climate change.

215.   The Oxfordshire Plan aims to protect and enhance Oxfordshire's distinct landscape character, recreational and biodiversity value. Achieving net gain for biodiversity is one way the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 can help to achieve this. This Plan will provide an opportunity to be ambitious and align the views of key stakeholders across the county, providing a county-wide framework for all the local authorities to work within. National policy is clear that the natural and local

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[32] State of Nature | Wild Oxfordshire

environment should be enhanced through minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

216.   Nationally, biodiversity net gain is proposed to be set at 10% for all new development[33]. Planning to 2050 provides an opportunity to set clear ambitions for environmental improvement and it is not considered unreasonable to have targets in the Oxfordshire Plan which go beyond existing and proposed national and local targets.

217.   A key challenge in securing biodiversity net gains through development will be the effect on viability but this is a challenge that must be addressed if the Oxfordshire Plan is to meet objectives for net zero carbon and to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

218.   A Natural England biodiversity net gain study[34] showed there is little or no effect on the viability of housing developments with up to 20% biodiversity net gain, and that there is a strong case for more.

219.   The preference should be for biodiversity net gains to be delivered on site, following the mitigation hierarchy and, where this is not possible, it should be delivered as close to the loss as possible. The Nature Recovery Network would provide a focus for off-site biodiversity net gains, with the Core Zone and Recovery Zone providing opportunities to deliver the greatest benefits for biodiversity and ecological connectivity.

The mitigation hierarchy

Avoid harm,
Minimise impacts,
Rehabilitation / restoration,
Compensation (on-site),
Offset (off-site).

220.   Securing biodiversity net gains will have knock-on positive effects, delivering direct and indirect benefits to environmental enhancement, nature resilience and the provision of ecosystem services to support health and wellbeing of communities.

Policy Options

221.   The protection and enhancement of Oxfordshire's wildlife, habitats and ecological networks is central to the Oxfordshire Plan.

222.   All development proposals in Oxfordshire should have regard to impacts on priority habitats, designated sites, Conservation Target Areas and the Nature Recovery Network for Oxfordshire.

Preferred Policy Option

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[33] Environment Bill 2020 Environment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament
[34] Biodiversity Net Gain Study (Vivid Economics, June 2018)

223.   The preferred option is to set an ambitious target for biodiversity net gain as a standalone policy as one of the primary mechanisms through which nature's recovery can be delivered through the Oxfordshire Plan. Setting an ambitious target above national requirements emphasises the importance of supporting nature's recovery and improving environmental quality through the Oxfordshire Plan.

224.   It is recognised that there could be viability implications for achieving higher biodiversity net gain targets in parts of Oxfordshire, but it is also noted that higher targets are being sought within individual developments and strategic developments in other parts of the county.

Policy Option 08: Biodiversity Gain

The Oxfordshire Plan proposes to set minimum target for biodiversity net gain across Oxfordshire to protect, enhance, restore, increase and connect the natural environment and secure measurable net gains in biodiversity.

20% biodiversity net gain - Standard benchmark for the whole of the county.

Biodiversity net gain will be measured using the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric.

The delivery of biodiversity net gain should follow the mitigation hierarchy with a preference to deliver gains on site. Where on site delivery is not possible, gains should be delivered within the administrative boundary of the Local Authority and wherever possible within a Conservation Target Area.

Alternative Policy Option 08-1

225.   Establish differential biodiversity net gain targets for different parts of the county with higher targets (e.g. 25%) in opportunity areas for environmental enhancement including Green Belt, AONBs, Conservation Target Area, as well as Broad Areas for Growth identified in the Oxfordshire Plan and a lower target (10% national minimum) for the rest of the county.

226.   This alternative policy option may assist in drawing out the challenge of viability that is anticipated in different parts of the county, whilst prioritising areas where biodiversity net gain from development is particularly sensitive and necessary.

Alternative Policy Option 08-2

227.   Leave to national standards and do not set minimum biodiversity net gain targets in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

228.   This is not the preferred policy option as reliance on the UK-wide 10% net gain would fall short of Oxfordshire's efforts to support nature's recovery and account for past losses to biodiversity.

Policy Option 09 - Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

229. Earlier policy options considered the merits of establishing a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) for Oxfordshire and for setting relatively high targets for biodiversity net gain, in order to increase space for nature and to increase the resilience of the natural environment to climate change and other pressures.

230. The emphasis of the NRN and biodiversity net gain are very much on building resilience in nature and supporting wildlife conservation, but investment in the natural environment to deliver wider environmental net gains can deliver economic and social benefits too.

231. Maintaining stocks of natural capital in good condition both in terms of quality and quantity will ensure a sustainable flow of ecosystems services underpinning human health and wellbeing.

232. A focus on natural capital and the ecosystem services that habitats provide gives a more holistic way of considering our relationship with the natural environment and how the protection and enhancement can deliver multiple economic, social and environmental benefits.

233. Natural Capital is the elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land minerals and air, as well as natural processes and functions.

234. The core elements of natural capital that are important in terms of the ecosystems services they provide are biodiversity (plants and animals), geodiversity (soil, rock), water and the air we breathe.

235. These stocks of natural capital provide a wide range of ecosystem services which can broadly be grouped into three categories:

Types of ecosystems services		
Provisioning Services	Cultural Services	Regulating Services
Food crops Livestock Wood Fish Fresh water supply	Recreation Aesthetic value Education and knowledge Interaction with nature Sense of place	Flood control Erosion control Water quality Carbon storage Air quality Cooling and shading Noise regulation Pollination Pest control

236. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity is fundamental to protecting stocks of natural capital and the flows of ecosystem services that underpin human health and wellbeing.

237. The approach to biodiversity protection and enhancement outlined in previous sections through the Nature Recovery Network and targets for biodiversity net gain will ensure that enhancements are delivered closest to where impacts arise or where they can deliver the most positive impacts.

238.   Detailed work has been undertaken in Oxfordshire to provide a baseline understanding of the supply of natural capital across the county and the ability of habitats to provide ecosystem services. The baseline assessment covers 18 types of ecosystem services illustrated in the table above.

239.   A robust methodology for natural capital assessment has been developed by Oxford University[35] which has been influential in steering assessments and approaches in neighbouring counties and throughout the Oxford-Cambridge Arc[36].

240.   The Oxfordshire Natural Capital mapping project provides a spatial overview of parts of the county that perform well in terms of the provision of ecosystem services. A summary of some of the key ecosystem services is illustrated in the map which follows.

241.   Darker green colours on the map indicate habitats that perform well in in terms of regulating and cultural services (as listed in the table above) and lighter green areas are those that perform less well. Many of the dark green areas represent areas of woodland such as the Chilterns in South Oxfordshire and the Wychwood Forest in West Oxfordshire. Areas of woodland score particularly well in terms of regulating services such as carbon sequestration, flood risk mitigation, shading and cooling and are valuable in terms of cultural services such as creating a sense of place and for recreation. It is important to note that the mapping makes no assessment of the quality of natural capital assets which may vary across the county.

242.   Darker green areas are areas that should be protected and enhanced in order to preserve the beneficial ecosystem services they provide.

243.   Lighter green areas on the summary map represent habitats that potentially perform less well in terms of the ecosystem services that they provide, although this doesn't distinguish between those habitats that provide multiple services and those that only provide one service. These areas may present opportunity areas to deliver environmental net gains, particularly where they relate to existing and future development, where demand for certain ecosystem services may be greatest. It is important to note that almost all of the land in Oxfordshire provide ecosystem benefits to people in one form or another.

244.   As a predominantly rural county, dominated by agricultural land, most of the land coverage in Oxfordshire scores well in terms of provisioning services such as food production and water supply. In order to differentiate between the best areas for food production and those that are potentially less productive, the orange colours on the summary map indicate areas of best and most versatile agricultural land. This is land which is most flexible, productive and efficient and can best deliver future crops for both food and non-food.

245.   An understanding of the supply of natural capital and ecosystem services for Oxfordshire is regarded as important, not only in terms of protecting what we have, but also in terms of increasing the supply, particularly where demand for services arises such as in new development locations.

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[35] Provide link to natural capital report with methodology
[36] https://www.oxcamlncp.org/our-project

Maximum Scores for Regulating and Cultural Services and High Value Land for Food Production in Oxfordshire

Legend

Max Scores - Regulating and Cultural Services
- 0 to 1
- 1.01 to 2.5
- 2.51 to 5
- 5.01 to 7.5
- 7.51 to 10

High Value Food Production
- 0-7.5
- 7.51-10.0

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Ancient tree data is provided by the Woodland Trust.
This map incorporates biodiversity data provided by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) which is copyright to TVERC and its partners.

246.   This understanding of the supply of natural capital assets and ecosystem services can have multiple benefits in plan-making not just in terms of guiding the spatial distribution of development, but also in terms of guiding green infrastructure investment and environmental enhancements such as increased woodland coverage, accessible natural greenspace and natural flood risk mitigation and the application of Environmental Land Use Management Schemes (ELMS).

247.   There is a strong case for investment in green infrastructure for the multiple social, environmental and economic benefits that a well-connected green infrastructure network can bring. Planning for, and enhancing,

Oxfordshire's Green Infrastructure is an essential part of realising the county's long-term ambitions and economic aspirations.

248.	Analysis has been undertaken to highlight a number of areas that present barriers to economic growth, with a significant economic cost to Oxfordshire each year.

Top seven sustainability challenges in Oxfordshire and their annual cost to the economy

Issue	Annual cost to Oxfordshire GVA
Mental Health	£1,300,000,000
Obesity	£427,000,000
Air pollution	£207,000,000
Transport – congestion	£170,000,000
Transport – accidents	£135,000,000
Inactive lifestyles	£120,000,000
Noise	£119,000,000
TOTAL	£2,496,000,000

Source – Making the case for investment in Green Infrastructure – Brillianto - Oxfordshire County Council

249.	Green infrastructure is a key part of natural capital, though natural capital also includes intensive farmland, which is not usually considered as green infrastructure.

250.	The natural capital maps developed to support the Oxfordshire Plan can be used to identify high value natural capital assets, and these can then be used to help identify strategic networks of green and blue infrastructure, and options for strengthening these networks.

251.	An understanding of the supply and demand for ecosystem services coupled with investment in green infrastructure will enable the delivery of nature-based solutions to address the sustainability challenges identified in Oxfordshire. Investment in green infrastructure is most effective where it is spatially targeted and designed to deliver multiple benefits in the same location. It is for this reason that our understanding of natural capital and ecosystem services provision should be central to plan-making and environmental investment in Oxfordshire.

252.	Applying natural capital approaches will help integrate the value of nature in all decision-making and develop a better understanding of impacts and dependencies on nature. Natural capital and planning for green infrastructure has an important role to play in improving health and reducing the costs of poor health.

A recently compiled business case for green infrastructure investment in Oxfordshire identified a number of headline benefits.

- A 1% increase in the amount of greenspace in a ward generates a 1% increase in the value of a residential property in England.
- Vegetation may reduce noise by as much as 50%.
- A noise reduction of just 1 decibel for every property in the county would be worth £8m p.a. to the Oxfordshire economy.
- Investment in cycling infrastructure could take one car off the road for as little as 80 pence per day.
- Reducing speed limits in residential areas could reduce traffic accidents by half.
- People with good access to green space are 24% more likely to be physically active.
- A 10% increase in physical activity in adults would be worth over £6m to the Oxfordshire Economy.
- Oxfordshire's woodlands remove 175,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO_2) per year from the atmosphere with an estimated value of £6 million each year.
- Green roof energy savings are 30 kwh/m2 or 14 kg CO_2/m2 or £5-6 m2 per year for heating and air conditioning.
- River woodland is worth £6,000 per year per hectare for its flood regulation benefits. Sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) are half the cost of traditional drainage over a 60-year life span.
- During an extreme rainfall event green roofs can retain up to 90% of rainfall.
- One square metre of green roof can offset the annual particulate matter emissions of one car.
- Planting of vegetation in streets can reduce street-level pollution concentrations by up to 60%.
- Oxfordshire's rural woodlands remove 400 tonnes of air pollutants and thereby save £6.5 million in healthcare cost per year.
- Converting intensive agriculture to a mixture of woodland and pasture near cities can generate benefits of £1,300 per hectare per year.

Source – Making the case for investment in Green Infrastructure – Brillianto - Oxfordshire County Council

253.   Taking a natural capital approach with ambitious targets will enable the Oxfordshire Plan to deliver sustainable development that secures investment in nature across Oxfordshire.

Policy Options

254.   One discounted option has been to include natural capital considerations within place-shaping principles rather than defining an Oxfordshire-wide approach to the assessment of supply and demand for ecosystem services.

255.   This is not the preferred option as it would represent a more traditional approach to green infrastructure delivery established in adopted local plans and

would not capitalise on the detailed evidence available to shape the Oxfordshire Plan.

Preferred Policy Option

256. The preferred option is to identify the parts of the county that are important and valuable for natural capital and ecosystems services and to use this mapped resource to shape the policies, define the spatial strategy and determine the spatial distribution of development in the Oxfordshire Plan.

257. Utilising the Natural Capital mapping to shape the Oxfordshire Plan would ensure that future development and environmental enhancements are directed to locations where they can minimise harm and deliver multiple benefits for the environment and communities as well as building resilience in communities and ecosystems.

Policy Option 09: Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

The proposal is that the Oxfordshire Plan will utilise the Natural Capital baseline mapping for Oxfordshire so that it can be used to guide strategic planning for development and green infrastructure investment at the strategic and site scale including the Oxfordshire Plan spatial strategy.

The Oxfordshire Plan would establish a Natural Capital Approach to planning in Oxfordshire, placing natural capital considerations at the heart of planning for development, infrastructure, and environmental enhancements including nature-based solutions.

A natural capital approach will recognise the importance of healthy and thriving ecosystems in supporting the health and wellbeing of communities, supporting climate change resilience and provision of ecosystems services.

The Oxfordshire Plan would require an assessment of natural capital and ecosystem services impact for major developments, policies, plans or programmes including the identification of strategic environmental opportunity areas and green infrastructure.

The use of an eco-metric may better enable the quantification of environmental value in order to establish the type and scale of investments to secure net gains.

Local plans should be guided by the baseline assessment of natural capital assets and ecosystem services developed for Oxfordshire to influence the spatial distribution of development and investment in green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

Policy Option 10 – Green Belt

258. The aim of Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Not all countryside and greenspace are classified in his way.

Green Belt is a specific policy protection that only applies to certain designated areas.

259. Oxfordshire has an expansive area of Green Belt that surrounds the city of Oxford and which extends in to all four rural districts surrounding the city.

260. The first Oxford Green Belt policies were introduced in 1958 with a tight inner boundary surrounding the city of Oxford and extending for 5 or 6 miles in every direction washing over a number of surrounding villages.

261. The rationale for the protection of the Green Belt in Oxfordshire has been expanded over time but with the main purposes of protecting the special character of Oxford and its landscape setting, checking the growth of Oxford and preventing ribbon development and urban sprawl and preventing the coalescence of settlements.

262. If applied to Oxford, the national definition of Green Belt and the 5 purposes that it serves are as follows;

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of Oxford;
b) to prevent neighbouring settlements merging into one another;
c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
d) to preserve the setting and special character of Oxford; and
e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

263. The extent of Oxford's Green Belt is illustrated on the map below:

Oxford Green Belt
Oxfordshire Boundary

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264.   Making changes to the Green Belt boundary, i.e. taking land out of the Green Belt or adding new areas to it, requires exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated. The consideration of Spatial Options could lead to further Green Belt release if exceptional circumstances could be demonstrated.

265.   As the NPPF records in para 137 '*Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policymaking authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development.*'

266.   The extent of the Oxford Green Belt has reduced in recent years, particularly on the inner edge, adjacent to Oxford, where there has been pressure for development to meet housing needs, and a lack of reasonable alternatives to deliver this new development. Allocations for development that satisfied the 'exceptional circumstances' test have resulted in land being removed from the Green Belt in sustainable locations through the adopted Local Plans.

267.   Looking forward to 2050 and having regard to the importance of openness and permanence of the Green Belt, the Oxfordshire Plan could present an opportunity to enhance the Green Belt for beneficial uses as the NPPF sets out in para 141 '*Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and*

recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.'

268.　So, for the Oxfordshire Plan, the beneficial uses could include the list of uses identified in the NPPF and also the provision of accessible natural green space, creation of ecological networks and local food production and with direct and indirect benefits for the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's residents and the protection and enhancement of landscape, heritage and biodiversity.

Policy Option

269.　It is proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan should have regard to the Green Belt in determining the spatial strategy for Oxfordshire to 2050 and NPPF paras 136 and 137. Subject to meeting the NPPF requirements this could include identification of opportunities to enhance the Green Belt for its beneficial uses.

Preferred Policy Option

270.　The preferred option is for the Oxfordshire Plan to consider NPPF para 141 and having completed the appropriate assessment the Plan would then focus on Green Belt enhancement in order to strengthen the important roles that the Green Belt plays, as well as supporting key objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan to improve the health and wellbeing of communities, deliver environmental enhancements and support nature's recovery.

Policy Option 10 – Green Belt enhancement

The Oxfordshire Plan would identify strategic opportunities to enhance the existing Oxford Green Belt i.e. provide access, opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or improve damaged or derelict land.

Policy Option 11 - Water Quality

271.　Oxfordshire's rivers, lakes, streams, manmade lakes and canals are an integral part of the county's ecosystems, heritage and identity. They provide a wide range of services, including:

- providing/supporting a diverse range of habitats and wildlife (including nationally and internationally protected habitats) such as chalk streams;
- providing water supplies for homes and businesses;
- providing opportunities for sports, leisure and recreation;
- contributing to landscape character and sense of place; and
- supporting tourism.

272.　In addition, Oxfordshire's groundwater resources have an important role in providing drinking water (a third of drinking water in England comes from

groundwater[37]), supporting agriculture and naturally recharging rivers, lakes and streams.

Map showing surface waterbodies in Oxfordshire[38]
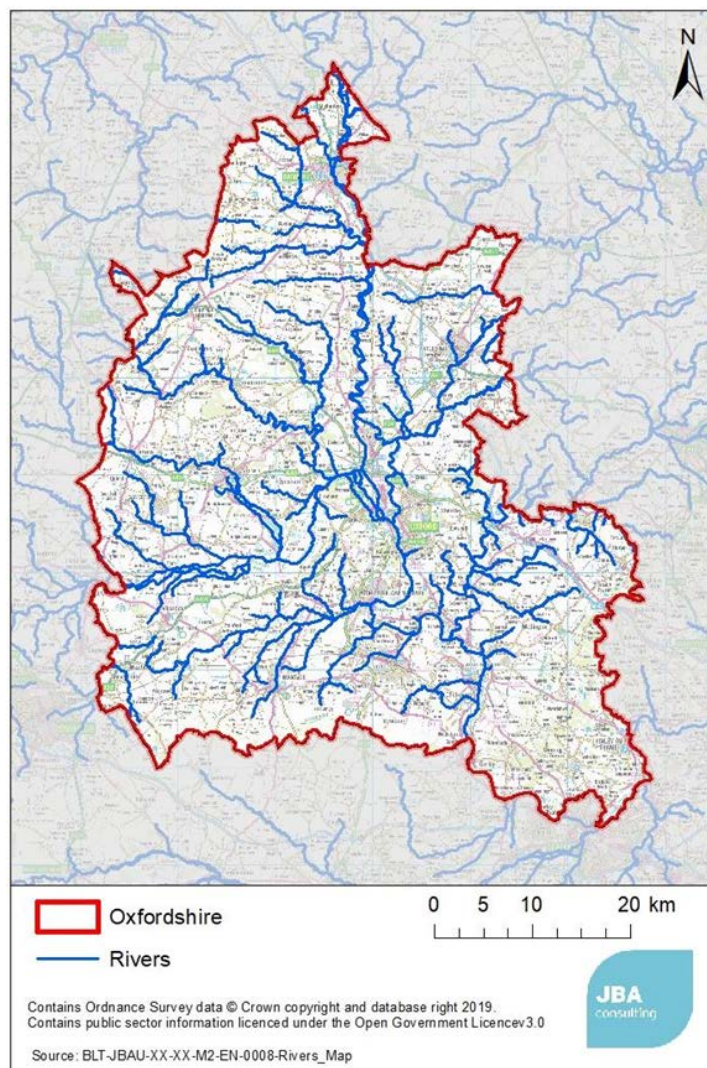
273.   The quality of Oxfordshire's waterbodies affects the health and wellbeing of our communities, natural environment and businesses.

274.   Activities that can affect the quality of Oxfordshire's waterbodies include pollution from wastewater or sewage, pollution from built development and transport, physical modifications to the size and shape of natural river channels and pollution from agriculture.[39]

275.   It is important that the Oxfordshire Plan helps to:

- prevent new and existing development from contributing to water pollution;
- prevent new and existing development from being affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution; and

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[37] Environment Agency: http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/37833.aspx
[38] JBA Consulting (July 2021) Oxfordshire Strategic Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping
[39] DEFRA & Environment Agency (December 2015) Part 1: Thames River Basin District River Basin Management Plan

- ensure that new development seeks to improve water quality wherever possible.

276.   The Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater. It requires the achievement of a 'good' qualitative and quantitative status for all water bodies. Whilst the UK is no longer part of the European Union, this requirement was transposed into UK law and implemented through the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003. The principle of all waterbodies aiming to achieve good ecological status is also broadly aligned with the principles set out in the Government's 25-Year Environment Plan.

277.   River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) implement the EU Water Framework Directive. They cover entire river systems (including river, lake, groundwater, estuarine and coastal waterbodies) and aim to protect and improve the quality of our water environment. Oxfordshire is within the Thames River Basin District. Consideration should be given to the Thames River Basin District RBMP in producing the Oxfordshire Plan and in making planning decisions.

Map showing Oxfordshire within the wider Thames River Basin District. [40]

Figure 1: Map of the Thames river basin district

Thames river basin management plan. Part 1   10

278.   It should be noted that RBMPs are updated every six years. The current Thames River Basin District RBMP was published in 2016. A review of this plan is currently underway and consultation on the draft RBMP is expected during 2021.

279.   An Oxfordshire focused Water Cycle Study is also being undertaken to inform the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. The Phase 1 Water Cycle Study sets out baseline information on water quality in Oxfordshire and considers, at a high level, the potential impacts of growth. A more detailed Phase 2 Water Cycle Study will be undertaken to help inform the next stages of the plan-making

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[40] DEFRA & Environment Agency (December 2015) Part 1: Thames River Basin District River Basin Management Plan

process. It will help to inform where growth is proposed in Oxfordshire and the infrastructure needed to support and mitigate it. The Phase 2 Water Cycle Study will be published at the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19).

Policy Options

280.   One option would be to not have a strategic policy on water quality in the Oxfordshire Plan and to instead leave it to local plans to set policies in relation to water quality.

281.   This is not the preferred option as there is a risk that local plans might take different approaches to water quality. This could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around environmental improvement and nature recovery.

Preferred Policy Option

282.   The preferred approach is for the Oxfordshire Plan to provide a strategic planning framework for the protection and enhancement of water quality in Oxfordshire. This framework would set minimum standards for development in Oxfordshire, helping to ensure a consistent approach across the county. It would also provide a framework for improving water quality wherever possible, aligning with proposed ambitions around environmental improvement and nature recovery. Local plans could provide further detail as appropriate.

Policy Option 11: Water Quality

The Oxfordshire Plan would require the following:

1) Water quality to be protected and enhanced. All development to take account of its potential impact on water quality.

2) Development to cause no deterioration in the quality of waterbodies, surface water and groundwater, nor would it prevent the future attainment of 'good' status under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 and Groundwater Direction 2016 or subsequent amendments.

3) Where there are impact pathways on habitats of national or international importance, development would not prevent a protected waterbody achieving the objectives set out in the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance (CSMG).

4) Development to improve water quality wherever possible by:
    i.   incorporating appropriate green infrastructure and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage and treat surface water run off close to source and to minimise the risk from contaminants and sediment;
    ii.   reducing the risk of discharges of surface waters to the sewerage network and of pollution, including groundwater infiltration, from wastewater treatment works;
    iii. prioritising natural flood management over hard flood defences;
    iv.   protecting and enhancing watercourses and habitats along river corridors;

> v. where appropriate restoring 'natural' systems, including de-culverting, restoring or re-profiling rivers and naturalising riverbanks;
>
> vi. adopting water efficiency measures to reduce pressure from low water levels and flows;
>
> vii. restoring contaminated land; and
>
> viii. working with and taking opportunities identified by River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Partnerships and flood risk management authorities.
>
> 5) Major development to be phased to align with any necessary wastewater treatment work and associated infrastructure upgrades to ensure that development would not lead to a deterioration in the quality of receiving waterbodies.
>
> 6) Measures to help waterbodies in Oxfordshire achieve Bathing Water Status, which help to protect and enhance water quality for all river users, to be supported.

Policy Option 12 - Air Quality

283.   Clean air is essential to the health and wellbeing of Oxfordshire's communities and the natural environment. Air pollutants can have direct effects on human health, habitats and biodiversity and climate change. The Oxfordshire Plan aims to help to:
- prevent new and existing development from contributing to air pollution;
- prevent new and existing development from being affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution; and
- ensure that new development seeks to improve air quality wherever possible.

284.   Public Health England advises that 'there is no evidence of a threshold for health effects' from air pollution and that local authorities should 'seek to lower population-level exposure and reduce everyone's exposure to air pollution, as well as targeting 'hotspots'', to maximise health benefits.

285.   There are currently 13 designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Oxfordshire. These are areas where nitrogen dioxide levels exceed national air quality objectives. Each AQMA has an Air Quality Action Plan which sets out how air quality will be improved.

Map showing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Oxfordshire
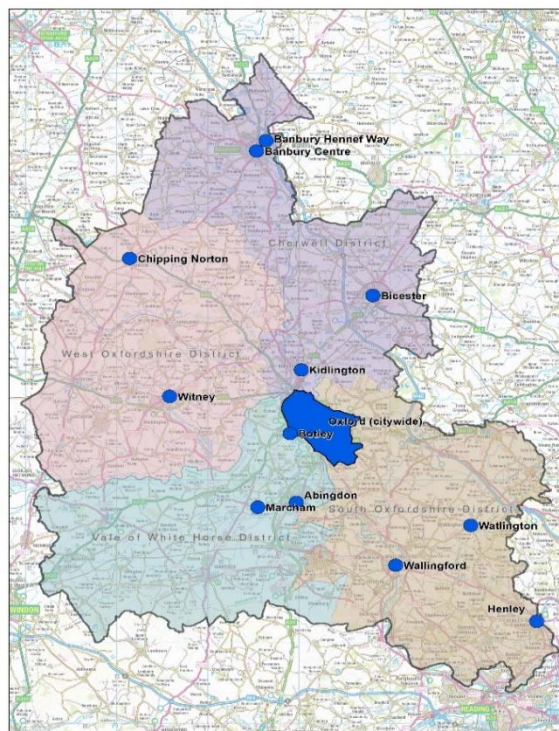
286.   Whilst air quality is a particular concern where development is proposed within an AQMA or where it might affect an AQMA, there are other parts of Oxfordshire that suffer from poor air quality, or which have the potential to be affected by poor air quality that also need to be considered. This includes habitats of national or international importance that are particularly sensitive to changes in air quality. It is important that all of Oxfordshire benefits from clean air.

287.   An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) will be undertaken to inform the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. This will include an assessment of how different growth scenarios might affect air quality and in turn how this may affect human health and natural habitats. The AQIA will help to inform where growth is proposed in Oxfordshire and the infrastructure proposed to mitigate and support it. It will also help shape policies in the Oxfordshire Plan. The AQIA will be published at the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19).

Policy Options

288.   One option is to not have a strategic policy on air quality in the Oxfordshire Plan and to instead leave it to local plans to set policies on air quality. However, the protection and enhancement of air quality is a strategic cross-boundary planning matter and it is considered appropriate to include a county-wide air quality policy in the Oxfordshire Plan.

289.   If it were left to local plans to set policies on air quality, there is a risk that local plans might take different approaches to air quality. This could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around the delivery of transformational change, environmental improvement and creating strong and healthy communities.

Preferred Policy Option

290.   The preferred approach is for the Oxfordshire Plan to provide a strategic planning framework for the protection and enhancement of air quality. This framework would set minimum standards for development in Oxfordshire, helping to ensure a consistent approach across the county. It would also provide a framework for improving air quality wherever possible, aligning with proposed ambitions around environmental improvement and creating strong and healthy communities. Local plans could provide further detail as appropriate.

Policy Option 12: Air Quality

The Oxfordshire Plan would support the protection and enhancement of air quality. Development would be expected to take account of:

i.   It's impact on air quality; and
ii.   Any potential impacts of poor air quality on future occupiers/users.

Development proposals in or affecting an Air Quality Management Area would be expected to be consistent with the relevant local Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

Major development proposals would be expected to be accompanied by an air quality assessment. Guidance would be produced to set out what information this should include. Guidance could be produced at a county-wide or local level.

Development would be expected to improve air quality wherever possible. For example, by:
  i.   supporting walking, cycling and public transport and reducing the need to travel;
  ii.   supporting the uptake of zero and low emission vehicles;
  iii. avoiding the creation of street canyons which trap traffic pollution;
  iv.   minimising human exposure to traffic pollution through the careful design of streets, outdoor spaces and buildings;
  v.   reducing emissions from buildings and other non-transport sources; and
  vi.   providing appropriate green infrastructure.

Where it is identified that development would have a negative impact on air quality, and/or that air quality would have a negative impact on the future occupiers/users of development, a hierarchical approach to mitigation would be required:

Avoid – Consider measures to avoid negative impacts, particularly if sensitive uses or habitats are affected.

Reduce – Where it is not possible to avoid negative impacts, consider measures to reduce negative impacts. For example, through traffic and travel management, careful design and green infrastructure provision.

Offset – Where it is not possible to reduce negative impacts to an acceptable level, consider compensatory measures which take a broader view of the human health and habitat impacts within and outside the development area. This could include supporting measures in an Air Quality Action Plan or low emissions strategy where applicable.

Where possible, the Oxfordshire Plan would identify strategic opportunities to address the main sources of air pollution in Oxfordshire. This would be informed by evidence (including the AQIA). It should be noted that these opportunities might be more appropriately highlighted within other policies (for example policies within Theme Four: Planning for sustainable travel and connectivity). All policies in the Oxfordshire Plan would be aligned with the ambition of improving environmental quality, including improving air quality.

Alternative Policy Option 12-01

291.   Include a strategic air quality policy in the Oxfordshire Plan but reduce the scope of this policy. For example: do not require air quality assessments for major development proposals.

292.   This is not a preferred option as there is a risk that local plans might take different approaches to air quality. This could result in less certainty and clarity for developers and communities. It may also make it more difficult to meet proposed ambitions around the delivery of transformational change, environmental improvement and creating strong and healthy communities.

Theme Three: Creating Strong and Healthy Communities

293.   The relationship between spatial planning and our health is an important and valuable one. The built and natural environment are key determinants of our health and wellbeing and therefore it is important to recognise the role that planning plays in influencing both our physical and mental health. The Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that planning policy in Oxfordshire encourages the creation of sustainable, well-designed communities that are safe, socially cohesive and promote active and healthier lifestyles.

294.   The way in which we plan for and design new developments has an influence not only on our health and wellbeing, but on the choices we make and the sense of safety, community and identity that we feel. Through careful planning and the design of new growth, we can help to deliver a high quality of life in Oxfordshire, improve accessibility and maximise the health and wellbeing of residents.

295.   Overall, Oxfordshire has better than average health outcomes compared to other parts of the country. However, in those communities suffering socio-economic deprivation, ill-health and preventable health issues are more pronounced. The Oxfordshire Plan aims to reduce health inequalities across the county and broaden access to opportunities for social interaction as well as active and healthy lifestyles.

296.   The Oxfordshire Plan could set out a range of policies or principles that will help to plan for and shape communities that are strong, healthy, and cohesive. These could include high standards for developments to adhere to such as ensuring all new developments meet Garden Town and Garden Village standards, implementing healthy place-shaping principals for strategic-scale development, and also requiring Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) to be undertaken for certain new development.

297.   The Oxfordshire Plan recognises that growth increases the demand for leisure, recreation and open space facilities, as well as community facilities including education, health and other services. As a result, it is considered that the Plan should set out policy proposals for these facilities, ensuring that they are accessible, high quality and in appropriate locations to contribute to the quality of life of communities.

298.   The policy proposals set out in this theme will ultimately help the Oxfordshire Plan to create strong and healthy, rooted and inclusive communities across the county, and ensure health and wellbeing is a key consideration in the planning process in Oxfordshire, as well as helping to address inequalities and broaden access to opportunities for all.

Theme Three – Meets the following objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan

No 1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

No 4. To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging active and healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.

No 7. 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.

No 8. To ensure that new housing is flexible to meet the varied needs of people through all stages of life.

No 9. To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.

No 10. 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.

Policy Option 13 - Healthy Place Shaping and Health Impact Assessments

299.　　The Oxfordshire Plan is committed to reducing health inequalities, increasing life expectancy and improving the quality of life for all who live, work and visit Oxfordshire. As a result, it is proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan should require all proposals for major development and urban extensions to contribute towards the creation of healthy communities, by adhering to healthy place-shaping principles for delivery of high-quality, sustainable places.

300.　　The inclusion of such a policy would help to promote a clear and consistent approach to healthy place-shaping across the county and ensure that the City and district local plans contain relevant and effective measures to create healthy places, as well as places that are accessible to all.

301.　　Health Impact Assessments (HIA) are a way in which we can ensure that health and wellbeing are carefully considered in planning policy and proposals throughout Oxfordshire. HIAs can be undertaken at any stage in the development process but are best done at the earliest stage possible. HIAs can be undertaken as stand-alone assessments or as part of a wider Sustainability Appraisal or Environmental Impact Assessment. The process looks at the positive and negative impacts of a development as well as assessing the indirect implications for the wider community. The aim is to identify the main impacts and prompt discussion about the best ways of dealing with them to maximise the benefits and avoid any potential adverse impacts.

302.　　The Oxfordshire Plan is itself supported by a Health Impact Assessment and the potential health impacts of the Plan's policies and strategy will be assessed through the plan-making process.

303.　　A Health Impact Assessment can take a number of forms, which range from full assessments which involve a comprehensive analysis of all potential

health and wellbeing impacts, to rapid and desktop assessments, which are a quicker and simpler method of assessment.

304. The main objective of an HIA is to inform and influence decision-making, with the main output being developments that minimise risks and maximise the benefits for the health and wellbeing of communities.

305. The introduction of Health Impact Assessments for new development in Oxfordshire, would ensure that greater emphasis is placed on the need to create healthy places by developers and decision makers.

Policy Options

306. It is proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan sets out a number of healthy place-shaping principles which will guide and inform how major developments are planned in Oxfordshire. These principals are varied, and include considerations of, for example, the impacts of air quality on human health, social isolation and loneliness and physical activity.

307. As cross-cutting principles, many of these are woven through other proposed themes and policies of the Oxfordshire Plan, so an alternative option is to not include a standalone policy for healthy place-shaping in the Plan. However, this approach would risk diluting the emphasis and importance placed on healthy place-shaping in Oxfordshire and could result in an inconsistent approach to healthy place-shaping across the county.

308. Setting countywide healthy place-shaping principles would not prevent local principles also being established as the local ones would reflect the characteristics of the local population. The county-wide principles would seek to identify the issues that any local principles should address.

309. The preferred policy option is to include a Health Impact Assessment policy within the Oxfordshire Plan, requiring major developments to be supported by an HIA.

310. The inclusion of an HIA policy for the whole of Oxfordshire would allow for clear guidance to be provided for when and where the preparation of a HIA would be appropriate. An alternative policy option would be to leave HIA policies to individual local plans. However, this alternative option would risk an inconsistent approach to HIAs in local plans, or even a lack of a HIA policy, and therefore it is not preferred.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy 13: Healthy Place-Shaping and Health Impact Assessments

We propose that the Oxfordshire Plan should include healthy place-shaping as a standalone policy, to establish a framework that can apply across Oxfordshire for

the design and masterplanning of major developments (as defined in the NPPF[41]). Example of the principles that a policy might usefully include are set out below:

- Explicitly address the existing and projected health and wellbeing needs of an area and consider how existing community assets could be enhanced to help promote healthy life expectancy.

- Help to reduce obesity and levels of physical inactivity through the provision of good-quality playing pitches, parks and open space, sports and active leisure facilities, and outdoor gyms that are accessible to all.

- Provide opportunities for people to become more active through the design of street layout and public realm to encourage walking and cycling as priority modes of transport; create and enhance cycling and walking networks as well as ensure connectivity between new development, local services and facilities, access to parks and open spaces and public transport.

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness through providing good-quality social community infrastructure which encourages opportunities for social interaction and helps to support the growth of friendly communities. Also, to create community development strategies which contain actions to encourage community cohesion, both within the development itself and between the new development and existing communities.

- Secures access for those with disabilities.

- Make it easier for people to make healthier food choices by providing allotments and other opportunities for food growing such as community gardens, school allotments, community orchards, roof gardens, edible landscaping around new schools and housing developments involving fruit and nut trees and planting.

- Aim to improve air quality and reduce noise through locating and designing pollution generating land uses and roads to avoid adverse impacts on sensitive land uses.

- Provide diversity in the residential offer that improves accessibility, affordability and promotes inter-generational connectivity and lifetime neighbourhoods.

- Design good quality buildings which are energy efficient and mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

- Create safe environments, addressing the fear and perception of crime, including improving safety for all road users.

It is also proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan includes a policy requiring the rapid Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for major developments in Oxfordshire, but the length and detail of the assessment should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the proposed development.

A methodology and assessment checklist for carrying out rapid HIA of major development proposals (10 or more houses) has been prepared for Oxfordshire and has been published as the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit.[42]

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[41] Major development is defined in the NPPF as: 'For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m^2 or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more'.
[42] https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/210126-Oxon-HIA-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf

Policy 14: - Health Infrastructure

311.	As the population of Oxfordshire grows and changes, so does the need for the right buildings in the right locations to meet the differing health needs of the different locations of the county. Reorganisation and reconfiguration are complex and tend to impact on more than one local authority area.

312.	Over the next 20-30 years it is highly likely that further reorganisation of the health estate across Oxfordshire will be proposed. It would be prudent to consider adopting a policy to provide a land use planning framework for Oxfordshire within which future health estate reviews might be considered.

Policy Options

313.	The preferred approach is an enabling policy that aims to set out a framework in which the land use and planning elements of future health reorganisations might be considered, recognising that many of the issues arising will be matters that impact across more than one local planning authority.

314.	One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans, but there is a risk that the cross-boundary nature of health estate changes will be lost. A strategic approach that brings together more than one local planning authority is likely to be more effective in securing influence over the actions proposed by the NHS. Our preference is to put a framework policy in place to enable forward planning by the local planning authority, with the health bodies and their developers in conjunction with the local community and Parish/Town Councils affected.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy 14: Health Infrastructure

In considering reviews to reconfigure the health estate of Oxfordshire the following factors should be considered:

Where changes to the health estate are considered and will impact upon more than one District, an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach will be taken and a masterplan prepared, in collaboration and agreed with the local planning authority/ies, Oxfordshire County Council and other statutory undertakers covering the development of the whole site or sites. This would be especially important where the catchment crosses administrative boundaries.

This comprehensive masterplan setting out the strategic justification and rationale with a realistic timetable would be essential to establish the case for the review and to show the proposals for each location.

New health infrastructure should be designed with changing medical technology and innovative approaches in mind where relevant, (for example, by ensuring building materials used in development will not block internet connectivity signals that can be needed for medical uses).

In Oxfordshire, public access and good connectivity is central, so new locations must prioritise the ease of public transport and active travel access for both public and workforce needs. Equal access for all and those with disabilities must be designed into the proposals.

In considering how best to modernise the health estate, both the quality of buildings and their functional effectiveness will be key. New buildings must be well-designed with renewable energy provision at its heart to help reduce use of carbon in the new buildings, with strong energy management policies to reduce their operational cost and enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Policy Option 15 - High-Quality Design for New Development and Garden Town Standards for New Settlements

315.   Oxfordshire is a special place. It is home to a range of different settlements, from the city of Oxford to market and railway towns, to rural villages and hamlets. Each has its own unique characteristics and heritage.

316.   Oxfordshire also benefits from extensive countryside, a series of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a varied landscape. The relationship between Oxfordshire's settlements and surrounding rural areas is extremely important.

317.   New development in Oxfordshire should recognise what makes Oxfordshire special and respond to the distinctive character of the setting in which growth and new development takes place.

318.   There is a growing network of Garden Towns and villages across Oxfordshire, from Bicester and Didcot Garden Town to Salt Cross, Berinsfield and Dalton Barracks Garden Villages. The designation is a statement of intent that new development will be well-planned, with a high design quality.

319.   These settlements and approaches embody the aspiration of the Oxfordshire Plan that all new settlements or development sites should be highly sustainable and well-designed places, with health and wellbeing as an early consideration, alongside tackling climate change and environmental improvements. There is an increasing focus on the importance of high-quality design by national Government too, with National Design Codes and other measures proposed.

320.   All new proposed settlements should be planned to Garden Town and Garden Village standards to set a framework for thinking about how the proposed settlement might best be developed, as the means by which new communities benefit from high design standards and quality places. This should include the prioritisation of brownfield land first, including the reuse and more intensive use of former MoD sites, subject to the consideration of other constraints. Consideration will also be needed as to how the challenge of the circular economy is to be addressed.

321.   We see the need for large-scale development and new settlements to align with the TCPA guidance on Garden City Principles[43].

322.   New settlements should be located in locations that are accessible by sustainable modes of transport; so, where a Garden Town or Village is proposed it must be well- related to existing or planned sustainable transport infrastructure especially rail services, together with the opportunity to strengthen cycling and walking connections to regional and national networks.

Policy Options

323.   The best way to secure this ambition is for the Oxfordshire Plan to establish a framework that individual local plans can respond to, taking account of local circumstances.

324.   An alternative option would be to leave design matters for local plans and, neighbourhood plans based on national guidance., However this would miss an opportunity to set an Oxfordshire-wide high-quality design ambition and is therefore not preferred.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 15: High-Quality Design for New Development and Garden Town Standards for New Settlements

This approach would set an ambition for high-quality design in Oxfordshire, with local plans, neighbourhood plans and design guides providing more detailed, locally specific requirements as appropriate.

This could include:

- Requiring development to respond to Oxfordshire's distinctiveness.
- Requiring development to recognise, respect and wherever possible enhance Oxfordshire's extensive and varied heritage.
- Recognising that what we build in the next 30 years will be a legacy for future generations. Development should therefore be responsive and resilient to future change. It should also be of a high design quality that communities, both now and in the future, can be proud of.
- Encouraging creative and innovative design solutions, including the use of new materials and building methods where appropriate.
- To respond to the impacts of climate change, new development should seek to minimise the carbon and energy impacts of their design and construction through mitigation and adaption measures.
- Encouraging the implementation of design codes where appropriate in order to achieve high-quality design and local distinctiveness. This includes ensuring that building design secures full accessibility for those with disabilities.

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[43] https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=f3272413-6d74-44c3-870f-fd333161f3a1

- Ensuring green (or blue where relevant) infrastructure will be incorporated as an integral part of new development and public access to high quality green space.
- The development of a countywide tool kit (possibly as an SPD) for checking that a response to distinctiveness has been achieved in the design of the proposed development i.e. a checklist of factors while retaining the space for the solution to be arrived at local level

In addition, any new settlements should be planned to Garden Town and Garden Village standards as the means by which new large-scale development and new village scale developments secure high design standards and deliver quality places.

There are a number of proposed policies across all five themes of the Oxfordshire Plan that are relevant to the masterplanning of new settlements This policy highlights a number of specific considerations that should be taken into account when reading the Plan as a whole:

This policy option for the Oxfordshire Plan would expect:

- All developments over 700 units to be led by a comprehensive masterplan together with a design code.
- Well-designed communities, with housing planned alongside new employment provision.
- Neighbourhood centres and community facilities (including community centres, schools and health facilities) to be provided.
- Such developments to include high levels of high quality, accessible and appropriate green space, parks and open spaces and green infrastructure, as well as sustainable water systems and SuDs.
- Such developments to have addressed healthy place-shaping principles.
- Excellent design with sustainable building materials used to achieve carbon reduction.
- All housing, business and retail units to contain energy management systems, renewal energy provision, grey water schemes, full fibre broadband connection to support home working, home learning and EV charging points.
- Schemes to be designed to reduce the need to travel, linked to the LTCP area strategies.
- Active travel measures to be supported and 20-minute neighbourhoods to be created that encourage walking and cycling connections to regional and national routes.

Policy 16 - Leisure, Recreation, Community and Open Space Facilities

325.   Leisure, recreation, community and open space facilities provide significant benefits to both the mental wellbeing and physical health of communities in Oxfordshire, as well as making an important contribution to the vitality of our city, town and local centres. Open spaces, as well as grassroot

sport and recreation facilities, can also make a positive contribution to biodiversity and the local environment. In reflection of this, it is important that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 continues to support these facilities.

326.   Many leisure, recreation, community and open space facilities in the county mainly serve local communities. However, there are some facilities that have catchments beyond city, district and county boundaries.

Policy Options

327.   The preferred policy option is to leave local plans to set policies for local (non-strategic) leisure, recreation, community and open space facilities, with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 setting a policy for strategic facilities that serve communities both in the county and further afield.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy 16 – Leisure, Recreation, Community and Open Space Facilities

Development proposals for high quality strategic leisure, recreation and open space facilities in Oxfordshire will be encouraged that serve more than one District, or county-wide, sub-regional, regional or national purpose, including (but not limited to):

- Strategic indoor sports and recreational facilities, such as leisure centres, aquatic centres, and indoor pitches, courts and stadiums.
- Strategic outdoor sports facilities and open space, such as pitches, courts, golf courses, as well as country parks and associated visitor facilities.

A strategic facility is a high-quality facility that will serve a county-wide, sub-regional, regional, or national purpose, for example (but not limited to) county sports grounds, stadiums, new golf courses, and country parks. It could also include activities associated with the stately homes of Oxfordshire. Due to the extent and variety of facilities that can fall under this definition, whether the facility is ultimately considered strategic will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

The Oxfordshire Plan would expect all new strategic leisure, recreation and open space facilities development to meet the following criteria:

- They must be located within the built-up areas of the city, towns and villages. In the villages, development must be proportionally scaled and in keeping with the character of the settlement. Development outside of these areas will only be supported in exceptional circumstances, for example where it is evidenced that it cannot reasonably be located in the city, or a town or village in the county, such as water-based facilities or parkland uses.
- They must be located in accessible locations, with excellent public transport and link to networks for walking and cycling and the public rights of way network.
- Use of sustainable travel is encouraged and a sustainable travel plan will be required that sets out the details of the bus and rail connectivity to be secured.

- They must be designed with renewable energy provision incorporated to help reduce use of carbon.

- They must have minimal traffic, environmental, visual and landscape impact.

- Provision for the long-term maintenance and management of the facilities will be sought and must be agreed as part of a planning application.

- School sports halls and outdoor playing fields should be made available to the local community. New facilities of this type would be required to enter into community use agreements.

- Sports lighting would operate within agreed hours where there is a need unless the lighting gives rise to demonstrable harm to biodiversity.

Community facilities would be a matter for individual local plans except where community facilities are intended to meet the needs of a wider district or neighbouring district(s) in which case they should be located within or adjoining rural service centres to maximise accessibility.

Alternative Policy Option 16-01

328.   As an alternative, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 could include a policy that seeks to protect the existing indoor and outdoor sports facilities and open spaces within the County. Those within built-up areas are most likely to be at threat from other forms of development. A policy which acknowledges the importance of retaining existing open spaces within built-up areas and seeks to protect them would do more to secure the future of these types of facilities within the built-up areas. Access to any new private facilities would also be encouraged.

Theme Four: Planning for Sustainable Travel and Connectivity

329.   The transport network across Oxfordshire is critical for residents to be able to access services, facilities and employment, as well as being needed for delivery of freight and goods. However, there are continued pressures on the use of this network associated with travel demand that needs to be managed and leads to wider impacts. This includes environmental impacts associated with use of vehicles including air quality and carbon emissions.

330.   With planned new development, the demand for travel is expected to increase and it is therefore important that this is managed, and plans are put in place to both support sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel where possible. In addition, the wider objectives and targets on climate action mean that there will be a need to ensure the Oxfordshire Plan supports a move towards a transport network across Oxfordshire and beyond that significantly reduces carbon emissions over the next few years. In practice, this will mean significant enhancement to bus and rail services, and a focus on delivering comprehensive active travel networks that enable people to choose walking and cycling for more local journeys, securing health gains as well as supporting the tackling of climate change.

331.   The Oxfordshire Plan also needs to take account of and support wider infrastructure and transport strategy development. It will be particularly important that the Oxfordshire Plan complements and supports the new Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), but also in a wider context aligns with other cross-boundary strategies including the England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy, and guidance and strategy being developed at a national level as part of the de-carbonisation agenda. Major planned strategic schemes such as East West Rail will also significantly impact on the transport choices available in Oxfordshire and more widely across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The Oxfordshire Plan can support and complement such plans to transform sustainable travel options.

332.   It is also important that long-term spatial planning recognises that the way people live their lives is increasingly influenced by changes brought about by technology and innovation. For example, the availability of high quality fixed and mobile digital connectivity can significantly impact on the need to travel, with trends such as flexible and home working dependant on its continued provision. The take up of lower carbon vehicles, particularly Electric Vehicles, will also need supporting, and developments should be designed to provide for these.

333.   The management and movement of freight and goods is also changing, influenced by trends such as the continued increase in internet-based shopping, and the uptake of freight by rail. The Oxfordshire Plan can support the development of a more sustainable freight management system.

Theme Four – Meets the following Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan

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No 1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

No 4. To improve health and wellbeing by enabling independence, encouraging active and healthy lifestyles, facilitating social interaction and creating inclusive and safe communities.

No 9. To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.

No 10. 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.

No 11. To ensure that communities are digitally connected and that innovative technologies are supported.

Policy Option 17: Towards a Net Zero Carbon Transport Network

334.   Emissions from transport currently account for around a third of greenhouse emissions in Oxfordshire, with the majority of this from road traffic[44] Although vehicle fuel efficiency and the switch to lower emission vehicles has started to have some impact, emissions from transport have not been falling as quickly as in other areas such as energy, meaning that the proportion of emissions from transport (road and rail) have increased over the last few years. (Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Report). Reducing carbon from transport movements will therefore be key if Oxfordshire is to meet its climate action commitments.

335.   Both local and national policy is clear that there is a need to cut our carbon emissions from transport. At a national level this is set out in the emerging Department for Transport De-carbonisation Plan, which already includes strategies for increasing walking and cycling, and bus use[45] At a sub-national level, ambitions for a net zero carbon emissions transport network are set out in the recently adopted Transport Strategy for England's Economic Heartland[46] At a local level, a new Local Transport and Connectivity Plan is being developed, with a draft Vision recently consulted upon which focuses on improving digital connectivity, active travel and public transport to support the move towards a net zero carbon emissions transport system, and meet wider social/ health outcomes.[47]

336.   These policies indicate that if we are to achieve required reductions in carbon emissions from transport, there will need to be a change in way that transport is planned and managed. In particular, there will need to be:

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[44] https://scattercities.com/
[45] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-the-transport-decarbonisation-plan
[46] https://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/transport/
[47] https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/localtransportconnectivity/consultationHome

- A reduction in overall travel movements, especially by private vehicles, enabled in part through investment in digital technology;
- A shift to public transport and active travel modes, especially for shorter journeys, enabled by increased investment in public transport, walking and cycle networks;
- Better management of freight and goods, with a focus on decarbonisation and enabling zero emission 'last mile' deliveries;
- A significant uptake of zero carbon vehicles, supported by investment in charging facilities, and,
- Ensuring the opportunities offered though technology and innovation to support sustainable transport solutions are taken up.

337.   Spatial planning has a clear role in supporting the move towards a net zero carbon emissions transport system. In particular, the location and design of new development can have a significant impact on the propensity for people to travel, and the number, type and length of travel movements. For example, the recently completed RTPI report, 'Net Zero Transport; the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions' sets out that transport and land-use planning needs to be integrated if carbon reductions are to be met.[48]

338.   Development plan policies can assist and be complementary to the policy development in transport and infrastructure plans. Paragraph 104 (b) of the NPPF (2019) states the need for planning policies to '*be prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities, other transport infrastructure providers and operators and neighbouring councils, so that strategies and investments for supporting sustainable transport and development patterns are aligned*,' whilst (d) states that policies should, '*provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans).*'

Policy Options

339.   Building on this guidance, the Oxfordshire Plan policies can in particular support the emerging LTCP policies, and any associated updated transport targets needed to move towards a net zero carbon emissions transport network. This includes active travel policies, expected to focus on developing an active travel network for the county and further developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans at key settlements. Policies can also support better sustainable first mile/ last mile transport connectivity to public transport hubs such as rail stations. This will help complement major planned investment, including service and station improvements enabled through East West Rail, and other major rail capacity investment proposed as part of the 'Oxfordshire Connect' priorities arising out of the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study.[49]

340.   The alternative of leaving these polices to local plans is not supported given the strategic and cross boundary nature of transport network.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 17: Towards a Net Zero Transport Network

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[48] https://www.rtpi.org.uk/netzerotransport
[49] http://democratic.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=543&MId=2783

All development proposals should be planned to both take account of, and take opportunities to support delivery of an Oxfordshire net zero carbon emissions transport network, including:

- Supporting delivery of enhanced walking and cycling networks and routes, including those identified as part of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS), and more strategic active travel links between settlements and other key locations such as areas of employment and public transport hubs;
- Supporting delivery of enhancements to the bus network, including proposals for bus priority measures and service enhancements;
- Supporting delivery of enhancements to the rail network, including linking in with new and improved stations, and supporting service enhancements;
- Supporting delivery of improvements to transport interchange, including enhanced transport hubs such as at rail stations that facilitate take up of sustainable travel opportunities, and where relevant link with opportunities for park and ride;
- Supporting delivery of measures that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the freight and logistics network that are consistent with delivering a net zero carbon emissions transport network: and,
- Supporting delivery of improvements to the local and strategic road network that are consistent with delivering a net zero carbon emissions transport network.

It will be important that the location and planning for new development takes into account the more detailed policies within the County Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), and where relevant other policy, both at a sub-national and national level. In particular, it will be important to take into account and support strategic cross-boundary proposals that contribute towards delivering a net zero carbon system, such as strategic public transport improvements like East West Rail.

Policy Option 18: Sustainable Transport in New Development

Sustainable Development Principles

341.   How development is planned and delivered impacts on the transport choices that new residents will make. Put simply, if development is planned around providing for private car use, with limited opportunities for residents to walk, cycle or use public transport, then less sustainable travel choices are locked in from the outset, and very difficult to change in the future. Given the contribution of transport to carbon emissions, this would make it very difficult for new development to both achieve required carbon reductions, as well as achieving wider objectives in particular on health and wellbeing.

342.   The NPPF (2019) makes clear that development plans should look to prioritise sustainable transport options where possible. Paragraph 102 (c) states that plan-making should ensure that '*opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued,*' whilst paragraph 103 states that, '*significant development should be focused on locations which are or can*

be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.'

343. Unfortunately, historically much development across the country and indeed parts of Oxfordshire has been planned and delivered with a focus on providing for and mitigating the impact of car-based travel. The RTPI Net Zero carbon report makes clear that there is therefore a need to re-examine how land-use and transport planning are integrated, if we are to achieve our zero carbon vision. In particular, the report notes there is a need to move away from a predict and provide' approach centred on planning for forecast transport movements (often based on past examples) to one very much focused on planning and delivering a vision (with targets) of what needs to be achieved. Once the vision and targets have been set, a hierarchical approach to planning for transport movements can then be undertaken, ensuring that supporting transport and land-use measures are prioritised.

344. Planning for transport also needs to be integrated into and support wider place-shaping principles. Paragraph 104(a) of the NPPF (2019) states that planning policies should, '*support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.*'

345. More recently, the concept of 15 or 20 minutes neighbourhoods has come the fore, and is about creating places where resident's everyday needs, such as education, employment, community health and wellbeing facilities and recreation opportunities can be met within a short walk or cycle ride.[50] Both the planning guidance and 20-minute neighbourhood concept supports the hierarchical approach to planning for transport and movement, through reducing the need for longer-distance travel, particularly by private vehicle. To enable this, there will also be a need to ensure that the street and movement network for new development is well designed, taking on-board key principles such as those outlined for 'healthy streets' to encourage take-up of more sustainable travel options. [51]

Planning for Zero Emission Vehicles

346. The UK government announced in November 2020 that the sale of diesel and petrol cars and vans will be phased out by 2030, with the plan for all new cars and vans to be 'fully zero emission at the tailpipe from 2035.' Between 2030 and 2035 all new cars and vans will need to 'have the capability to drive a significant distance with zero emissions.' [52]. The main way to enable this switch will be the sale of Electric Vehicles, including plug-in hybrid vehicles, with the proportion of new cars sold that are defined as 'ultra-low emission' now increasing year-on-year. To support this, there is an acknowledgement of the need to roll out significant further charging infrastructure at homes, on local streets and along strategic roads. [53]

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[50] https://www.tcpa.org.uk/guide-the-20-minute-neighbourhood
[51] www.healthystreets.com
[52] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-historic-step-towards-net zero-with-end-of-sale-of-new-petrol-and-diesel-cars-by-2030
[53] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-motoring-milestone-with-half-a-million-ultra-low-emission-vehicles-now-on-uk-roads

347.   Oxfordshire is already starting to plan in detail for the required charging infrastructure to support the move towards zero-emission vehicles. The Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Strategy was signed-off by the County Council Cabinet, and most of the district councils in March/ April 2021 and sets out key policies and actions for roll out of EV infrastructure over the next 5 years. [54]The strategy recognises that forecasts predict sales of EVs to significantly increase in the run up to central Government timescales, with Oxfordshire forecast to be ahead of the rest of the country based on sales to date.

348.   The NPPF (2019) recognises that planning has a key role to play in ensuring the roll out of appropriate EV charging infrastructure in new development. Para 115 notes that any local parking standards should take into account, *'the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other low emission vehicles,'* whilst para 110 states that applications for development should *'be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.'* In July 2019, the Government also consulted on proposals to set minimum requirements for EV charging in new and existing residential and non-residential development, proposing chargers in every new car parking space for residential developments with at least 10 spaces, and 1 in every 5 spaces for non-residential development with at least 10 spaces.[55]

349.   The recently adopted local plans for Oxford and South Oxfordshire both have policies that support introduction of EV charging points, with the Oxford City policy specifying the need for EV charging points at each residential unit with a parking space, and for at least 25% of non-allocated spaces to have charging points. Non-allocated spaces can not only provide for both residents and visitors, but they can also help enable shared mobility options such as car clubs. EV charging can also be integrated into the energy networks for new development, with smart charging of vehicles aligning with energy demand and power supply from renewables.

Policy Option

350.   The preferred option for the Oxfordshire Plan takes account of the Oxfordshire EV strategy which recommends that future planning policies should seek to meet or exceed those targets set out for Oxford City. Building on national planning guidance, the recent local plan policies and the Government proposals for building regulations, there is an opportunity through the Oxfordshire Plan to set out a common minimum standard for all new developments that supports the move towards 100% uptake of EVs. There is also an opportunity to plan for this provision alongside the energy and digital networks within any development.

351.   The Preferred policy option seeks to set a standard framework for considering these matters across development in Oxfordshire.

Preferred Policy Option

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[54] https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/preparing-oxfordshire-for-the-electric-vehicle-revolution/
[55] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/electric-vehicle-chargepoints-in-residential-and-non-residential-buildings

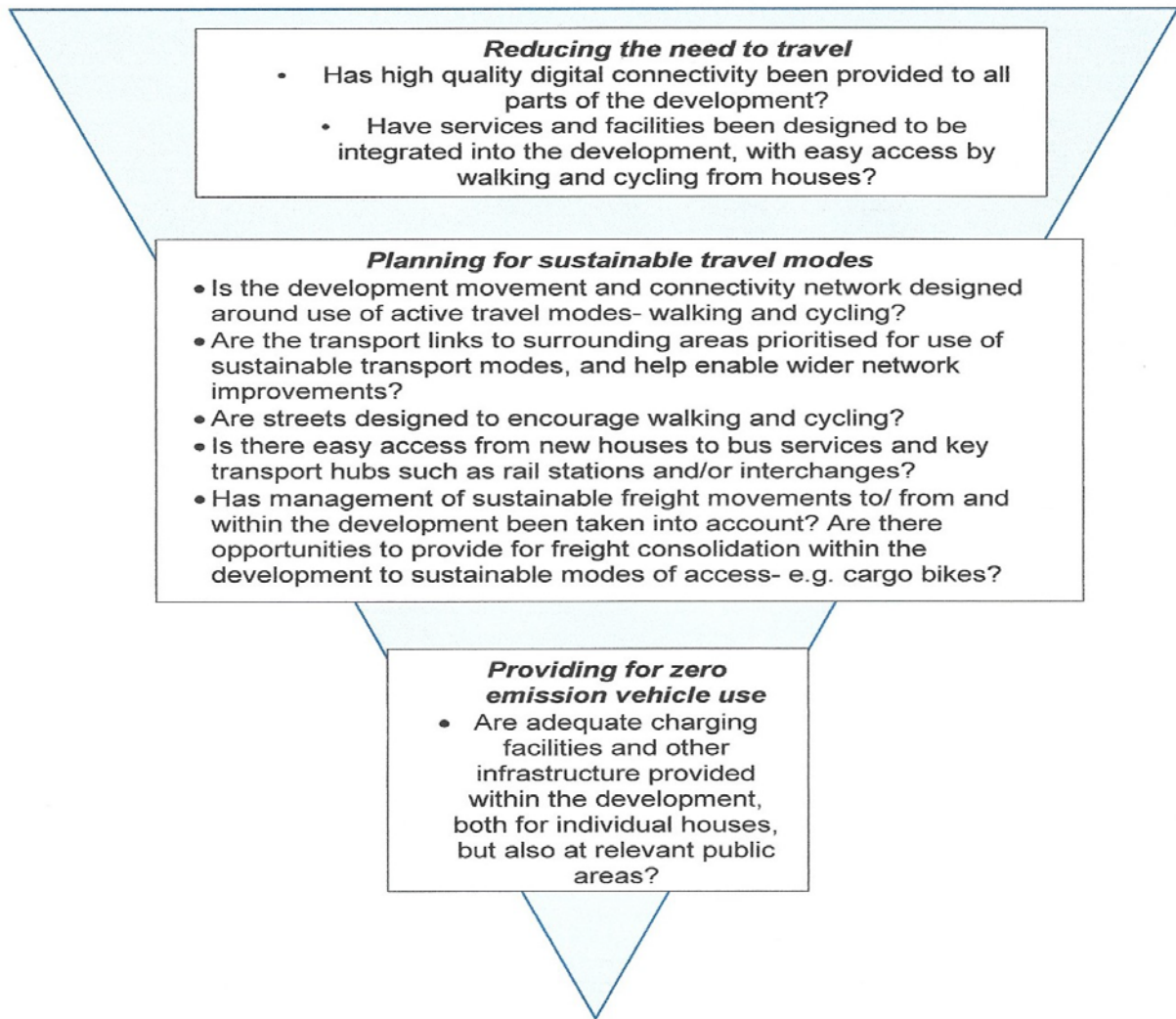**Policy Option 18: Sustainable Transport in New Development**

In this approach, all development proposals should consider and plan for transport and access against a vision, focussed on enabling people to travel by active and sustainable means. In particular, plans should be considered in a hierarchical way as follows:

1. *Reducing the need to travel* - ensuring that high quality digital connectivity is provided to enable working and access to services from home, and that necessary services and facilities are planned and provided in close proximity to new housing areas which can be accessed through safe and direct walking and cycling routes.
2. *Planning for sustainable travel modes* - ensuring that new development is primarily designed to enable movement by active travel and public/shared transport, and that sites are well connected to surrounding sustainable transport networks. The street and movement network should be designed to focus on enabling residents to be able to walk and cycle, and easily access public transport options.
3. *Providing for zero emission vehicle use* - ensuring that any essential vehicle travel for people and goods is prioritised for zero carbon emission vehicles, with adequate charging and other supporting infrastructure provided as per the following standards:
   a) For residential development, each new residential unit with an allocated parking space should be provided with an electric vehicle charging point. At least 25% of non-allocated spaces (with a minimum of 2) should be provided with an electric vehicle charging point.
   b) For non-residential development, at least 25% of spaces should be provided with electric vehicle charging points.

Provision of EV charging instructure should be integrated in the masterplanning for new development form the outset, alongside provision for full fibre broadband, 5G mobile networks, and sustainable energy provision.

The spatial context of any proposed development would also be important in determining the detail of proposals within the sustainable travel hierarchy, and certain measures will be more suited to certain locations than others. However, at all times measures at the top of the hierarchy should be robustly considered first, before moving on to measures further down the hierarchy. Provision and management of parking should also be considered in this context, recognising priority for zero emission vehicles. It will also be important that planning and development takes into account relevant more detailed guidance such as the walking and cycling design guidance as part the LTCP and accessibility guidance, as well as ensuring connectivity with existing walking/cycling networks identified in Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.

The diagram that follows sets out key questions to consider through the hierarchical approach.

Reducing the need to travel
- Has high quality digital connectivity been provided to all parts of the development?
- Have services and facilities been designed to be integrated into the development, with easy access by walking and cycling from houses?

Planning for sustainable travel modes
- Is the development movement and connectivity network designed around use of active travel modes- walking and cycling?
- Are the transport links to surrounding areas prioritised for use of sustainable transport modes, and help enable wider network improvements?
- Are streets designed to encourage walking and cycling?
- Is there easy access from new houses to bus services and key transport hubs such as rail stations and/or interchanges?
- Has management of sustainable freight movements to/ from and within the development been taken into account? Are there opportunities to provide for freight consolidation within the development to sustainable modes of access- e.g. cargo bikes?

Providing for zero emission vehicle use
- Are adequate charging facilities and other infrastructure provided within the development, both for individual houses, but also at relevant public areas?

Policy Option 19: Supporting Sustainable Freight Management

352.   Movement of freight and goods is an inherent part of our market-based economy. Complex supply chains have built up over time, based on usage of a range of logistics facilities and the transport network. The majority of freight and goods are moved by road, both by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs). Due to Oxfordshire's central location in the country and proximity to major ports and airports such as Southampton and Heathrow there are major freight movements through the county, particularly on the main road routes such as the A34 and M40, but also by rail.[56]

353.   However, there has been increasing concern regarding the impacts of freight movements on particular areas and less strategic roads. The current Local Transport Plan freight strategy therefore recognises the benefits of focusing freight movements on the strategic road and rail network, as well as managing and mitigating the impact of freight movements in other areas.[57]

354.   The NPPF (2019) Paragraph 104 (e) notes the need for planning policies to '*provide for any large-scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their*

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[56] Supporting freight - England's Economic Heartland (englandseconomicheartland.com)
[57] LTP4 - Countywide and corridor strategies | Oxfordshire County Council

operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. In doing so they should take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and any relevant national policy statements.'

355.   At a more local level, the increasing demand for local deliveries to both homes and businesses enabled through digital connectivity has in turn driven increases in use of smaller goods vehicles. For example, the number of LGVs increased by 29% over the 10-year period between 2004 and 2014, with Department for Transport forecasting indicating continued growth over the next 30 years, including being much higher than HGV growth over the same period.[58] Looking to the future, there is also potential for further delivery of goods by automated and/or electric vehicles, or drones should relevant legal and practical considerations be overcome[59]. There is therefore a need to look at how to best manage this demand for shorter distance journeys alongside management of longer-distance HGV movements, and look at opportunities to reduce associated environmental emissions. One example of this is supporting consolidation and transfer of freight for more local journeys by cargo bike, including through enabling new and enhanced facilities. 'Pedal and Post' is already operating successfully in Oxford and helping to enable further such operations across Oxfordshire will assist the move to more sustainable and low carbon last-mile delivery.[60] There is also opportunity to support delivery of the charging infrastructure needed to enable a move towards use of electrically powered LGVs in the shorter-term, and HGVs in the longer-term.

Policy Options

356.   The preferred policy option would close the current planning policy gap and provide a strategic framework for considering freight issues as proposals come forward. These are not matters that are well suited to consideration through individual local plans given the strategic nature of freight movement and goods management across Oxfordshire and the need for consistent criteria for consideration of proposals.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 19: Supporting Sustainable Freight Management

Development proposals would be supported that enable a move towards more sustainable freight and goods delivery, and which have the potential to improve system efficiency and effectiveness and allow uptake of lower carbon transport choices. Facilities that support uptake of zero-emission freight vehicles such as electric vehicle charging areas should also be supported.

However, such facilities will not be suitable at all locations. The following matters should therefore all be reviewed carefully before considering support:

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[58] LTCP Baseline Report at: Local Transport and Connectivity Plan - vision consultation - Oxfordshire County Council Consultation Portal
[59] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-mobility-automation-in-freight-transport
[60] http://www.pedalandpost.co.uk/

- The alignment of any proposals with local, sub-national, and national policy and guidance;
- The proximity of proposed facilities to relevant strategic transport corridors;
- The ability for facilities to be easily accessed by sustainable transport modes; and,
- Any environmental, amenity, or heritage impacts on surrounding areas.

Policy Option 20: Digital Infrastructure

357.   The Oxfordshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy sets out that society is increasingly dependent on high quality digital infrastructure provision for our everyday needs. [61] This was thrown into focus during the recent COVID-19 pandemic where digital provision was key in enabling many people to continue to work and access services and facilities remotely. However, the trend towards a more digital world was already happening before then, with a move to cloud storage and applications, the increasing trend and requirements around homeworking, and the significant growth in video-on demand content. Demand for high quality digital connections is only going to grow in the future with the move towards Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence.

358.   The Oxfordshire Digital Infrastructure and the national Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review outlines that in order to provide for this more digital world there is a need to focus on roll out of both full fibre broadband (allowing for reliable internet speeds of up to 1Gbps/ 1,000 Mbps), and the infrastructure needed to support deployment of 5G mobile technology. [62]The review targets near 85% nationwide coverage of full fibre by 2025, and deployment of 5G to the majority of the country by 2027. In short, it is expected that full fibre and 5G mobile coverage should be norm within 5 to 10 years. The rollout of enhanced digital infrastructure is vital for rural and urban Oxfordshire.

359.   In practical terms, full fibre provision relies on the effective laying of fibre optic cabling, whilst 5G depends on traditional mast mounted equipment and also small cell deployment. Small cell technology is in turn dependent on mobile transmitters every 100m or so, and most transmitters require a fibre connection. Both technologies therefore need to be planned together when being rolled out in a particular area, such as a new development.

360.   Para 112 of the NPPF (2019) makes clear that planning policies should '*support the expansion of electronic communication networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.*'

361.   The benefits of providing this infrastructure at the outset of new development are:

- Allowing delivery of 'smart homes' that help residents in their day-to-day lives, for example by better controlling heating to reduce energy consumption;

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[61] https://digitalinfrastructureoxfordshire.co.uk/whats-next/timeline-strategy/digital-infrastructure-strategy
[62] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-telecoms-infrastructure-review

- Allowing residents to work from home or local offices reducing the need for commuting;
- Ensuring that all new residents have full access to high quality digital provision from when moving in, making sure that they are not digitally excluded;
- Giving new residents live provision of real-time integrated public transport information where journeys are necessary;
- Allowing for provision of sensors in homes of vulnerable people to enable access to services and permitted monitoring of live health data; and;
- Facilitation of a Living Labs environment to trial new technology.

Policy Options

362. An Oxfordshire-wide approach will ensure that all development proposals take into account national strategy and guidance as well as securing the scale of investment needed to secure a full rollout of investment.

Prefered Policy Option

Policy Option 20: Digital Infrastructure

In this approach all new residential and business developments would plan for the provision of fixed and mobile technology from the outset.

Full fibre broadband connectivity should be provided, with full ducting for use of fibre cabling to be designed and laid out during the construction of development.

Alongside any other supporting infrastructure, this should also provide and support roll out of 5G mobile technology throughout the development. Infrastrucure providers should ensure works are effectively co-ordinated with other parties, including the Highway Authority.

Policy Option 21: Strategic Infrastructure Priorities

363. New development needs to be supported by high quality infrastructure. This needs to be delivered in a timely fashion, alongside delivery of housing, employment and other types of development. However, the funding and delivery of infrastructure is complex, with many different infrastructure providers and funding streams. Funding for key infrastructure to be directly delivered on development sites such as schools and green spaces can often be secured directly through Section 106 payments.

364. Funding for more strategic infrastructure such as major transport improvements is often more complex, requiring input from a number of public and private sector partners. It can often require a package approach, with developer contributions matched with funding from elsewhere such as central Government which is often short-term and competitive in nature. Other investment, such as provision of new digital networks, is largely private sector led.

365.   The respective Oxfordshire local plans are all supported by Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDP), which set out in particular the infrastructure seen as needed to support delivery of allocated development sites, and planned funding sources and timing for delivery. All four Districts, the City of Oxford and the County Council are also now required to produce an Infrastructure Funding Statement annually which sets out how developer contributions are being spent.

366.   However, there has been a recognition for some time that strategic infrastructure requirements and funding often needs to be considered at an Oxfordshire-wide level. In 2017 an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) was initiated and subsequently endorsed by the Oxfordshire Growth Board which reviewed and prioritised strategic infrastructure across the county, with a timescale of up to 2040. This was the first time that infrastructure priorities had been considered comprehensively in Oxfordshire in this way and has helped secure significant funding for major projects such as improvements to the A40, and a new bridge over the Thames north of Didcot.[63]

367.   In 2020, the Growth Board agreed that the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy should be updated, and a Stage 1 OxIS, covering the period up to 2040 has now been produced. A key emphasis of the OxIS update was the need to consider and prioritise defined strategic infrastructure against a set of strategic needs. These were very much aligned with the principles set out in the Oxfordshire Vision, focused on the Environment, Health, Place Shaping, Productivity and Connectivity, with a set of indicators under each area allowing for a qualitative score to the produced for each infrastructure project. The relative importance to supporting housing and employment growth was also considered in the assessment, based on linkages with local plan allocated growth.

368.   The OxIS Stage 1 update has allowed for an objective assessment to be undertaken of the relative importance of different strategic infrastructure, and its alignment with currently planned growth. This has resulted in identification of priority schemes in infrastructure types including transport, education, green and blue infrastructure and water management. It has also identified the funding gaps and requirements for this infrastructure. Though considering against a range of needs, the work has also given a better understanding of how different types of infrastructure perform against wider outcomes.

Policy Options

369.   Alongside other evidence, the OxIS Stage 1 report will help inform the refinement of Oxfordshire Plan spatial options towards a preferred option at Regulation 19 stage. It is also intended that a final Stage 2 report will be produced to assess strategic infrastructure priorities to 2050 and consider how these align with the preferred spatial options. It is expected that this will provide a strategic infrastructure framework for delivery of infrastructure needs alongside new development and inform the more detailed planning for sites at the local plan level. In effect, it is expected to become the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support the Oxfordshire Plan.

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[63] https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/projects/original-oxis/

370.   The preferred policy option seeks to ensure that the Oxfordshire Plan and the OxIS are aligned, given the significance of strategic infrastructure that frequently crosses more than one local planning authority.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 21: Strategic Infrastructure Priorities

Development proposals would be planned to both take account of and take opportunities to support delivery of the strategic infrastructure priorities identified in the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS), and any subsequent updates. Local plans, and any supporting documents such as Infrastructure Delivery Plans, and Infrastructure Funding Statements should also take into account OxIS when being developed and updated.

Alternative Policy Option 21-01

371.   Safeguard land for strategic infrastructure priorities. This is not preferred, as this should be considered in more detail in the individual local plans that follow the completion of the current OxIS work programme.

Theme Five: Creating Jobs and Providing Homes

Creating Jobs

372.　Oxfordshire is ambitious for its economy and is forwards looking. The Oxfordshire Plan seeks to help Oxfordshire to position to meet global challenges and secure new economic opportunities. With significant sector strengths in life sciences, high-performance engineering and R&D, local opportunities include ensuring we are reducing inequalities and ensuring all citizens have an opportunity to access new local jobs as well as advanced skills and education.

373.　Economic priorities for Oxfordshire draw on the strategies prepared by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, including the Strategic Economic Plan and the COVID Recovery Plan. The Oxfordshire Plan supports the delivery of those two economic plans, recognising the importance of the wider economy, which the planning system should support and seeks to ensure that the planning authorities across Oxfordshire can respond to the impact of COVID on retail and hospitality sectors through re-imagining the role of our town centres.

374.　The Oxfordshire Plan contains proposals to assist with the economic recovery from COVID. These proposals build on the strengths of the economy and seek to harness its capability in the long-term to maintain high level of GVA growth, to secure the retention of young people, and improve access to skills and training resources.

375.　The Oxfordshire Plan recognises that the economy will continue to evolve over next 30 years; this Plan seeks to support that evolution and assist it to become less carbon dependent. The Plan also seeks to support economic innovation as well as improved productivity by ensuring that land use is flexible and can adapt to economic change in both rural and urban Oxfordshire.

376.　The Oxfordshire Plan looks to take full account of climate change and the need for environmental enhancement to achieve a greener economic future. The use of 5G and the application of new advanced digital infrastructure will help our businesses and institutions position for the future, as well as help to maintain the current high levels of home working.

377.　Over the 30-year duration of this Plan, new affordable housing in Oxfordshire will both reduce the need to travel long distances to work, and through the provision of a wider range of house types help to ensure that the workforce of Oxfordshire companies can live in the County and economic success is not held back. Equally, new and renewed business premises will extend the capacity available of floorspace, employment and in Oxfordshire.

Theme Five – Meets the following Objectives of the Oxfordshire Plan
No 1. To demonstrate leadership in addressing the climate emergency by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
No 5. To sustain and strengthen Oxfordshire's economic role and reputation by building on our key strengths and relationships.
No 6. To ensure that the benefits and opportunities arising from Oxfordshire's economic success are felt by all of Oxfordshire's communities.
No 7. 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.
No 8. To ensure that new housing is flexible to meet the varied needs of people through all stages of life.
No 9. To deliver high quality, innovatively designed development that ensures efficient use of land and resources.

Policy Option 22 - Supporting the Creation of Jobs

378. The Oxfordshire Plan is aligned with the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)[64] and seeks to maintain the economic success of the county over the long-term. A central piece of evidence for the Oxfordshire Plan is the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA) which considers the housing need figure across a range of scenarios, including options that consider the relationship to economic growth.

379. Like many issues affecting land use planning, the UK approach to regional and local economic growth is changing. This is partly due to COVID-19 and Brexit, as well as securing the economic aspirations of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, and the Government's focus on 'levelling up' across the UK and its 'Plan for Growth', launched alongside the March 2021 budget. The current Oxfordshire LIS responds to the UK Industrial Strategy which aims to increase growth and productivity, creating more prosperous communities, much of which is core thinking in the emerging Government approach.

380. The Oxfordshire LIS is underpinned by three guiding principles: i) Invest in Oxfordshire, deliver for the UK; ii) Oxfordshire – the UK's 'innovation engine'; and iii) Global Oxfordshire, Global Britain. The key sectors and technologies in which Oxfordshire excels has global reach, meaning Oxfordshire is a critical driver for UK economic growth post-Brexit. The Oxfordshire Plan is one of the tools by which this economic success is to be maintained.

381. The LIS identifies key assets in the innovation ecosystem which underpin that strategy; the LIS looks to build on these strengths and assets to drive R&D

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[64] Local Industrial Strategy | OxLEP (oxfordshirelep.com)

and innovation across the region. The Oxfordshire Plan seeks to strengthen the economic activity taking place in our town and city centres, plus the business and science parks located across the county, as 'priority locations' and supports those priority sectors where strategic jobs growth is focussed as identified in the LIS.

382.	The Oxfordshire Plan supports the creation of jobs across a range of sectors and in various locations, particularly to achieve the shift to 'good growth' as the economy begins to transition to address climate change.

383.	One of the purposes of the Oxfordshire Plan is to consider the level of employment growth and the links to housing need over the Plan period. There are a number of ways to identify the requirements for job growth figures, but there is considerable uncertainty later on in the Plan period, from 2040 onwards.

384.	The following figure is taken from the OGNA and highlights the range of forecasts for job growth 2020-205020.

OGNA: Employment projections for Oxfordshire (2010=100)

Source: ONS, Cambridge Econometrics, PwC.
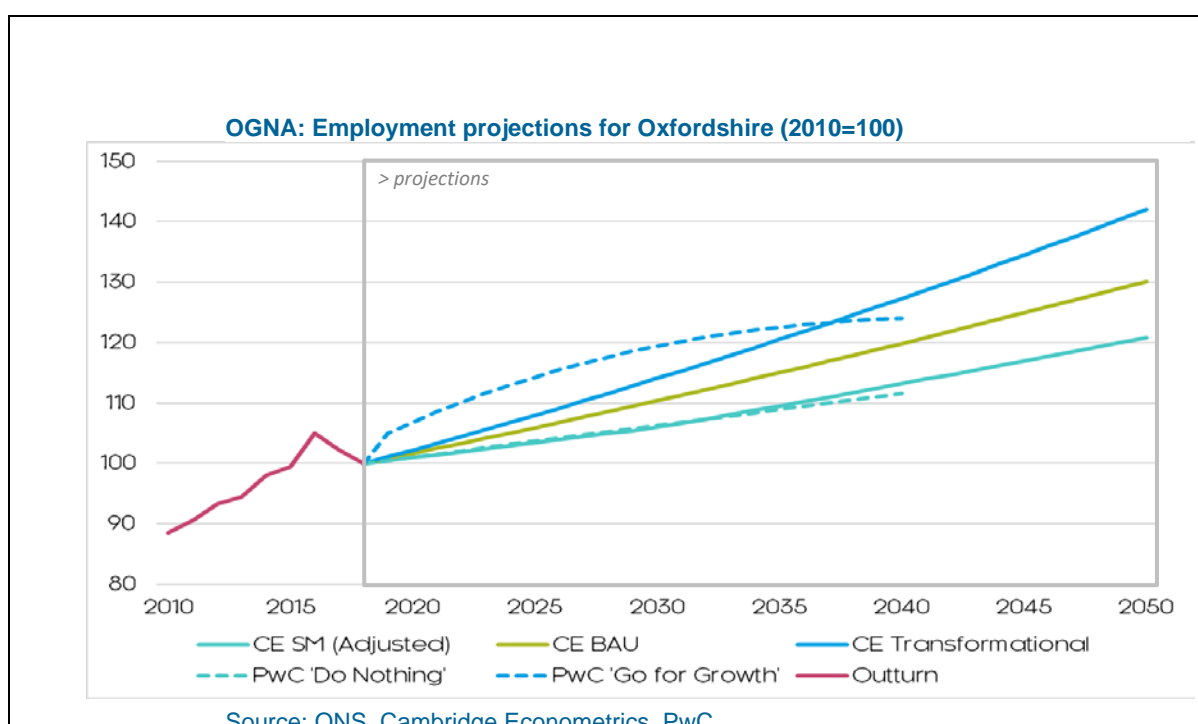
Policy Options

385.	There are a number of policy options that have been considered including whether to encourage appropriate forms of development which would lead to the creation of jobs, without placing any numerical requirements on any of the local planning authorities. The Oxfordshire Plan could provide the strategic framework for emerging local plans and neighbourhood plans to work with.

386.	One other alternative would be to use a floor space calculation of new B Class employment instead of a jobs number for the Plan as a whole.

387.	The challenge with both these alternatives is that the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan is looking to secure a progressive change to business working practices to 2050 and such approaches are traditional rather than transformational. In

addition, recent changes to Use Class orders (new Class E) has made calculating floorspace requirements difficult. Therefore, we consider that the proposed policy option is likely to be the better option as it provides an overarching positive strategy which local plans and neighbourhood plans can build on, responding to local circumstances.

Preferred Policy Option

388.   The proposed policy option could be to consider the level of jobs growth using the OGNA trajectories to identify the employment growth figure for Oxfordshire for 2020-2050. Economic growth and housing growth would need to be aligned and take into account a range of other factors. The decision on the appropriate level of jobs growth would be taken alongside the final decision on the housing growth figure that will draw on the OGNA scenarios.

389.   The OGNA calculations could then be broken down into tranches for the local planning authorities to use (e.g.10 years) in the preparation of local plans. Figures provided for each tranche would have to be indicative, and subject to review by local plans due to the complex nature of job creation and to allow for individual circumstances to be taken into account.

Policy Option 22: Supporting the Creation of Jobs

The Oxfordshire Plan encourages the creation of jobs which align with the objectives of the Plan.

The Oxfordshire Plan could use the OGNA scenarios to consider the level of jobs growth and identify the employment growth figure for Oxfordshire for 2020-2050. This would align job creation calculations with the housing growth scenarios that the OGNA considered.

Policy Option 23 - Protection of Economic Assets

390.   Oxfordshire has a significant network of business, science and technology parks located in the city and towns and in rural locations too. They range from the internationally significant sites at Harwell and Culham, through the United Kingdom's largest RAF station at RAF Brize Norton, to the smaller business parks on the edges of towns and offices within the city. They are the location for companies of different sizes and sectors and are a major focus for employment. This diverse economic base provides Oxfordshire with economic strength and resilience.

391.   Oxfordshire has a number of economic assets that are of not only regional importance, but of national and international importance. These include, the MINI Plant in Oxford, known for its car production, and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and Culham Science Centre in the Science Vale, both world-renowned for being the UK's leading centres for science, research and innovation. Additionally, the business, science parks, innovation and technology centres of Oxfordshire are where a significant amount of business activity takes place across the county. Ensuring that the buildings

associated with these economic assets remain fit for purpose is an essential component of how these locations continue to adapt to changing economic circumstances, current sector strengths and how those grow and evolve in the future.

Policy Options

392.　The economy of Oxfordshire will continue to evolve over the next 30 years, supported through the Local Industrial Strategy and future economic growth strategies. This policy seeks to enable sensible forward planning by site owners and business operators about their future site and building needs for new economic purposes, for science, technology and innovation, as business needs change, in both the rural and urban parts of Oxfordshire. The policy would support a flexible intensification of economic activity at these sites, with re-purposed buildings and site layouts, new build and extensions as required.

393.　The aim is to seek to ensure that the network of sites continues to support new innovative economic uses, but also becomes more sustainable, not just as buildings are upgraded, but as sites seek to reduce their carbon footprint and increase their take up of renewable energy, whilst supporting new aspects of the economy of Oxfordshire as innovation continues and key sectors continue to evolve.

394.　The preferred policy option seeks to secure a consistent long-term approach across Oxfordshire to ensure that investment continues to flow to support the business and science park network as major economic assets.

395.　One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans. The disadvantage of this approach is to miss the strategic opportunity from an Oxfordshire-wide approach. Strategic economic assets are at the heart of Oxfordshire economy. A framework policy is preferred to provide a minimum level of consistency of approach across Oxfordshire.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 23: Protection of Economic Assets

The Oxfordshire Plan would continue to support the appropriate growth of economic assets. This growth may come in the form of:

- New investment in the physical fabric of economic assets and their estate.
- Economic assets being extended as well as re-purposed, re-provisioned and re-used for new and innovative economic activities.
- Flexibility on what those future economic uses might be to support economic innovation within them, recognising that Oxfordshire has strengths in key economic sectors and over the 30 years of this plan we would anticipate new sectors emerging from the investment by the private sector, entrepreneurs, the Universities, LEP and Government.

Appropriate growth would be supported particularly where there is:

- Investment in renewable energy provision and higher quality more sustainable buildings and a focus for new digital infrastructure.

- An increased use of renewable energy including charging points for electric and hybrid vehicles.
- Improved walking, cycling and public transport connectivity and capacity.

The loss of existing economic assets would not generally be supported unless proposals are in accordance with the relevant development plan policies across the districts and city concerned with the loss of economic assets.

The Oxfordshire Plan would support flexible working practices, including live-work accommodation. As we wish to retain and grow economic uses across Oxfordshire's economic assets, we will not support the loss of economic assets to housing but will support the introduction of live-work units where that supports the success of the economic asset and the economic activities undertaken.

Policy Option 24 – Town Centre Renewal

396.   Major changes are affecting town, city centres and other urban centres, with dramatic retail changes and high levels of vacant premises. The changing role and nature of retail is generating significant uncertainty, while the full implications and impacts from the period of the COVID -19 pandemic (2020/1 - 2021/2) are not yet known. At the same time, recent changes to planning controls and Use Class Order Amendments are expanding more flexible changes of use away from retail.

397.

Re-imagining and re-purposing town centres and urban centres is essential to enable new economic activities to come forward for consideration, to enable new economic uses to be accommodated and to plan for change over the long-term. Our policy approach is intended to support the vitality of service centres, being flexible and responsive to future changes, and supporting the high-level retail hierarchy. It is intended to set the context for future local plans.

398.   We want to see town and urban centre uses supported with an increased role for a range of leisure facilities, new business uses, new live-work facilities, hospitality and the night economy. It may also require a local level move to review the extent of the primary retail frontage to most effectively protect the remaining retail uses. Consideration will also be needed as to how the challenge of the circular economy is to be addressed.

399.   While this policy focuses on land use matters, there are a range of active measures outside of planning that can be taken to strengthen town and urban centres including promotion, shopper directories, loyalty cards, cultural events and festivals, and shop front renewal schemes, all of which can help generate new footfall into our towns.

Policy Options

400.   The preferred policy approach seeks to provide the local planning authorities with an enabling policy with which to respond quickly to support newly arising economic opportunities in the city and town centres across Oxfordshire. It establishes a framework policy to support long-term action at the local level

following the major changes to retail and the hospitality sector accelerated through the COVID period.

401.   Establishing an Oxfordshire-wide framework is judged the right means to enable forward planning by developers in conjunction with the local planning authorities and the local business community and Parish/Town Council affected.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 24: Town Centre Renewal

To encourage new dynamism into the central area of each market town (and Oxford's city, district, urban and local centres) and generate new footfall, the Oxfordshire Plan would support the vitality and viability of town centres. At each of the market towns and Oxford City, the Oxfordshire Plan will support the changing nature of our town centres and provide future flexibility to this change, for example, by continuing to support the retail uses, and in addition, supporting new measures including:

- New leisure and hospitality uses, including the night-time economy and 'pop up' venues in vacant buildings.
- New economic and business uses including where appropriate, new live-work units.
- The redevelopment of town centres to make them more visually appealing.
- Markets and their facilities, traditional, seasonal and contemporary.
- New cultural activities, community uses and the consolidation of civic facilities.
- Improved walking, cycling and public transport facilities to and from town centres to surrounding residential areas.
- Taking account of the role that heritage has to play in creating a sense of place and a dynamic town centre environment.
- Taking account of unique, local factors and not taking 'a one-size fits all' approach.

We would encourage the preparation of a town centre strategy between the local planning authority, landowners and businesses to consider challenges and opportunities on a holistic basis and as the means to take local level decisions about the most appropriate boundary of the areas to be devoted to primary and secondary retail, recognising that it may be most effective to reduce the area and consolidate and strengthen the remaining zone.

Policy Option 25 - Visitor Economy

402.   We recognise the importance of sustainable tourism for Oxfordshire's economy and the jobs it creates. As the economy recovers from COVID and the visitor economy looks to new provision, we anticipate opportunities to grow this important economic sector in Oxfordshire.

Policy Options

403.   The Oxfordshire Plan is considering major developments that have an impact beyond more than one district or the city. Large tourism proposals that can have an impact county-wide or across more than one district or the city would be covered by this policy. The Plan aims to set out a positive approach to encouraging new sustainable tourism development in appropriate places, to benefit urban and rural Oxfordshire based on a coordinated approach to infrastructure to support sustainable tourism development and investment.

404.   The Oxfordshire Plan recognises that Oxfordshire's heritage is a key aspect of its tourism industry, likewise the business use of facilities such as through hotels at business parks plays a significant role in generating footfall.

405.   One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans, but our recommendation is to put a framework policy in place to enable forward planning by developers in conjunction with the local planning authority and the local community and Parish/Town Council affected

406.   The preferred policy option seeks to set in place a strategic framework to address those proposals that are likely to impact on more than one local planning authority.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 25: Visitor Economy

We want to encourage new development to advance the visitor economy designed to have a national and international draw. Proposals for such purposes could be supported under this option, subject to the following criteria to guide development, including:

- The provision of new conference facilities, high grade hotel accommodation, resort hotels and museums, new stadium-scale sports facilities designed to have a national and international draw.
- The development of new leisure complexes and the provision of associated specialist sports equipment.
- New adventure-based tourist attractions and sports-based leisure and visitor facilities.
- Active tourism in rural Oxfordshire that supports the rural economy and diversification.

We would expect all new visitor facilities to meet the following criteria:

- They must be located either a) within the built-up areas of the city, towns and villages, and in the villages, development must be proportionally scaled and in keeping with the character of the settlement, or b) development outside of these areas in rural Oxfordshire would be supported where it supports rural diversification and is proportionate to the rural location.
- Being sensitive to the local and historic context.
- They must be located at sites which can provide excellent transport and connectivity, that are easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.

- Use of sustainable travel is encouraged and a sustainable travel plan would be required that sets out the details of the bus and rail connectivity that is to be secured.
- They must be designed with renewable energy provision and others to help reduce use of carbon.
- They must have minimal traffic, environmental, visual and landscape impact.

Policy Option 26 - Culture and Arts

407.   Oxfordshire's city, towns and villages offer a variety of cultural and arts facilities that attract visitors well beyond the county's borders. Oxfordshire's world-renowned city of Oxford, as well as many of its traditional market towns and villages, play a role in making the county a sub-regional hive for cultural activity. Rural Oxfordshire too contains a diverse provision, from great houses to the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where rural arts, heritage and cultural activities are well established. As a result, it is considered important to ensure the continued growth of Oxfordshire's diverse cultural and creative industries.

408.   Culture and the arts are a valued part of our society and play a key role in ensuring social wellbeing and community cohesion, as well as having a positive impact on our physical and mental health. Culture and the arts not only enrich our personal lives, but also our economy. In 2011, businesses in the UK arts and culture industry generated an aggregate turnover of £12.4 billion[65]. Cultural and arts facilities additionally serve an educational purpose, as for example, museums and galleries are often utilised by schools and universities for teaching and research.

409.   In recent times the culture and creative industries have suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has therefore become increasingly important that they are supported in reflection of the difficulty faced by both industries during the pandemic, and the years that will follow it. It is also important to look forward to how these industries are likely to adapt and change in future. By 2050, these industries will likely turn increasingly more digital, so considering the changing physical nature of cultural and arts facilities is also necessary, as demand for temporary spaces such as pop-up venues may increase, whilst digital media venues may become more prevalent.

Policy Options

410.   In order to ensure the continued growth of cultural and creative industries in Oxfordshire, a preferred policy option is proposed for inclusion in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 which aims to advance these industries by supporting new strategic cultural and arts facilities across the county that will have regional, national and international draw.

411.   One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans, but our recommendation is to put a framework policy in place to

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[65] The Arts Council evidence review

enable forward planning by developers in conjunction with the local planning authority where the proposal is likely to impact on more than one district.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 26: Culture and Arts

In order to advance Oxfordshire's culture and creative industries, and foster innovation, proposals for new cultural and arts facilities designed to have regional, national and international draw would be supported, including (but not limited to):

- New cultural centres, museums, exhibition halls, galleries, and other visual arts facilities.
- New performing arts centres, concert halls, theatres, auditoriums.
- The provision of public broadcasting facilities, including public television, radio stations and other electronic media outlets.
- Evening and night-time cultural venues such as public houses, night clubs, cinemas and music venues.
- Film production.
- Associated cultural and arts facilities, including studio and rehearsal space.
- Pop up culture and arts venues, such as in vacant buildings.
- New cultural and arts provision at the great stately houses of Oxfordshire.

We would expect all new culture and arts facilities to meet the following criteria:

- Opportunities are taken through design to have a positive visual impact on the local area.
- They must be located within the built-up areas of the city, towns and villages. In the district's villages, development must be proportionally scaled and in keeping with the character of the settlement. Development outside of these areas will only be supported in exceptional circumstances, for example where it is evidenced that it cannot be reasonably be located in the city, or a town or village in the county, such as at the great houses.
- They must be located at sites which can provide excellent transport and connectivity, that are easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
- Use of sustainable travel is strongly encouraged and a sustainable travel plan will be required that sets out the details of the bus and rail connectivity that is to be secured.
- They must be designed with renewable energy provision and others to help reduce use of carbon.
- They must have minimal traffic, environmental, visual and landscape impact.
- There is no negative cumulative impact resulting from the proposed use in relation to the number, capacity and location of other similar uses (existing or committed) in the area.

We would also seek to protect and retain existing cultural and arts facilities. Planning applications for the change of use of a cultural or arts facility must be accompanied by evidence to demonstrate that the continuation of the use of premises of the existing facility is nor viable. It must be demonstrated that:

- all reasonable efforts have been made to market the premises for its existing use; and
- all reasonable efforts have been made to support and improve the operation and management of the business; and
- it is demonstrated that suitable alternative facilities exist to meet the needs of the local community.

Policy Option 27: Meeting Skills and Education Needs

412.   The Further and Higher Education (FEHE) sectors are one of the economic assets of Oxfordshire. The Universities of Oxford are world class and play a central role in the dynamism of the Oxfordshire economy, bringing forward innovation and technology, as well as new investment and company spinouts that act as a major driver of the economic success of the county.

413.   Oxfordshire has historically had a high education and skills base, but the offer to young people as a whole has not always reflected this. We will encourage and support development that will diversify and strengthen the skills and education base into the future to encourage its continued role in the innovation ecosystem. Apprenticeships can also play a vital role in delivering the skilled workforce that is required.

414.   We recognise that reorganisation and re-provision is likely to take place over the next 20-30 years, as Government policy changes, to provide new services to students of all ages, to respond quickly to demographic changes, improve skills access and to use land and property more efficiently and effectively. This enabling policy is designed to support effective forward planning by the sector to continue to meet the needs of training and education providers, as well as businesses of all sectors in Oxfordshire.

415.   The provision of primary and secondary education facilities, along with those for early years and lifelong learning has a critical role to play in supporting population growth as well as meeting new training needs and improving access to the world of work. The demand for pre-school facilities is increasing due to changes in lifestyles and work patterns and is a critical underpinning of the economic dynamism of Oxfordshire.

416.   We recognise the important role that skills and training facilities and schools have to play in maintaining the quality of life of communities and will support the growth plans of schools. The County Council in its role as Local Education Authority is responsible for securing provision of new schools and school places. It has a statutory duty to ensure that there are enough school places. The local planning authorities will work with the County Council and the FEHE sector to support the range of education and training facilities required, including provision of nursery, primary and secondary schools; further and higher education facilities; community learning facilities; special schools and specialist post 16 education; and other educational facilities as required. This may include seeking the provision of new schools, contributions towards these facilities or contributions towards expanding existing facilities as new growth takes place.

417.   We want to ensure that the design of these facilities is flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of their users and the communities they serve, while recognising safety concerns. Where appropriate and agreed with the education & skills provider the use of the facilities after hours will be encouraged to support learning among the wider community and may be able to enhance recreation provision. New skills and educational buildings should be located in sustainable locations within the built-up limits of settlements to secure active travel and improved public transport connectivity; as well as being considered within regeneration schemes to encourage social mobility and 'upskilling'.

Policy Options

418.   The preferred policy option seeks to ensure that there is a framework policy in place to enable future development or the land use aspects of the reorganisations of skills and education facilities to be considered in a consistent way, especially where the provision reaches beyond administrative boundaries. This is an issue that has also arisen in a number of Duty to Co-operate discussions with neighbouring Councils.

419.   One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans, but our recommendation is to put a framework policy in place to enable forward planning by the institutions affected, with their developers in conjunction with the local planning authority and Oxfordshire County Council.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 27: Meeting Skills and Education Needs

To support the provision of modern and up to date facilities to support existing and future education and training needs across the county:

1. The local planning authority should work with partners to support the provision of new schools, universities and colleges, community learning and other training facilities which provide for education and the development of skills across each district, the city and county-wide, where needed.

2. The provision of new facilities that are integrated into regeneration opportunities to support social mobility will be encouraged.

3. Education and training facilities should be designed to:

   a. achieve a high degree of durability and environmental efficiency to minimise maintenance and running costs;

   b. increase use of renewable energy and help reduce use of carbon;

   c. provide a safe, secure and pleasant environment conducive to learning;

   d. be sustainably designed and located to promote sustainable methods of travel, both by active travel and by public transport; and

   e. be designed to enable future expansion and long-term flexibility, as required.

4. The co-location of community and education facilities will be supported where they create community hubs that can serve the needs of the community and catchments that cross administrative boundaries.

5. Where proposals relate to large schemes or strategic housing developments or the expansion of existing campuses, an integrated, coordinated and comprehensive planning approach would be taken and a masterplan would be prepared, in collaboration and agreed with the local planning authority/ies, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and other statutory undertakers covering the development of the whole site or sites. This will be especially important where the catchment crosses administrative boundaries. Any new education sites must comply with the OCC guidance documents issued at that time to ensure efficient and effective use of the site.

Providing Homes

420.   The Oxfordshire Plan aspires to meet the housing needs of current and future generations.

421.   The cost of housing continues to be a major issue across Oxfordshire and impacts on where people can live and what they can afford, whether they purchase or rent property. This is a particular challenge faced within Oxford City but it affects the neighbouring four districts too and impacts on the economy by leading to lengthy commutes and an inability to retain younger people leaving University.

422.   The Oxfordshire Plan proposes to support the use of new construction technologies to both reduce cost of building new housing but to ensure it uses less energy too.

423.   The Oxfordshire Plan proposes to support innovation over the next 30 years, be it in housing design, build quality and incorporation of measures to help tackle climate change.

424.   The national push for 'zero carbon ready' homes has been embraced by the Oxfordshire Plan as part of its ambitious set of measures proposed in Theme One: Addressing Climate Change and builds on the innovation achieved on current development sites such as NW Bicester.

425.   The Oxfordshire Plan proposes to set a framework for housing quality (see Themes One and Three) and undertaking health impact assessments (see Theme Three) to improve the quality of life for residents. The Oxfordshire Plan places an emphasis on tackling climate change and securing environmental betterment. That emphasis has led to the proposed emphasis on achieving high design standards, which are recognised as being essential for reducing inequalities as well as having environmental impact and helping to achieve improved health & wellbeing of residents, as well as reducing energy costs.

426.   The Plan seeks to secure the retention of young people and the less well-off through the proposed adequate provision of affordable housing and to secure sufficient provision for older people too, through extra care, care villages and

other types of provision. The Plan proposes to support people who can't afford access to the housing market, those in low paid jobs, and newly forming households with the need for accommodation. The Oxfordshire Plan also supports the delivery of First Homes, a new national form of affordable housing. The Plan proposes to support new approaches to Community Led Housing, the use of Community Land Trusts and the contribution that public land has to play in enabling new innovative approaches to housing provision.

427.	The Oxfordshire Plan proposes a strong brownfield land focus with support for programmes of urban renewal which means a reduced level of greenfield release with valued green space protected. The Plan looks to support the renewal of town centres.

428.	The Plan will seeks to support achieving higher densities by building residential property higher, three or four storeys, in appropriate locations, to improve the overall land use and to reduce the need for more greenfield release.

429.	Finally, the Plan looks to support the role of small and medium sized developers who tend to build the majority of smaller sites, to a high standard and more quickly than is achieved on larger sites. The planning authorities in Oxfordshire will explore the introduction of an accelerated consenting process.

Policy Option 28 - Homes: How Many? Commitments and Locations

How Many Homes?

430.	In planning for housing, the terms 'need', and 'requirement' have specific meanings. The Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA) assesses the growth **needs** for Oxfordshire to 2050 to identify the range of what might be reasonable levels of growth to test through the Plan. It will then be for the Plan-making process to arrive at a growth **requirement** figure for the Plan policies. OGNA is a technical document and must provide robust evidence to support our policy making. The draft assessment identifies three need scenarios which are shown in the table below (further to a national 'standard method'). We will consider any consultation comments before the assessment is finalised. For comparison, the current level of housing need, as embedded in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, is shown indicatively for the same period.

431.	The OGNA modelling focusses on three levels of growth: Standard Method adjusted, Business as Usual, and Transformational. These three show the range. The Oxfordshire Plan cannot go lower than standard method (or it would fail to comply with Government guidance), and it would be unrealistic to aim for higher growth than the aspirations in the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), associated with the transformational trajectory given the need to balance homes and jobs, as well as the challenge of delivery and the environment and infrastructure constraints that exist. Further explanation of these housing need scenarios is provided in the OGNA.

Housing Need in Oxfordshire 2020-2050		
	Total	**Per annum**

Standard Method (adjusted) trajectory[66]	101,580	3,386
Business as usual trajectory	123,390	4,113
Transformational trajectory	152,790	5,093
Growth Deal comparator	150,000	5,000

Housing Need in Oxfordshire 2020-2050 (per annum)
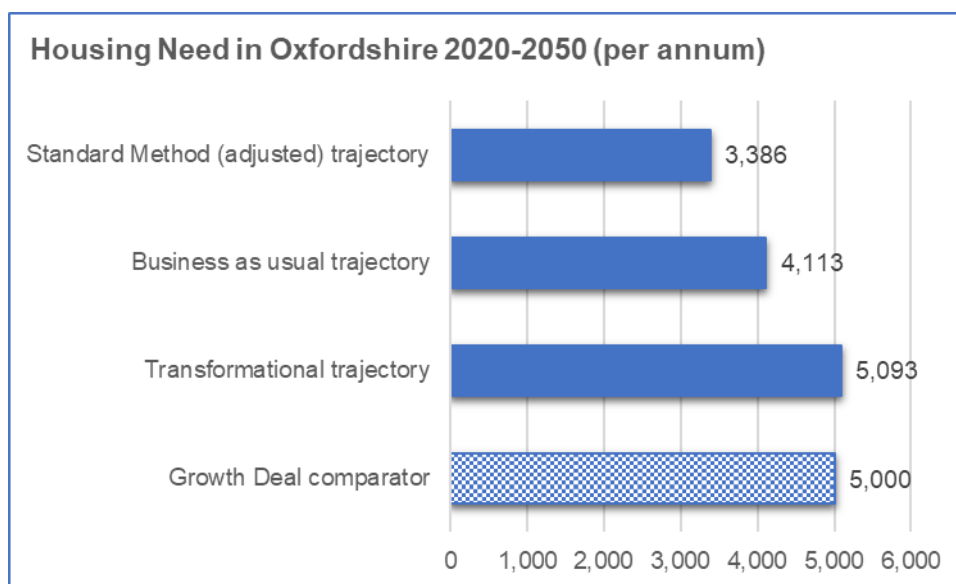
432. Whilst the OGNA has set out a range of housing needs figures it has not advised on a target or requirement that the Oxfordshire Plan should take forward. Through the Plan making process (including this Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation) we are testing the level of growth options. The decision on the final housing requirement will need to balance the OGNA with other evidence studies, and other decision-making tools such as Sustainability Appraisal, consultation, and the strategy set out in this Plan. This process will follow the outcome of this Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation on the proposed strategy of the Plan, the proposed policy options and the proposed Strategic Spatial Options.

433. The next tranche of growth has already been committed in the 2020 – 2031/5/6 period of the Oxfordshire Plan through the City and District's planning consents. In a number of Districts, committed growth associated with consents continues into the period after 2031/5/6 due to the delivery period of strategic development sites and windfalls. In the next phase of Plan making the total of these commitments will be taken off the OGNA scenarios to present the 'residual' figure. This is the housing requirement that we will need to plan for.

Committed Growth

434. Oxfordshire has adopted local plans in place with committed growth for the next 10-15 years. The table below shows the number of homes that these plans presently provide for, the number built at 31 March 2020, those left to be built and additional homes that the plans provide for beyond their plan periods.

435. The next table (as of 2020/21) illustrates this.

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[66] The national Standard Method produces a total of 101,490 from 2020-2050 or 3383 per annum.

District	Local Plan period	*To illustrate 'Committed growth' using Plan trajectories*	Completions since start date of Local Plan - 2019/20	Remaining to be built 2020/21 – end of Local Plan	To be built beyond end of Local Plan
Cherwell	2011-2031	22,840 (pt1) 4,400 (PRev)	8, 614	18,626	**2,707** (NW Bicester)
Oxford	2016-2036	10,884	1,948	8,936	-
South	2011-2035	30,056	7,178	22,878	**2,815** (Chalgrove: 895 after 2035) (Grenoble Rd: 520 after 2035) (Culham: 1,400 after 2035)
Vale	2011-2031	25,359	9,112	16,247	**1,883** (Valley Park, Didcot: 713) (Grove Airfield: 1,042) (NW Valley Park: 128)
West	2011-2031	15,799	4,437	11,362	None
Totals		109,338	31,289 approx.	78,049 approx.	7,405
					Illustrative **Committed Growth 2020/21 onwards = 85,454**

436.   This committed growth (taken from local plan trajectories to illustrate the issue at this stage) should be taken into account. The table below illustrates the 'residual figure' that arises by taking the OGNA scenario figure minus committed growth to leave a 'residual' figure:

OGNA Homes 2020-2050		*Illustrative* **Residual (OGNA minus Committed Growth). Approximately**
Standard Method	101,580	16,126
Business as usual trajectory	123,390	37,936
Transformational trajectory	152,790	67,336

437.   So, the range of new growth we intend to test in the preparation of the Regulation 19 Plan is of the order of 16,000-68,000 homes (not 101,000-153,000). This lower range is the basis for looking at broad areas of growth through the Oxfordshire Plan 2031/5/6 to 2050. i.e. over a 20-year period, after the end of the current adopted local plans. *Note:* In considering this issue in the preparation of the Regulation 19 Plan we will use the most up to date data from AMRs from each local planning authority to ensure we use a common basis for the calculations.

438.   The decision on where in the range the housing requirement for Oxfordshire should sit will be informed by the outcome of the evaluation and evidence in the next phase of plan-making in preparing the Regulation 19 Plan.

Locations

439.   The Oxfordshire Plan has identified five strategic spatial options for consideration in the next section of the consultation document. These options take into account the locations for growth set out in the adopted local plans.

440.   The next stage of the development of the Oxfordshire Plan will consider the application of the growth need numbers to assess the most appropriate locations for future growth to be identified in the Regulation 19 Plan version.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 28: Homes: How Many? Commitments and Locations

Through this consultation on the Regulation 18 Part 2 stage of the Oxfordshire Plan, the scenarios for the total housing requirement figure 2020-2050 (the OGNA) need to be considered and views are sought.

The Regulation 19 stage will consider the OGNA range taking the level of committed growth into account using AMRs, its ongoing delivery as well as the identification of a residual figure that is broken down into tranches (e.g. 10 years).

Commitments

It is proposed that the Regulation 19 Plan is prepared on the basis of what is already committed in the five Districts using the most up to date AMRs, deducted from the OP2050 requirement identified through the OGNA.

Locations

Homes and jobs to be delivered in strategic locations following a process of assessment.

District-level figures will be provided for the remaining requirement (i.e. OGNA minus committed growth level).

As the Strategic Spatial Options section shows, as part of the site assessment process to take the proposed options forward in detail, we propose to use a step-by-step process, drawing on our extensive Plan evidence base to assess capacity and delivery in broad locations.

A range of evidence will be required including a HELAA, to assess capacity and availability of brownfield land, as well as constraints analysis on flooding, landscape and other factors, plus input from the SA/HRA and considerations of climate change.

The aim is to establish a final list of prospective locations for future growth that secure the objectives of this Plan and especially, sustainable outcomes, net zero carbon growth and environmental enhancement.

Policy Option 29 – Urban Renewal

441.   This policy aims to enable forward planning of urban renewal schemes and will include the reuse of brownfield land and an intensification of land use in our market towns, the City of Oxford and at the former MoD bases and sites

where the largest holdings of brownfield land are located. Urban renewal brings new vitality to areas and helps secure more sustainable locations, with investment in new services, new employment and improved health outcomes from urban re-design. The modernisation of housing and replacement of housing seeks to achieve higher residential densities, as well as more energy efficient, healthier living in higher quality housing.

442. New development can help secure gains and opportunities for the area being invested in, such as environmental gains, habitat creation and improved access to the countryside and improved walking and cycling opportunities. New affordable housing can be secured using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to secure significant energy gains for residents and reduced building costs.

443. Urban renewal is already taking place in a number of locations including the redevelopment of parts of Didcot and in the west end of Oxford around the rail station, whereas innovative approaches to custom build housing are being pursued at Graven Hill, Bicester. Urban renewal is expensive, and it takes time to prepare schemes with impact, so this is a policy that is intended to enable schemes to be developed with planning authority support through the life of the Oxfordshire Plan.

444. The policy will draw on brownfield land registers and support the forward programmes of redevelopment that are prepared by local planning authorities to bring new use to areas where private sector led schemes have been delayed. Joint ventures between the public, private, voluntary sector and other bodies such as Universities and other institutions will be supported.

Policy Options

445. The preferred policy option for the Oxfordshire Plan is to put in place a framework policy to guide the development of options to renew areas over the next 20 to 30 years.

446. One alternative policy option is to leave these considerations to future local plans, but our recommendation is to put a framework policy in place to enable forward planning by developers in conjunction with the local planning authority and the local community and Parish/Town Council affected.

Preferred Policy Proposal

Policy Option 29: Urban Renewal

Urban renewal schemes and the reuse of brownfield and 'underutilised land' to achieve a more efficient use of land and to help minimise the use of new greenfield land across Oxfordshire will be supported.

This policy would include:
- Support for proposals that include a package of measures to renew and replace existing buildings (i.e. those that are under-utilised, energy inefficient or are degraded or derelict), with more modern higher quality housing to achieve

higher densities where appropriate, as well as being designed to be more energy efficient and support healthier living.

- Mixed use schemes will be encouraged, with the colocation of employment and residential provision to improve the sustainability of the location.
- Support opportunities for investment in redevelopment and development to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land where appropriate.
- The identification of appropriate areas for regeneration with a clear boundary within the market towns and the City of Oxford as well as major brownfield locations such as former MoD sites and areas of former MoD housing.
- Sensitivity to local context particularly where there are heritage assets.
- Support for the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), including custom build, to secure energy gains for residents and reduced building costs.
- Support for opportunities for urban renewal and brownfield land development to achieve net environmental gains and recognise and utilise the function brownfield land often has in for example, wildlife, flood risk mitigation, and carbon storage.

Appropriate land will be identified through Brownfield land registers as well as programmes established for urban settings, through Council housing companies, Housing Associations and others.

Policy Option 30 - Affordable Homes

447. Affordable homes are greatly needed across Oxfordshire. The OGNA Phase 1 Report stated that 'evidence points to a very significant scale of need for affordable housing in Oxfordshire'. Across the county, average house prices are at over 10 times median earnings, and up to 17 times median earnings in the city of Oxford. The high cost of housing has significant impacts for those living and working in Oxfordshire, as well as on economic growth. High house prices have led to those working in Oxfordshire needing to commute longer distances to and from their workplace, which in turn puts increased pressure on transport infrastructure across the county.

448. Increasing land values across Oxfordshire combined with land availability constraints, means that it is likely that house prices will worsen during the plan period. Innovative methods of construction, such as 'Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC) can reduce the building cost of housing, including affordable housing, whilst also securing energy gains for residents. Community-led housing (CLH) schemes are also an innovative way in which affordable housing supply can be boosted. CLH schemes also help to deliver not only much needed affordable homes, but also additional benefits to the communities they serve, as the homes are delivered by local people for local people. As identified in the OGNA Phase 1 Report, other initiatives such as local authority house building (supported by national Government) could help to boost affordable housing delivery, and also help councils to return to their historic role as provider of homes in the four districts and the City of Oxford.

449.   Importantly, the delivery of affordable homes is also influenced by Government funding and initiatives aimed at increasing affordable housing supply (both for rent and purchase) including home ownership through subsidised routes such as shared ownership and the First Homes scheme. First Homes are a specific kind of discounted market sale housing and is the Government's preferred discounted market tenure and should account for at least 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations. In order to quality as a First Home, a property must be sold at least 30% below the open market value, however local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups have discretion to require a higher minimum discount of either 40% or 50% if they can demonstrate a need for this. Local authorities are also encouraged to ensure that First Homes work well in their area, which may include requiring a higher minimum discount, lower price or income caps, or local connection/key worker requirements. This provides an opportunity for all the Oxfordshire authorities to understand their individual needs.

450.   Public funding is also a key factor in helping to support delivery, and locally this has been secured through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and is also available at a national level through the Government's Affordable Homes Programme. A variety of methods will be needed to ensure the delivery of affordable homes in Oxfordshire is maximised, and the inclusion of an affordable homes policy in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is a way in which it can help achieve this aim.

451.   The provision of affordable housing is well established nationally and locally, with the NPPF setting out clearly that affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas (where policies may set out a lower threshold of 5 units or fewer).

Policy Options

452.   In order to help address the acute affordable housing needs across the county, it is proposed that the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 includes an overarching policy that ensures maximum levels of affordable housing are delivered on new residential sites across Oxfordshire. This would mean that the detail surrounding tenure mix and affordable housing requirements (expressed as a percentage) would remain a decision for local authorities to include in their local plans in light of local evidence. The Oxfordshire Plan is not setting a county-wide figure for affordable housing.

453.   One alternative policy option would be to include percentage requirements and/or tenure mix targets in the Oxfordshire Plan to ensure a consistent, strong and diverse affordable housing mix across the county. However, this is not the preferred policy option as it could potentially overlook the differences in the housing market across Oxfordshire. Affordable housing requirements vary across the Oxfordshire authorities and it is important that all the authorities retain this flexibility to be able to respond to local circumstances. It would also be difficult to ensure that the policy has the necessary flexibility to plan over the longer term to 2050, when the needs of Oxfordshire might change. The remaining alternative option would be to not include an affordable homes policy in the Oxfordshire Plan, but instead leave all decisions and detail regarding affordable housing to local plans.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 30: Affordable Housing

In order to help address affordable housing needs across the county, the Oxfordshire Plan would require local plans (and neighbourhood plans where relevant) to seek maximum levels of affordable housing on residential (use Class C2/C3) development sites of 10 units or more, those in excess of 0.5ha (subject to local viability considerations), and within the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB's) development sites of over 5 units.

In order to ensure residential development sites are well integrated and cohesive, the affordable housing units should be visually indistinguishable from market housing on site, and thus 'tenure blind'.

Affordable housing units should also be distributed throughout the site to prevent concentrations of affordable homes in one particular area. Any limitations on number of affordable units being clustered in groups should be set out in local plans, informed by local evidence and site-specific circumstances.

Tenure mix targets and affordable housing requirements (expressed as a percentage) will be for local plans to decide in the light of local evidence.

Innovative arrangements such as Community Led Housing schemes will be supported.

Alternative Policy Option 30-01

454.   Instead of leaving tenure mix to local plans, should the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 set tenure mix targets across Oxfordshire?

455.   This could be added to the policy set out above. An example of how percentages could be split (that reflect existing local plans and between the City of Oxford and neighbouring Districts) is as follows:

- 25% Affordable Rented
- 35% Social Rented
- 15% other routes to affordable housing (including shared ownership)
- 25% First Homes

456.   But the risk of this approach is that it is less robust and reflective of changing circumstances over the longer-term period that the Oxfordshire Plan is intending to address.

Policy Option 31 - Specialist Housing Needs

457.   Across Oxfordshire there is a wide range of housing needs. One of Oxfordshire's key strengths is its thriving and diverse communities, therefore providing the appropriate types of houses for these communities is essential.

458.   The NPPF sets out that the housing needed for different groups in the community should be reflected in planning policies. This includes, but is not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their home and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

459.   Across Oxfordshire it is essential that housing is provided for different groups in the community, who all have different needs, in the right places. The needs of Gypsies, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople are addressed separately in the Plan. Across Oxfordshire, whilst there are similarities between the types of housing needed, each authority area is different and has its own specific needs.

460.   Oxford City has a higher proportion of student accommodation due to the location of the universities. The Oxford City Local Plan 2036 responds appropriately to this through its policies. Whilst this high concentration in the city is likely to continue, during the longer-term plan period for the Oxfordshire Plan it is unknown if any university expansions are going to occur outside of the City. It may be that in looking forward, the universities decide to explore wider Oxfordshire options. Planning over this longer period the Oxfordshire Plan should be a position to provide a framework to assist the four districts and the City of Oxford in dealing with any future proposals.

461.   One trend which is likely to have an impact on the four districts and the City of Oxford across the 30-year plan period, is housing for older people. People are living longer lives and the proportion of older people in the population is increasing. Oxfordshire has an aging population and it is forecast that this trend will continue. Housing for older people needs to be appropriately located with good access to public transport and local facilities, including shops and healthcare.

462.   From previous consultations on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, we know that making homes accessible and affordable and meeting a variety of needs is important to communities. In response to the Regulation 18 Part 1 consultation, it was highlighted that housing should meet a variety of needs, such as those of older people, neurodivergent people and people with disabilities. Some respondents also raised that the Oxfordshire Plan should make new homes accessible and affordable to local people, including key workers.

Policy Options

463.   The Oxfordshire Plan will be determining a broad spatial strategy and broad locations for growth. As such it will not include detailed housing needs or requirements about the need for specialist housing. It is more appropriate to consider specialist housing matters via local plans and neighbourhood plans given the differences between provision and requirements in the Districts and the City of Oxford.

464.   However, the Oxfordshire Plan can play a role in providing a framework for the local plans to work within. There are county-wide similarities with specialist housing that could benefit from a strategic level policy. A policy in the Oxfordshire Plan could provide high level support for the delivery of specialist housing,

recognising the role the local plans will play in setting out the levels of appropriate specialist housing that should be delivered.

465.   This policy is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow the four districts and the City of Oxford to deal with individual needs. Policy could only be high level as evidence would be needed if policy became specific.

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 31: Specialist Housing Needs

1. The Oxfordshire Plan would support the delivery of specialist housing where meeting an identified need, in appropriate locations and where proposals conform with development plan policies.

2. Specialised housing may include, but is not limited to:
   - Housing for older people
   - Student accommodation
   - Housing for key workers
   - Housing for people with disabilities
   - Homes for life

3. Where appropriate, specialist housing should:
   - be integrated into proposed developments and existing neighbourhoods to create mixed and balanced communities;
   - have good access to public transport and local facilities;
   - enable the delivery of well-connected locations which maximise walking, cycling and public transport;
   - be appropriate for its intended occupant, e.g. living spaces, provision of storage and accessibility; and
   - not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbourhood uses.

Alternative Policy Option 30-01/02/03/04

466.   An alternative policy option could be for the Oxfordshire Plan to consider the specific requirements for identified groups in the community, as set out below for example. However, this is not the preferred option as it could potentially overlook the differences in the housing market across Oxfordshire and local plans are the most appropriately placed to respond to locally specific housing needs.

1. Support the delivery of specialist housing where meeting an identified need, in appropriate locations and where proposals conform with local plan policies.

2. Where there is an identified need, housing for older people should:
   - Have good access to public transport;
   - Have good access to local facilities and services, including healthcare and shops;

- Be appropriate for its intended occupants;
- Not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses;
- Provide suitable parking in accordance with the relevant parking standards and provide pick up and drop off facilities suitable for taxis, minibuses and ambulances; and
- Be built maximising energy standards in accordance with the approach set out in this document.

3. Where there is an identified need, student accommodation should:
    - Be appropriate for its intended occupants;
    - Be secured for student use;
    - Be integrated into proposed developments and existing neighbourhoods to create mixed and balanced communities;
    - Maximise walking, cycling and public transport in well-connected locations;
    - Not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbourhood uses;
    - Provide suitable parking in accordance with the relevant parking standards; and
    - Be built maximising energy standards in accordance with the approach set out in this document.

4. Where there is an identified need, housing for key workers should:
    - Be appropriate for its intended occupants;
    - Be integrated into proposed developments and existing neighbourhoods to create mixed and balanced communities;
    - Maximise walking, cycling and public transport in well-connected locations;
    - Not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbourhood uses;
    - Provide suitable parking in accordance with the relevant parking standards; and
    - Be built maximising energy standards in accordance with the approach set out in this document.

Alternative Policy Option 30-02

467. Another alternative option would be to not have a strategic policy on specialist housing in the Oxfordshire Plan and to instead leave it to local plans to set policies in relation to specialist housing need.

468. Local plans are best placed to address local housing needs, and this is reflected in the preferred policy option. However, leaving it completely to local plans is not the preferred approach as the Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to establish an Oxfordshire wide overarching strategic policy on specialist housing.

Policy Option 32 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

469. All the local authorities in Oxfordshire have a responsibility to address the needs for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. Currently across

Oxfordshire there are 6 permanent council-owned traveller sites, providing 89 pitches and 21 privately run authorised sites[67].

470.   In accordance with national planning policy, a county-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) has been commissioned jointly to inform the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. The current evidence across the county comprises the Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse GTAA 2017 and the West Oxfordshire GTAA 2016. The Oxfordshire GTAA which will support the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 is an update of the 201 & 2017 GTAA's.

471.   The Government's planning policy document, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites[68], sets out that local authorities should set targets which address the likely permanent and transit accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. This document provides definitions for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. For the purpose of planning policy 'gypsies and travellers' means:

472.   '*Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.*'

473.   For the purpose of this planning policy 'travelling showpeople' means:

474.   '*Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above.*'

475.   The Oxfordshire Plan will play an important role in assessing county-wide accommodation needs and travel patterns. The Government's overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community. It is important to note that Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople have different accommodation need requirements. For example, Travelling Showpeople need additional space in order to store and maintain large equipment and vehicles.

476.   The Oxfordshire Plan will provide an overarching framework, supported by the GTAA. The proposed methodology of the GTAA will provide an accommodation need figure based on ethnic identity; and also a figure based on the definitions above from national policy. The needs of those who are not covered in the GTAA will be addressed through the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment ('OGNA').

477.   One of the aims of Government is working collaboratively to develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites.

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[67] Authorised Gypsy and Traveller sites | Oxfordshire County Council
[68] Planning policy for traveller sites - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Given the transient nature of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, collaborative working with neighbourhood authorities has played an important role and will continue to play an important role as the Oxfordshire Plan progresses. The Oxfordshire Plan provides an opportunity to work collaboratively to develop a county-wide strategy to meet these needs.

478.   The GTAA will assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople for the period 2020-2035 and consider potential future needs up to 2050 for the whole of the county. It will quantify the accommodation needs, relating to permanent pitches/plots, sites/yards, and transit sites and/or negotiated stopping arrangements. The GTAA will not recommend any sites for allocation; this will be done via local plans and the Oxfordshire Plan will provide the overarching strategic framework.

Policy Options

479.   The proposed policy options relating to Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople have been informed by the emerging evidence base, primarily the Oxfordshire GTAA. The GTAA will provide a need figure for each local authority, as well as advising on potential strategic approaches, but site allocations will remain with the local plan.

480.   Due to COVID-19, the preparation of the GTAA has been delayed with the household surveys unable to be completed prior to this consultation. It is anticipated these will resume shortly and the final GTAA will be published at the next stage of consultation (Regulation 19).

Preferred Policy Option

Policy Option 32: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

The Oxfordshire Plan will set out an Oxfordshire-wide need figure and local planning authority breakdowns in 5-year tranches per each authority.

The Oxfordshire Plan will set out locational criteria for the provision of pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, plots for Travelling Showpeople and transit sites/pitches, this may include, but is not limited to:

  - Safe access for pedestrians and vehicles;
  - Accessibility to facilities and services;
  - Availability of utilities;
  - Green Belt (subject to the provisions of the NPPF);
  - Landscape – e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (subject to the provisions of the NPPF);
  - Flooding;
  - Historic and natural environment;
  - Accessibility to preferred routes on the highway network; and
  - Impact on human health/ natural environment/ local amenity.

Spatial Strategy Options

Introduction

481.   This part of the Plan outlines the spatial strategy options on which we are seeking views. It begins by explaining the purpose of the options, the principles on which they are based, the criteria used to evaluate them and links with the Sustainability Appraisal process. The section outlines the scale and distribution of committed growth in Oxfordshire's existing local plans and goes on to describe five spatial strategy options. This part of the Plan concludes with a section on the process for selecting a preferred spatial strategy option and broad locations for growth in the Regulation 19 Plan.

Proposed Spatial Strategy

482.   At this stage in the Plan preparation process, we are not identifying individual spatial strategy options that can necessarily accommodate all of Oxfordshire's growth over the next 30 years. Nor is any one of the options, taken in isolation, likely to form Oxfordshire's eventual long-term spatial strategy. It is much more likely that the preferred strategy in the Regulation 19 Plan will comprise components from more than one of the options which, when combined together and depending on how robust the potential interventions are likely to be, will most effectively deliver the Plan's priorities and the outcomes set out in the Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire.

483.   Presenting a set of options allows us to explore how, and the extent to which, each option would deliver Oxfordshire's ambitions for long-term, transformative, sustainable development. The options have been broadly defined to consider opportunities for *'good'* housing and economic growth, but also opportunities for a wider range of improvements that contribute to *'good growth'*, including new infrastructure and environmental enhancements, as well as the scope for enhancing the beneficial use of the Green Belt, and constraints.

484.   It is important that each of the options is 'reasonable', clearly defined and sufficiently distinctive to allow for robust testing as part of the plan-making process. Nevertheless, the five spatial strategy options are underpinned by a set of **common principles**.

- All options help deliver the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision and the Plan's Vision & Objectives. They seek to align economic, social and environmental objectives – though each option does this in different ways and to varying degrees because each is based on a different key driver for transformation.

- All options make effective use of land by planning positively for re-use of previously developed or brownfield land, including under-utilised land and buildings as urban regeneration schemes.

- All options prioritise the environment as a common thread that flows from the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. This includes climate change, nature recovery, natural capital and enhanced resilience. This means there is no separate environment-led option.

- All options support the City of Oxford as the key driver for good growth within Oxfordshire.

- All options give priority to national policies that protect areas or assets that are of particular intrinsic importance and are likely to endure over the whole Plan period *and* are likely to impact on the distribution of development at the strategic scale.

- All options will seek to influence and shape the priorities within the emerging Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

- All options recognise that in the short-term, adopted local plans will be particularly important in shaping Oxfordshire's spatial strategy, but that over the longer-term – the 30-year time-span of the Oxfordshire Plan – there is greater scope to effect change, but also greater uncertainty.

485.   To evaluate the options, we have identified what the three overarching objectives of sustainable development mean in an Oxfordshire context and set them out as a set of **criteria**. There is a strong read-across between these criteria, Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision and this Plan's Vision & Objectives.

1.   Guiding new development to the most sustainable locations.
2.   Using land effectively by planning positively for brownfield land and supporting urban regeneration.
3.   Protection and enhancement of Oxfordshire's highly valued countryside and landscape.
4.   Enhancement of the network of green spaces and blue infrastructure in urban and rural areas in ways that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits.
5.   Support for nature's recovery in ways that optimise the range of economic and social benefits that nature provides.
6.   Creation of places that build community resilience in terms of climate change, health of habitats and healthy place-shaping.
7.   Maintenance of an effective Green Belt around Oxford and enhancement of its beneficial use in line with national policy.
8.   Planning for growth opportunities that will reduce inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of the most disadvantaged.
9.   Strengthening the conditions that support our network for economic activity comprising innovation hubs and clusters and corridors based on science and technology and other key economic assets.
10.   Reducing the need to travel and improving connectivity, with new development located where there is existing or planned sustainable transport links (or the potential for such links based on new investment) and the potential for active travel.
11.   Planning for further development at existing settlements where this can be done sustainably.
12.   Contributing to the success of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

486.   The evaluation of the options presented here is consistent, robust, objective, evidence-based, transparent and sets out at a high level the positive and negative impacts of each option and the interventions that would be required to deliver it.

487.   The **Sustainability Appraisal** has played – and will continue to play – an important ongoing role in strategy and option development. The 'Introducing

the Oxfordshire Plan 2050' consultation document included the following set of spatial scenario typologies:

Spatial Scenario Typologies, February 2019

Scenario 1:   Intensification of city, town and district centres

Scenario 2:   New settlements

Scenario 3:   Dispersal with development spread evenly across the county, including in smaller settlements

Scenario 4:   'Wheel' settlement cluster with a focus on Oxford and the existing larger towns and key corridors into Oxford and between towns

Scenario 5:   Intensification around the edges of larger settlements and strategic extensions

Scenario 6:   Spokes and hubs with a continued focus on Oxford and key corridors into Oxford

Scenario 7:   'String' settlement/ settlement cluster with development focused on a number of linked settlements.

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488.   These typologies were further refined following public consultation to inform the following set of eight potential alternatives for the spatial distribution of growth for consideration through the Sustainability Appraisal of the Oxfordshire Plan.

Spatial Alternatives, July 2020

1. Intensification in existing towns and cities**:** Increase density of existing and planned settlements, prioritise brownfield sites.

2. Intensification of housing development around strategic economic assets: Co-location of uses to meet business and research park needs.

3. Public transport 'Wheel' (transport-led): Concentrate development around areas of good public transport connectivity.

4. Rail 'String' (transport-led): Locate string of settlements along new/upgraded rail corridors (e.g. Cowley line).

5. OxCam 'String' (transport-led)**:** New development along route of OxCam Expressway, once the route has been decided, consistent with NIC Growth Deal aspirations.

6. Strategic road junctions: Concentrate development around strategic road junctions.

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7. Proportionate dispersed growth between existing settlements (needs-led): Oxford, towns and villages.

8. New settlements with new strategic transport connections.

9. Protect environmental assets (environment-led)**:** Identify environmental constraints first (eg. strategic green and blue infrastructure, historic environment, flooding, AONB and other sensitive landscapes, best and most versatile agricultural land etc, possibly through natural capital mapping), then place housing and employment where they avoid significant impacts and enable enhancements.

Source: Oxfordshire Plan 2050, Sustainability Appraisal – Alternatives, LUC in association with Levett-Therivel Sustainability Consultants, July 2020

489.   Alternatives 5 & 6 which would focus development on roads (the Oxford-Cambridge expressway for Alternative 5 and existing road junctions for Alternative 6) were the least sustainable alternatives of the nine considered through the Sustainability Appraisal. The expressway was formally cancelled by Government on 18 March 2021 after analysis showed that the proposed project would not be cost-effective, with any benefits outweighed by the costs.

490.   Alternative 5 is no longer considered 'reasonable' and it has been discounted from further consideration.

491.   Alternative 6 was assessed as having significant negative effects across a range of SA objectives, including health, reliance on the car, climate change, pollution, soils and efficient use of land, biodiversity and geodiversity and landscape. This alternative is also not considered 'reasonable' and none of the spatial options put forward at this stage focuses development on roads.

492.   Alternative 8 (new settlements with new strategic transport connections) was assessed as having a mix of positive and negative effects, depending on the scale of new settlements, their location and the type of strategic transport connections created. New settlements have not been taken forward as a separate strategic spatial option in the Plan; rather a new settlement (or settlements) is considered as a spatial typology that could potentially help deliver several of the strategic options set out in this document.

The level of 'committed growth'

493.   As noted in the section on housing, the OGNA was commissioned because we recognised at the outset that in order for the Oxfordshire Plan to be robust, we would require a different approach to assessing Oxfordshire's long-term growth needs. The commissioning brief for the OGNA recorded:

494.   'National planning policy requires an assessment of Local Housing Need based on a standard methodology as set out in the PPG. However, there are limitations and uncertainties in applying a methodology over such a long timescale when it has been designed on the basis of 10 to 15-year local plans. For example, forecasting affordable housing need is particularly sensitive to

market and pricing fluctuations so it is challenging to forecast over a long timescale to 2050.

495.   *As such the city/district councils are commissioning this assessment to provide bespoke analysis of the growth needs for Oxfordshire to supplement the Standard Methodology, to inform the preparation of the Oxfordshire Plan and which is capable of satisfying the soundness requirements for Examination.*

496.   *The aim of this study is to identify numerical scenarios for sustainable housing and economic growth needs in Oxfordshire over the period 2020-2050 based on consideration of key drivers including the housing market, demography and the economy. Taken together, the scenarios will provide a tool that policy-makers can use when developing policies for the Oxfordshire Plan.*'

497.   The OGNA ranges appear in the emerging Oxfordshire Plan at the Regulation 18 stage as the scale of future growth that the Plan has to consider up to 2050 is a fundamental part of the what the Plan is being created to do. At the Regulation 19 stage (the next stage), the Plan will set the broad areas of growth, with policies that will apply to 2050 and the monitoring and infrastructure elements. But the plan also draws on the Growth Board Strategic Vision that has been adopted by each Council and a series of Objectives that have led to a series of Themes for grouping proposed policies.

498.   The Oxfordshire Plan and the Growth Board's Strategic Vision include an agreed broadly-based definition of 'good growth'. This is important as rather than seeing economic, social and environmental objectives as competing demands that need to be balanced or prioritised, our approach is to align and integrate all our priorities.

499.   But in testing the OGNA ranges, we need to consider what the Plan is trying to achieve as whole (including for example, on Climate Change and Environmental quality). We also need to consider the level of growth set out in the adopted local plans for Oxfordshire which runs into the time period of the Oxfordshire Plan.

500.   As noted in the earlier plan section (Homes: How many? Commitments and locations) Oxfordshire has five adopted local plans with committed growth running from 2020 (the starting date for the Oxfordshire Plan) onwards and in 3 of the Districts there are strategic sites that will continue to be built out beyond the end of the local plan period which the Oxfordshire Plan needs to take into account too.

501.   This committed growth (taken from local plan trajectories, based on allocated sites) has to be taken into account. The OGNA figure minus committed growth leaves a 'residual' figure.

502.   The decision on where on the range the figure for Oxfordshire should sit cannot be taken at this stage (Regulation 18 Part 2). This decision is to be informed by the outcome of the evaluation and evidence in the next phase of plan-making.

503.   For the local planning authorities to take that decision in due course, it is recognised that there must be an appropriate set of spatial options that have

been consulted upon (the Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation undertakes this) and then have undertaken further technical testing and an assessment of different site proposals that have been sent to us for consideration, a process that includes a consideration of the Plan's Vision, its objectives and the five policy themes of the Plan (Climate Change, Environmental quality etc).

504.   This process of evaluation will be undertaken early in the period between Regulation 18 Part 2 and Regulation 19, the next consultation stage (due to be undertaken in May 2022). This Regulation 18 Part 2 Plan contains a section setting out how the Plan is to proceed from Regulation 18 to Regulation 19 through this process of evaluation.

505.   The spatial strategy options also take account of the locations of growth from the adopted local plans.

Local Plan Allocated Sites 2011-2031/5/6
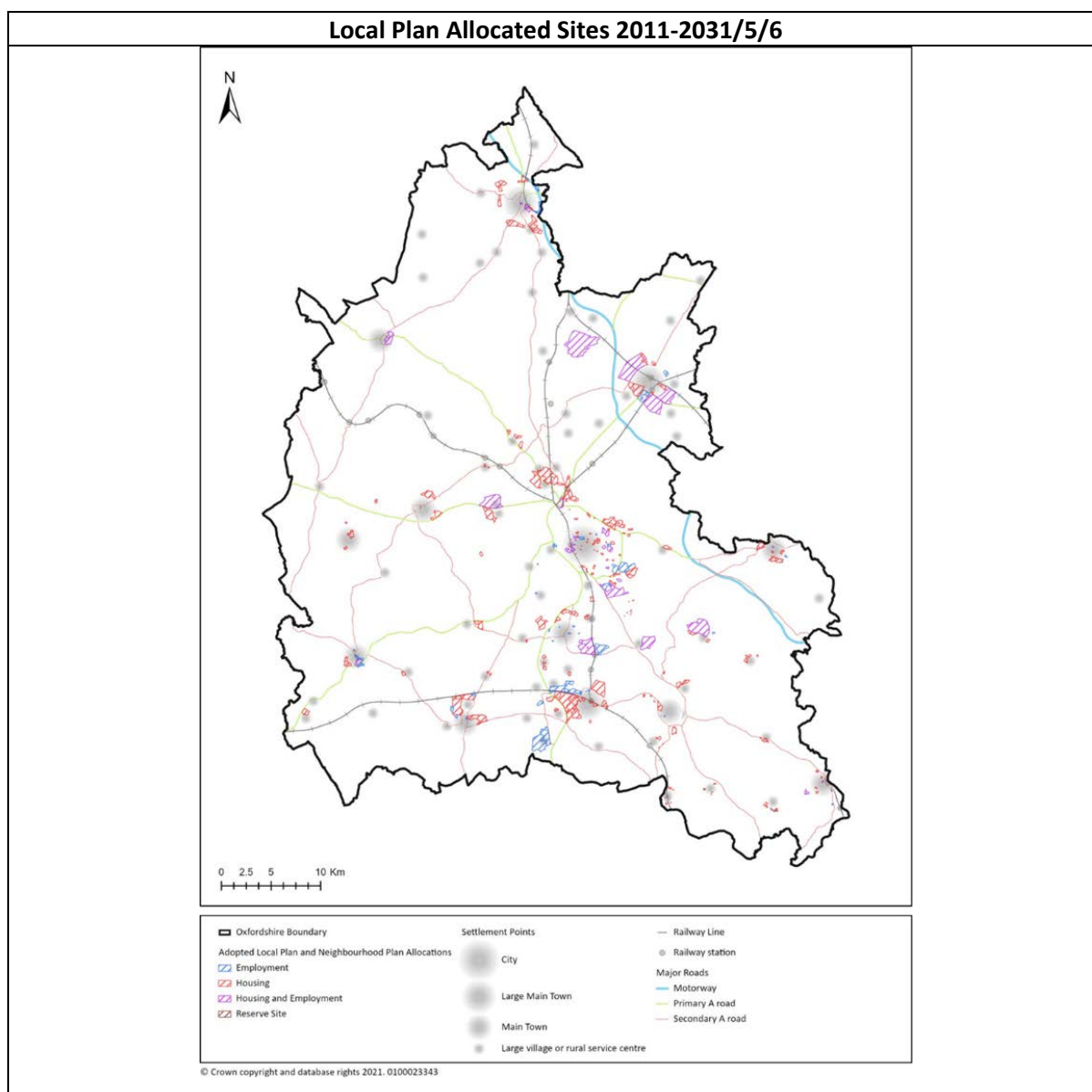
The Spatial Strategy Options

506.   We are consulting on five spatial strategy options:

Option 1   Focus on opportunities at larger settlements and planned growth locations.
Option 2   Focus on Oxford-led growth.
Option 3   Focus on opportunities in sustainable transport corridors & at strategic transport hubs.
Option 4   Focus on strengthening business locations.
Option 5   Focus on supporting rural communities.

507.   These five options are seen as being clear and distinctive high-level 'reasonable alternatives' to consult on at Regulation 18.

- Option 1 aims to add more growth onto the growth level and locations set out in the adopted local plans.
- Options 2 to 5 are more transformational.

508.   Each option is high level and helps identify how new housing, employment and other development could be distributed, and where there are opportunities for environmental enhancement and infrastructure improvements.

509.   Each spatial strategy option shows the current local plan allocations for reference purposes.

510.   Each option includes detail of scope and justification and most importantly the delivery challenges, as there are no easy options. No one option appears able to accommodate all of the proposed additional Plan growth on top of the growth associated with the existing adopted local plans. It is anticipated that a mix of options will be needed to deliver our spatial strategy.

Option 1: Focus on opportunities at larger settlements & planned growth locations

Scope & scale

This option would distribute the bulk of growth to 2050 to those locations that have accommodated the majority of five local plan allocations in the first phase of the Plan up to the mid-2030s, on the edges of the towns, the City and former MoD sites (such as Heyford Park, Chalgrove Airfield, Carterton/Brize Norton & Dalton Barracks) ie the growth would be focused in line with current adopted Local Plan strategies.

It would also include opportunities for urban renewal, intensification and brownfield redevelopment.

The focus of this option would be strategic scale housing growth at existing market towns, Oxford, former MOD sites and planned garden communities. As a result, if this were pursued as an option, it would include consideration of growth proposals that would bring more development to locations already receiving a high level of growth and constitute an extension of the existing local plan strategies, adding to the pattern of existing and planned infrastructure investment.

The limits of the option are that it is not the easy option it first appears due to transport issues at a number of locations, such as Banbury that may limit the ability to absorb more growth and limited land availability at Didcot.

This option does *not* include consideration of new settlements beyond those identified in existing local plans.

The scope of this option includes all of the top-tier settlements within each local plan settlement hierarchy as well as rural service centres that have plans to accommodate significant growth and new planned garden communities.

Oxford	Cherwell	South	Vale	West
Oxford	Banbury Bicester Begbroke/Kidlington/Yarnton Heyford Park	Didcot Henley Thame Wallingford Berinsfield Chalgrove Airfield Culham	Abingdon Faringdon Grove Wantage	Carterton/Brize Norton Chipping Norton Witney Eynsham Woodstock

Justification

Many stakeholders and communities have already expressed views about the merits of this proposed development distribution during the development of the five District local plans. The strategies underpinning these plans were shaped to a significant degree by the previous Structure Plan for Oxfordshire which concentrated growth at County Towns, as well as the more recent challenge of accommodating Oxford's unmet housing needs outside of the city administrative area in the neighbouring Districts.

The existing distribution of allocated growth has been found sound and sustainable through five independent examinations of the current adopted local plans for each District, which also concluded that exceptional circumstances exist for the Green Belt boundary reviews that took place in the preparation of the Cherwell, Oxford City, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Plans.

There was significant opposition to the allocation of land in many Oxfordshire locations, particularly where it affected communities in the Green Belt in South Oxfordshire and Cherwell. Such locations are regarded as sustainable as they are situated in accessible locations for Oxford and many of the major economic growth and innovation areas for the county. Further development in these locations would require demonstration of 'exceptional circumstances', and subsequent Green Belt review.

This option would continue to focus growth to locations with the highest concentration of jobs, affordable housing need and sustainable transport connectivity, to ensure that development helped meet the needs of existing and future communities in a sustainable manner. The emphasis would be on growing existing communities and those locations previously determined to be the most

sustainable locations for strategic scale growth. Clearly, assessment would be required to identify the scale of what might be possible in specific locations.

The current local plans include allocations for a high level of development through new garden communities across Oxfordshire (e.g. at Bicester, Didcot, Salt Cross, Berinsfield and Dalton Barracks) which are being established during the first phase of the Oxfordshire Plan up to 2036. These new communities will be complemented by the delivery of new infrastructure which could accommodate further development beyond 2040.

This option includes areas of urban renewal, intensification within urban areas, opportunities for brownfield redevelopment (including at former MoD sites such as Heyford Park and Chalgrove Airfield and current areas of MoD housing such as Carterton and their adjoining areas) and would take account of the changing nature and role of town centres (in part arising from the COVID impacts on the retail sector).

This option would focus growth around existing sustainable transport nodes and proposed infrastructure investment to ensure communities have access to sustainable transport choices for movement within communities and for inter-urban connections. We wish to avoid the risk that growth at the edge of main settlements becomes increasingly distant from town centres and transport hubs. There is a need to ensure that connections are provided to maximise sustainability, with neighbourhood centres that do not detract from the viability/vitality of town centres.

This option could result in further expansion of settlements at the urban fringe, eroding rural character and the relationship with the surrounding countryside. Hence, the detailed assessment required prior to publication of the Regulation 19 Plan. As we know, planned growth already takes us to the limits of what is acceptable at some settlements in terms of constraints. A number of towns face significant challenges in entertaining additional growth such as Banbury, where the current pattern of connectivity is severely stretched with considerable infrastructure challenges to resolve to deliver the level of planned growth associated with the adopted local plans. The same is also the case at Didcot and the edge of Oxford.

This option excludes new significant level growth at the villages of Oxfordshire.

New settlements do not form part of this strategy option.

Opportunities

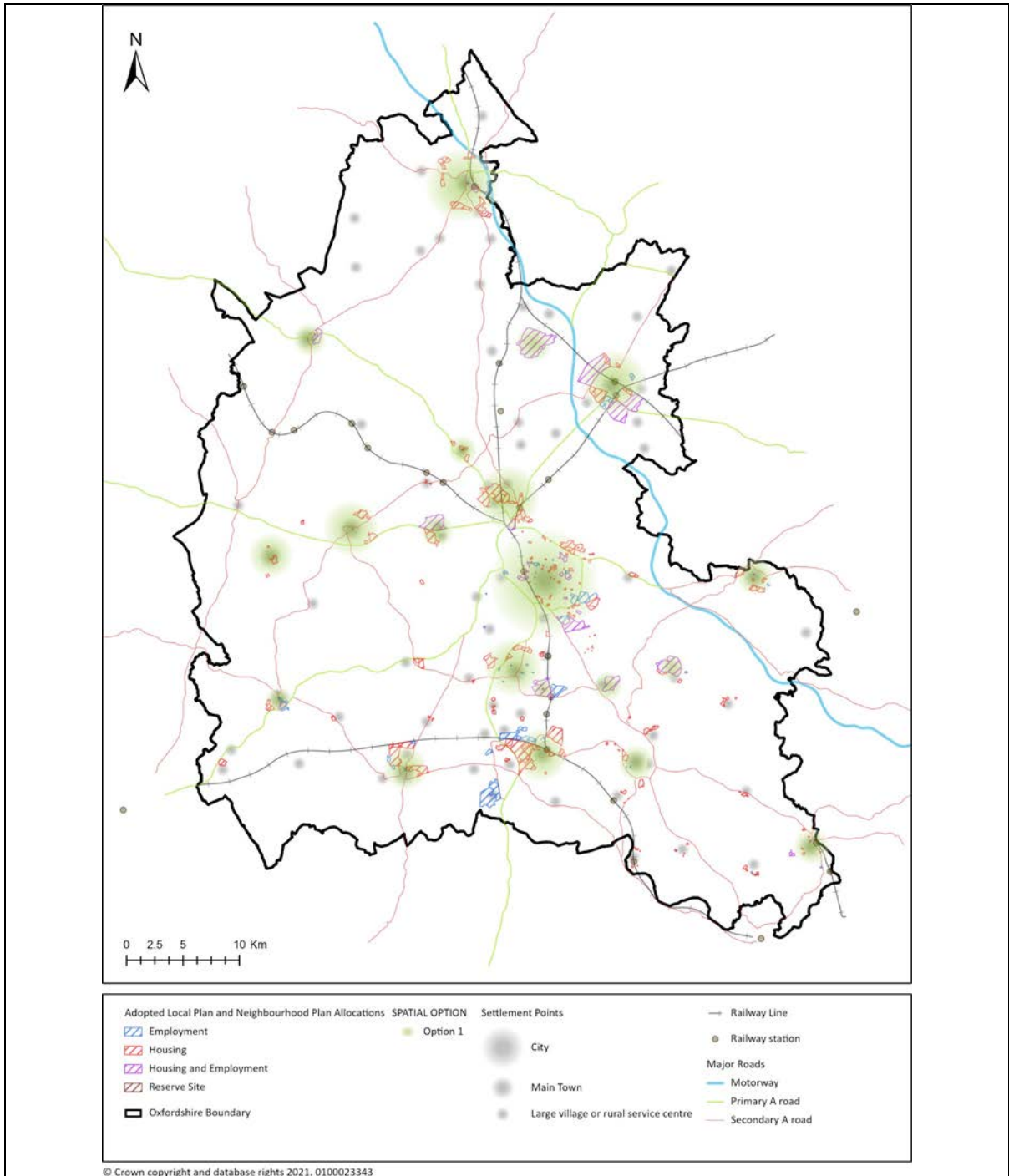Opportunities and sustainability gains to be secured where growth is considered include:
- Securing brownfield redevelopment
- Addressing the changing role of town centres
- Meeting affordable housing needs
- Concentration around sustainable transport nodes and supporting sustainable travel movements
- Opportunities for multi modal travel
- Strengthened community services and facilities in most accessible locations / Strengthening existing role of settlements.
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Addressing existing deprivation

- Links to OxIS and existing planned infrastructure where capacity allows
- Securing '20 minutes neighbourhoods'
- Extended walking and cycling provision including connections to regional routes.
- Supporting a mixed economy – balancing jobs and housing growth.

Note: There may be an opportunity to create a new tier within the settlement hierarchy, associated with the settlement potential work, that draws out a vision for the settlements to 2050 which takes account of opportunities and constraints and would include:
- City – main hub/centre
- Bigger Towns – between the city & market towns. Could be grown to have an extended role/function and significant new services/facilities (could include Bicester, Didcot).
- Market Towns – more traditional scale/character/role/function

Option 1 – Focus on opportunities at larger settlements and planned growth locations.

Adopted Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Allocations
- Employment
- Housing
- Housing and Employment
- Reserve Site
- Oxfordshire Boundary

SPATIAL OPTION
- Option 1

Settlement Points
- City
- Main Town
- Large village or rural service centre

Railway Line
Railway station

Major Roads
- Motorway
- Primary A road
- Secondary A road

0   2.5   5   10 Km

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Option 2: Focus on Oxford-led growth

Scope & scale

This option covers urban intensification within the City of Oxford, new or extended urban extensions on the edge of the City.

It includes consideration of growth proposals that are well-connected to the city or are potential extensions to planned growth sites on city edge related to growth in the current adopted local plans and employment sites on the edge of the city that form an Oxford-focused cluster. This may require consideration of a need for a further Green Belt release if the 'exceptional circumstances' test can be met.

The limits of the option are that we know there are significant constraints on what can be achieved within the current administrative area of Oxford, as while there is some potential for more urban renewal and transformation within the city over a 30 year period, it is likely to be modest in scale. Following the release of land on the edge of the city in the Cherwell, South and Vale local plans there are only limited options for additional growth, but some options being promoted which should be tested. The big challenge is to secure the integration of major sites, transport connectivity and green infrastructure connections.

Our aim is to seek to retain the current economic-housing balance, so do not anticipate changes of use to established economic sites.

This option does ***not*** include consideration of new settlements.

The focus of this option will be on the City and its immediate locale, recognising the role that Oxford plays as a vital economic node, its function as the main service centre and key focal point for the county as a whole. New city-focused growth would aim to support and strengthen Oxford's role as a global centre for knowledge and innovation and its role as a modest sized compact city, as well as one of the anchors of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

If new or extended urban extensions were to be considered it is anticipated that Green Belt land would be required. This option could include consideration of enhancement to the Green Belt adjoining the city for beneficial public uses, such as new parkland.

Justification

This option would focus growth within the city and its immediate hinterland to capitalise on economic growth in the city utilising sustainable transport connections, rail, bus and cycling, such as the west end regeneration centred on the Oxford rail station improvement or at the Parkway station, Cowley Branch Line and Park and Rides to support prosperity in the rest of the county.

Recognising the significant role of the city as a global centre/leader in knowledge and innovation, as driver of the county economy and the importance of Oxford as an anchor in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and how building on the strengths of the city and meeting the needs of its communities will underpin regional prosperity.

The challenge faced by Oxford in meeting its full housing need, as well as an urgent need to provide more affordable housing led to four local plans neighbouring Oxford meeting its unmet housing need up to 2031/36. Improved cycling links and public transport connections are being put in place to ensure that the new development areas fully integrate with the city.

The focus on 'levelling up within the city in order to support a more productive economy and to deliver inclusive growth will lead to new approaches to regeneration and housing delivery.

Further development on the edge in the Green Belt (that meets the 'exceptional circumstances' test) should be to a high design quality, together with improved connectivity to the city, reinforce the links to the business parks surrounding the city and invest in environment enhancements to the Green Belt around the edge of the city.

Opportunities

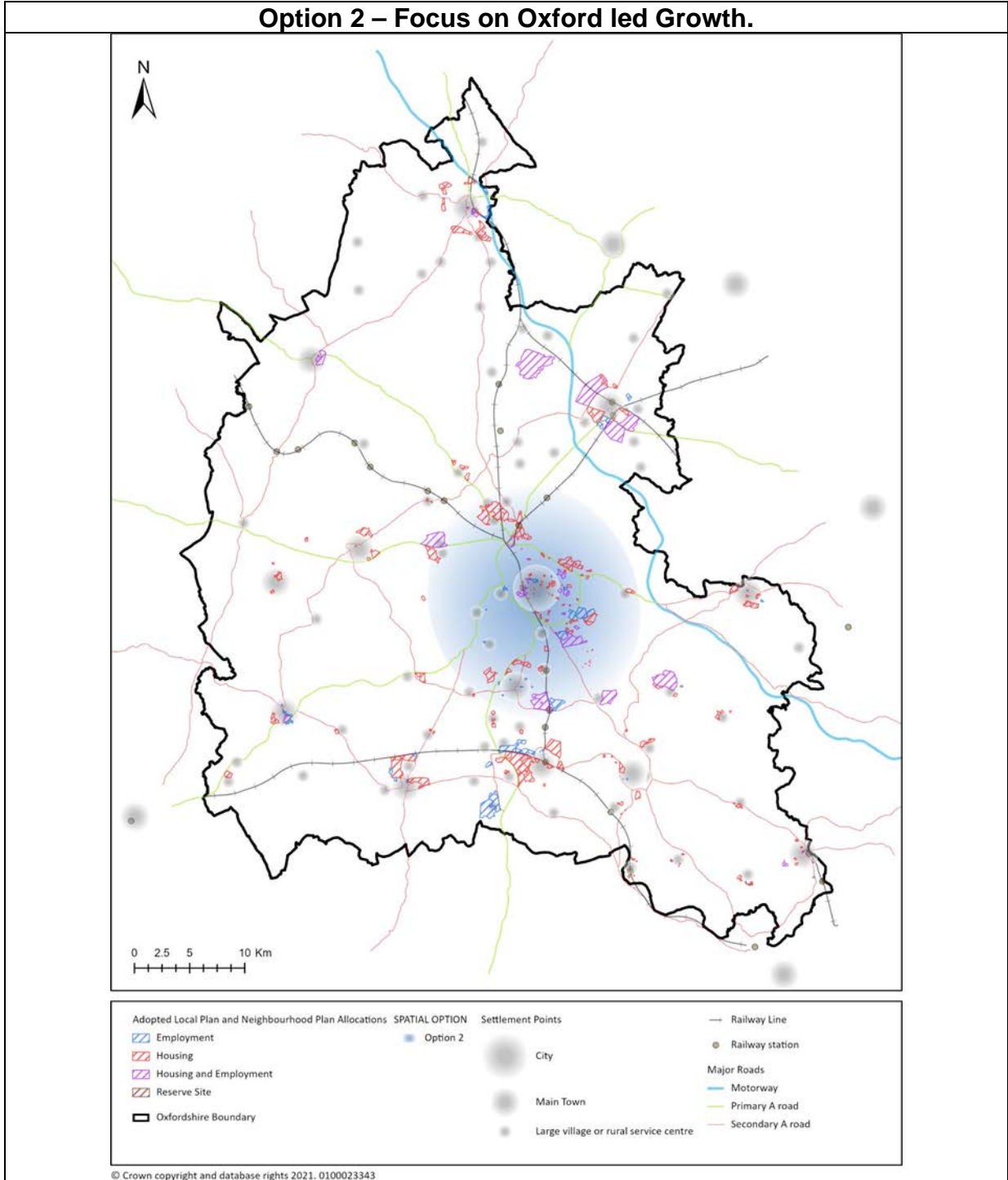Opportunities and sustainability gains to be secured where growth is considered include:

1) Securing wider economic opportunities:
   - Growing Oxford's (and subsequently Oxfordshire's) global role as a centre for knowledge and innovation
   - Re-purposing of business and science parks with new economic uses as they age and new business activities need to be supported.

2) Securing local opportunities:
   - Growth related to Oxford's main service centre as a highly sustainable location
   - A well-established network of sustainable and active travel to connect to
   - Securing regeneration opportunities and some brownfield redevelopment
   - Addressing engrained deprivation and reducing inequalities
   - Responding to the changing role of town centres
   - Co-location of jobs and housing
   - Securing '20 minutes neighbourhoods'
   - Extended walking and cycling provision including connections to regional routes
   - Capitalising on skills
   - Enhancing Green Belt for its beneficial uses - for people as well as nature.

Option 2 – Focus on Oxford led Growth.

N

0   2.5   5   10 Km

Adopted Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Allocations   SPATIAL OPTION   Settlement Points

Employment

Housing

Housing and Employment

Reserve Site

Oxfordshire Boundary

Option 2

City

Main Town

Large village or rural service centre

Railway Line

Railway station

Major Roads

Motorway

Primary A road

Secondary A road

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Option 3: Focus on opportunities in sustainable transport corridors & at strategic transport hubs

Scope & scale

This option covers new growth based in the most sustainable transport corridors, where frequent bus services operate and rail stations act as transport hubs. This includes new rail stations being planned through strategies such as the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study. This option aligns with the emerging Local Transport Connectivity Plan, being prepared by Oxfordshire County Council.

It includes consideration of growth proposals that sit within the main public transport corridors, both rail and bus, linking the rural parts of Oxfordshire with towns and key employment locations and the city itself where the highest density of public transport corridors is focused (and thus not all of the M40 is included). It also takes account of existing and planned key transport hubs. The aim is to align future growth with transport infrastructure investment. The strategy would continue to concentrate Oxfordshire's population through the identified corridors, including the main settlements and potentially at lower order settlements and new settlements within these corridors.

This option *does* include consideration of new settlements. Development may be generated from transport investment that improves the sustainability of particular locations.

This option focuses on bus and rail corridors for the purpose of considering an option. Vehicles will become much more sustainable over the plan period as the switch to electric accelerates.

Bus Routes
- Existing: High frequency bus routes and rapid transport routes.
- New: Need to consider the quantum of growth required to deliver bus routes? A new national bus strategy and bus services implementation plan is due from Government shortly; this is too soon to account for at the Regulation 18 stage and will input at the Regulation 19 stage.

Trains
- Existing: Based on the location of stations (nodes) with a walking/cycling distance buffer around existing stations. Not all stations play an equal role as some are major hubs, others smaller.
- New: Opportunities related to new stations or improved services at existing stations. A new national rail strategy is due from Government shortly; this is too soon to account for at the Regulation 18 stage and will input at the Regulation 19 stage.

Justification

The option fits with the net zero carbon ambitions of the Oxfordshire Plan. Central to the Oxfordshire Plan vision and objectives is the need to address the causes of climate change and to improve the health and wellbeing of communities. Securing growth based on a sustainable transport network will be central to achieving those

objectives and this option places the focus and emphasis on growth in areas with good public transport links. Our spatial strategy has moved away from putting the car first.

The focus and emphasis of this option is on the existing public transport network and primarily locations that are connected with Oxford and thus form part of the first/last mile considerations. This option may result in a hub and spoke pattern of development with future growth focussed in areas with good public transport connectivity to Oxford, with new development focused on transport nodes such as Oxford Parkway and the regeneration of Oxford station and growth associated with Culham station and other new stations.

This option also considers wider area connections, such as between Oxfordshire and the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the Thames corridor and M40 corridor, together with the relationship to major settlements close to the plan area, including Swindon and Reading.

This option would focus growth at locations within or connected to the highest concentrations of jobs, affordable housing need and sustainable transport connectivity, to ensure that development was well placed to meet the needs of existing and future communities in a sustainable manner. The emphasis would be on ensuring that future communities, whether part of an expanding settlement or new garden community would be well connected to the sustainable transport network.

This option could support areas where urban renewal, intensification within urban areas, or opportunities for brownfield redevelopment can be triggered by transport improvements (such as new railway stations and extending rail services on the Great Western Line, or following the upgrade to Oxford Station, including the North Cotswold Line, East-West Rail and the line to Didcot) as well as new rapid bus connections and would also take account of the changing nature and role of town centres.

It may result in the establishment of new garden communities where they are well related to existing or planned sustainable transport infrastructure investment such as on the Oxfordshire rail network, not in isolated locations.

This option would closely align with the LTCP vision including active and healthy travel, encouraging healthy choices, promoting the use of public transport and improved regional and local connectivity.

The option considers 'Connectivity for all', not just those who are able to drive. Public transport provisions meet the needs of younger and older people, those with disabilities & those on lower incomes.

Opportunities

Opportunities and sustainability gains to be secured where growth is considered include:
- Concentration around sustainable transport nodes and supporting sustainable travel movements
- Opportunities for multi modal travel and integrated transport networks
- Enhancing sustainable transport and building on existing infrastructure

- Links to OxIS and existing planned infrastructure where capacity allows
- Decarbonising the transport network
- Establishment of new settlements in sustainable locations
- The potential to create new and/or improved sustainable transport hubs/corridors.
- Strengthened community services and facilities in most accessible locations
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Addressing existing deprivation
- Securing brownfield redevelopment
- Addressing the changing role of town centres
- Meeting affordable housing needs where they arise
- Supporting a mixed economy – balancing jobs and housing growth.
- Distributing growth away from locations that have experienced significant growth in first phase of plan and are allocated through adopted local plans.
- Securing '20 minutes neighbourhoods'
- Extended walking and cycling provision including connections to regional routes.
- Moving away from car dependent developments.

Option 3 - Focus on opportunities in sustainable transport corridors & at strategic transport hubs.

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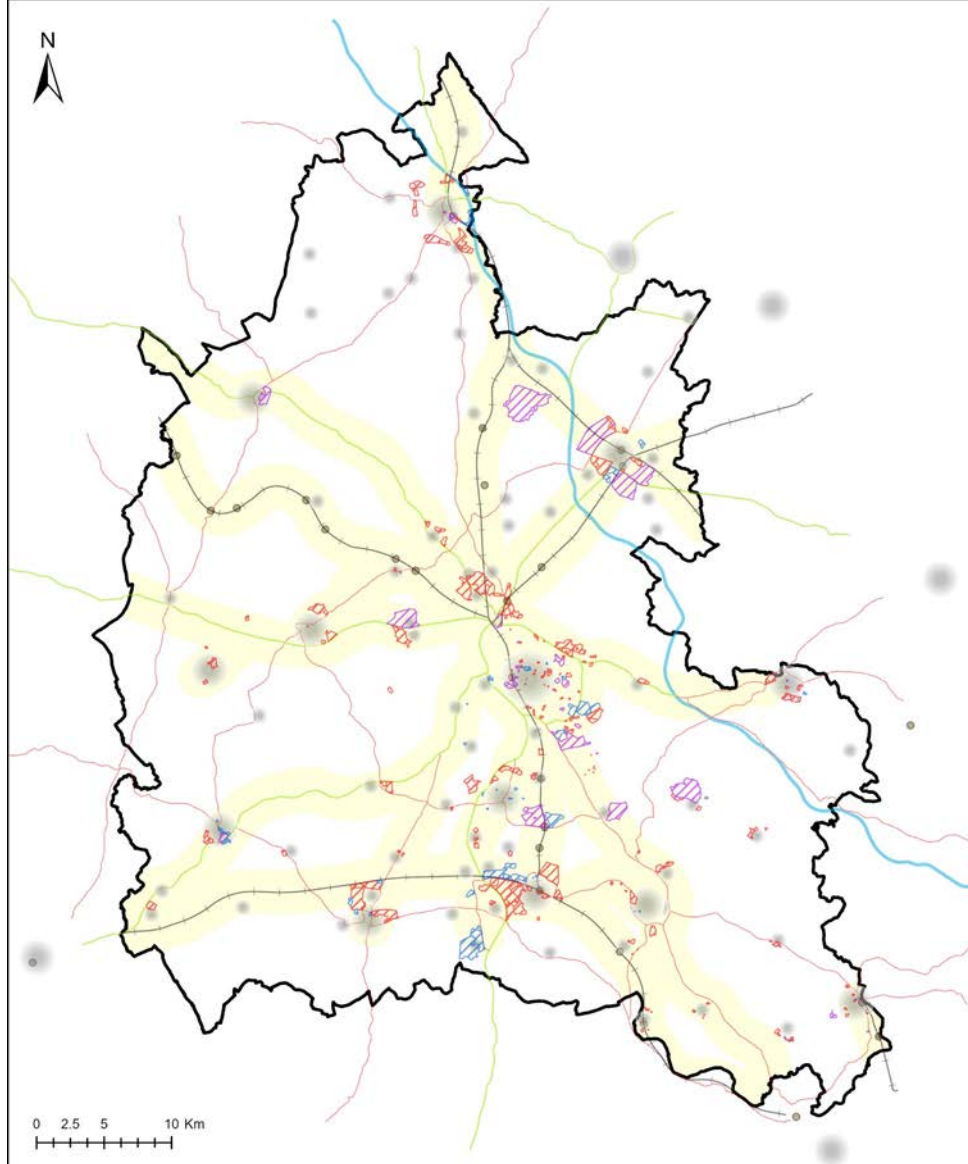
Adopted Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Allocations	SPATIAL OPTION	Settlement Points		Railway Line
Employment	Option 3	City		Railway station
Housing				Major Roads
Housing and Employment		Main Town		Motorway
Reserve Site				Primary A road
Oxfordshire Boundary		Large village or rural service centre		Secondary A road

0   2.5   5   10 Km

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Option 4: Focus on strengthening business locations

Scope & scale

This option centres on the network of business and science parks that covers Oxfordshire and particularly those identified as priority economic assets in the OXLEP LIS key locations within Oxfordshire's 'innovation ecosystem'.

This option includes consideration of growth proposals that would extend business and science parks or create new ones, with housing and residential areas alongside, co-located with these economic hubs, to reduce the need to travel and to create more sustainable locations. This option does not support the conversion of business parks themselves for housing.

This option would also include the intensification of economic activities at the business and science parks, building on current economic strengths in key sectors such as life sciences and advanced engineering, as new economic innovations are applied, and buildings need to be repurposed to support new economic activities and create more jobs. As the OXLEP LIS highlights, as current and new economic sectors grow, the demand for employment space will grow further. It is also anticipated that as the Oxford to Cambridge Arc takes shape over the next 20 to 30 years, more land for economic purposes will be required, especially as the economy gradually converts to net zero carbon and new economic opportunities arise for the wider economy and SMEs as a result.

The option would focus new growth where it would help to support/strengthen Oxfordshire's key economic assets and take account of key economic assets identified in the LIS that are not yet built out. The limits of the option are that it is anticipated that the opportunity to undertake the sort of residential growth alongside the network of business parks that is proposed in this option is modest.

This option *could* include the creation of new settlements, where new business and science parks are proposed as part of a comprehensive, mixed use development proposal.

Location identified in LIS (Figure 10)	
Banbury	Oxford Brookes University
Begbroke Science Park	Oxford Business Park
Bicester Garden Town	Oxford Centre for Innovation
Carterton/Brize Norton	Oxford North
Culham Science Centre	Oxford Science Park
Didcot Garden Town	Oxford Station and West End
Grove Technology Park	Oxford Technology Park
Harwell Campus	Oxford University
Headington Hospital Quarter	Salt Cross garden Village
Heyford Park	Shrivenham Defence Academy
Howbery Park	The Quadrant, Abingdon
Milton Park	Witney Business and Innovation Centre
Osney Meads Innovation Quarter	

Justification

Oxfordshire is at the centre of innovation for the UK. It has a strong network of science parks and innovation firms across the county, with towns such as Bicester and Banbury, Carterton and locations such as Heyford Park all playing an important role, alongside the globally significant Science Vale with it critical economic assets at Culham and Harwell and the City of Oxford, with its universities, at the heart of the county-wide network.

The strength of Oxfordshire's economy has been and will be driven to a large extent by innovation sectors and business clusters within towns such as Bicester and Didcot as well as transformative technologies developed through the universities and the network of business and science parks in Oxfordshire.

The challenges in retaining growth in these key sectors and enabling business to establish themselves and grow in Oxfordshire are well recognised and include the availability of space for business to grow, the availability of affordable housing and capacity in the transport and infrastructure network.

This option supports clean economic growth to support innovation and economic prosperity across the county. The option would support the intensification and extension of existing business and science sites and emphasises supporting innovation and securing innovation centres, live-work units and building on the recent Treasury Plan for Growth.

Supporting the growth and sustainability of Oxfordshire's innovation ecosystem will help support a balanced economy across Oxfordshire so that prosperity is shared. This option includes the potential to renew and strengthen the economic role of our city and town centres.

The focus of this option is on the spatial relationship between these key innovation and economic growth clusters, with the emphasis on enhanced transport and digital connectivity and the co-location of housing and jobs to reduce the need for travel and create a more sustainable approach to growth.

This option takes account of a recent survey of key employment sites and their potential for growth.

The option also addresses the impact of COVID-19 and the long-term need for people to be located close to their workplaces - recognising lots of the work in the knowledge economy needs specialist equipment, laboratories, etc. Also, the business opportunities arising from MoD activities and technology support undertaken at military bases such as Brize Norton.
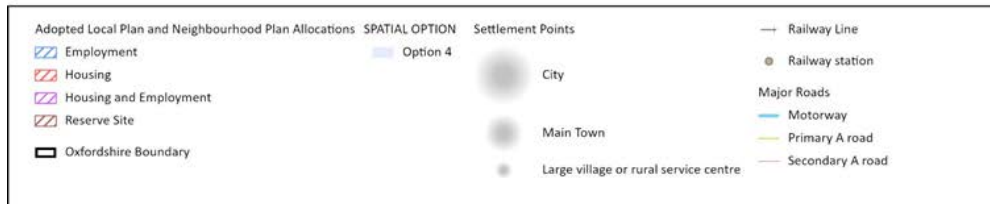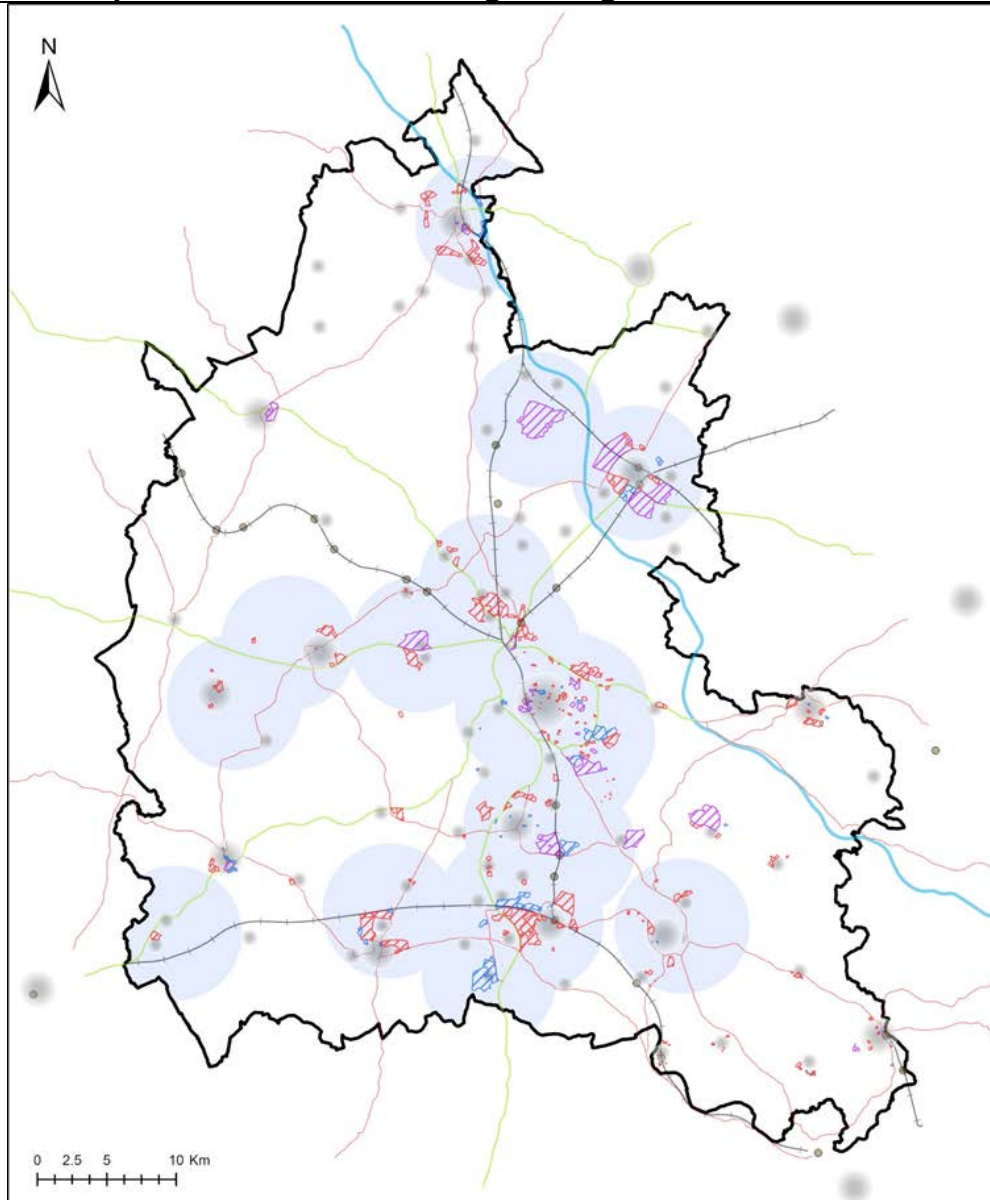
Opportunities

Opportunities and sustainability gains to be secured where growth is considered include:

A) Securing global economic opportunities:
- Supporting the innovation ecosystem and the wider economy too
- Securing affordable housing is a key issue to address to remove a key constraint on economic growth

- Spreading growth and investment (and the opportunities associated with this) across a wide geographical area and a wide range of key economic assets.

B) Securing local (Oxfordshire) economic opportunities:
- Reducing the need to travel
- Concentration of growth around sustainable transport nodes
- Securing '20 minute neighbourhoods'
- Extended walking and cycling provision including connections to regional routes.

Option 4 – Focus on strengthening business locations.

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Option 5: Focus on supporting rural communities

Scope & scale

This option covers rural Oxfordshire and focuses on the villages and areas between the villages.

It includes consideration of growth proposals beyond the areas supported through the current adopted local plans that might bring new investment and strengthen patronage in rural areas that is essential to support rural services (and improve access), improve access to education and shops etc. It could include new investment in the rural economy, new village clusters, as well as taking account of strong cross-boundary relationship with major settlements outside Oxfordshire, such as Swindon.

The scope for this option is to consider growth in rural settings away from the main service centres and top-tier settlements that will accommodate the current local plan-led growth up to the mid-2030s and a redirection of development to more rural parts of the county provided that suitable access to the public transport network and key services and facilities is possible.

The limits of the option are that we anticipate the SA and the other evidence that supports the Plan will show that there is a limit to the level of new growth that can be absorbed in each of the four rural Districts. We anticipate that limited rural growth will feature in the Regulation 19 Plan.

This option **does** include consideration of extending existing and allocated Garden Villages and establishing new settlements.

Justification

Many villages have an aging population and have lost their services. Limited growth could arrest that decline and strengthen their sustainability. The most widespread deprivation factor in Oxfordshire relates to barriers to housing and services.

Such inequalities are less prevalent within the main market towns and settlements that are planned to grow from the sites allocated in the adopted local plans. The main settlements have benefitted from investment in infrastructure and affordable housing over a number of years and although deprivation and inequalities exist within these communities, rural areas have in many cases become increasingly isolated, particularly with the removal of public transport services and restricted growth.

This option would seek to address existing issues of isolation and rural deprivation by redirecting growth away from main settlements to where it could best address such inequalities; this approach is being taken in the current South Oxfordshire Plan with the Berinsfield Garden Village.

Regard will be had to infrastructure delivery and how investment in infrastructure in the first phase of the Plan might facilitate further growth beyond and up to 2050.

While there are settlements that might be strengthened by limited growth to improve accessibility, housing choice and service, it is anticipated that only modest levels of

growth would arise from this option due to constraints such as poor access and the limited capacity of rural roads.

It is likely that as farming practices and land stewardship continues to evolve, in response to climate change and policy changes around environmental stewardship, the process of farm diversification will lead to new innovations in the rural economy that will themselves support limited residential growth in rural areas.

It could involve support for new villages and modest growth at villages not faced by connectivity challenges. But a major dispersal of new growth across a wide range of villages would not be consistent with the Plan strategy as it is much harder to deliver strategic scale infrastructure and it is harder to deliver major change to meet net zero carbon ambitions.
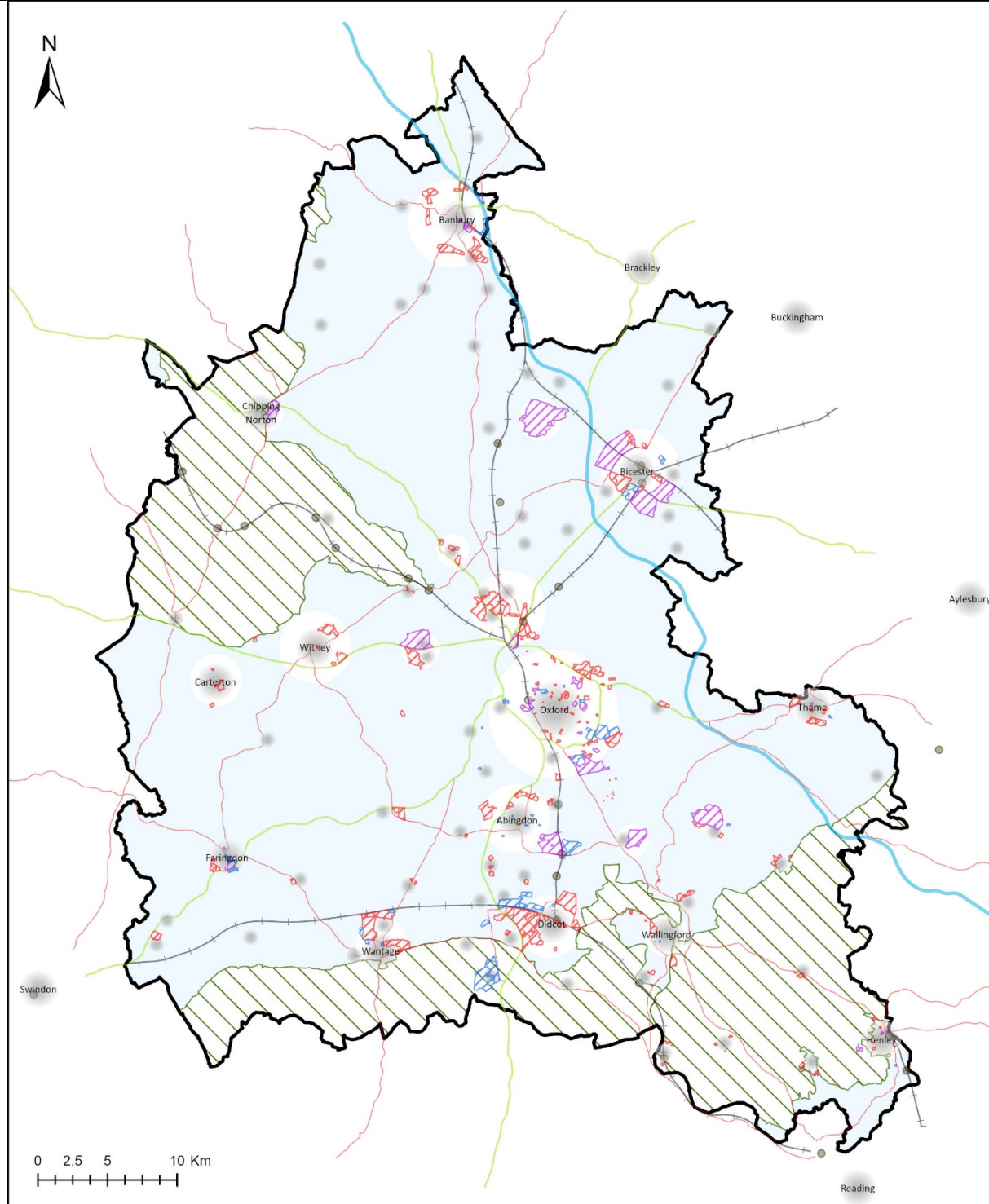
A number of locations would also currently be in the Green Belt and therefore any removal of land from the Green Belt would be subject to identifying the exceptional circumstances for doing so.

Opportunities

Opportunities and sustainability gains to be secured where growth is considered include:
- Addressing rural deprivation and inequalities by improving access to services, facilities, homes and jobs in rural areas
- Maximising cross-boundary relationships
- Reducing pressure on main settlements
- Supporting the diversification of the rural economy
- Securing '20 minutes neighbourhoods' and delivering net zero carbon growth
- Extended walking and cycling provision including connections to regional routes.

Option 5 – Focus on supporting rural communities.

N

Banbury
Brackley
Buckingham
Chipping Norton
Bicester
Aylesbury
Witney
Carterton
Oxford
Thame
Abingdon
Faringdon
Wantage
Didcot
Wallingford
Swindon
Henley
Reading

0   2.5   5   10 Km

Adopted Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Allocations

Employment

Housing

Housing and Employment

Reserve Site

Oxfordshire Boundary

SPATIAL OPTION

Option 5

Settlement Points

City

Main Town

Large village or rural service centre

Railway Line

Railway station

Major Roads

Motorway

Primary A road

Secondary A road

Next Steps: Proceeding from Regulation 18 to Regulation 19

511.　　Following the consultation on the Regulation 18 Plan, a site options assessment will be undertaken using a series of steps to enable the 'Broad Areas of Growth' to be identified, taking account of current local plan allocations, new development proposals and opportunities for enhancement. This evaluation will involve testing of site options against the Oxfordshire Plan evidence-base using consistent data and baseline information.

512.　　Consideration will also be given to the strategic interventions required to deliver each spatial strategy option and the testing of each option against different scales of growth.

513.　　As noted in the section on the level of 'committed growth', a decision will also be taken as to where on the OGNA range the level of growth to be accommodated should be set at the end of 2021. This will take account of the level of 'committed' growth already met in the five adopted local plans from 2020 to 2031/5/6 onwards and thus consider a 'residual growth' figure for the 2031/5/6 period to 2050.

514.　　We anticipate that the Regulation 19 Plan will contain a mix of the five spatial options.

515.　　The assessment of site proposals in the period between Regulation 18 and 19 will also need to take account of the MHCLG-led Arc Spatial Framework as it emerges. It is possible that there may be growth requirements to be considered from that source.

STEP 1:　(September 2021) Identify high-level spatial strategy options for distributing growth in Oxfordshire.

STEP 2:　Testing of each of the high-level spatial strategy options, including Oxfordshire's growth requirements, opportunities & constraints.

This step will include the assessment of sites and will combine consideration of urban renewal and brownfield potential, the use of the HEELA and settlement capacity analysis, climate change and environmental enhancement opportunities, transport factors and issues arising from the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), as well as reviewing the link to the Strategic Vision and Plan Objectives. The assessment will be published as part of the evidence base for the Regulation 19 Plan.

STEP 3:　Selection of Spatial Strategy.

STEP 4:　Identification of areas of focus.

STEP 5:　Further testing of suitability, achievability, and deliverability to establish development capacity and sustainability of approach for Oxfordshire.

STEP 6:   Confirm broad locations for growth (and any phasing) for the Oxfordshire Plan and each District.

STEP 7:   (December 2021) Confirm level of growth within the OGNA range.

516.   The conclusion of these steps will inform the 'broad locations of growth' that will be presented for consultation in the Regulation 19 Draft Oxfordshire Plan.

The Draft Monitoring Framework

517.　　Effective monitoring is important to ensure that Plan policies are being implemented and are achieving their aims.

518.　　Our monitoring report will measure and report on the effectiveness of policies within the Oxfordshire Plan. It will report on a range of data to assess whether: policy targets have been met, or progress is being made towards meeting them; policy targets are not being met, or are not on track to being achieved, and the reasons for this; whether policies are having an impact in respect of national and local policy targets; and whether any other targets need adjusting or replacing because they are not working as intended; whether policies need changing to reflect changes in national policy or strategic needs appropriate infrastructure is being delivered to support growth.

519.　　If policies need changing the monitoring report will list the actions needed to achieve this. Our monitoring report will be published every 12 months.

520.　　For each policy in the Plan, we will develop an indicator and a target, which will be used to measure the policy's effectiveness. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) also lists a number of 'significant effects indicators' which will be used to monitor the 'significant effects identified in the SA. Data collected on these indicators will be reported on in our monitoring report.

521.　　A set of trajectories for housing and employment to address delivery across the programme period as a whole will also be completed. These are of necessity indicative but provide a baseline against which overall implementation can be assessed. They include completions and strategic developments which have an existing planning permission.

Delivering the Plan

522.　　Data on these indicators will be gathered and reported on an annual basis. We will also report on whether the established targets have been met, and, if not, what actions are to be taken to ensure they are met in future.

523.　　We have worked with our delivery partners including Oxfordshire County Council during the preparation of this Plan and its Infrastructure Delivery Plan (OxIS) to ensure the partnership is focused on the monitoring and delivery of strategic policies with the right infrastructure at the right times.

524.　　We will continue to work as a partnership of planning authorities through the Oxfordshire Growth Board and with the County Council and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The Statement of Common Ground shows the joint working undertaken during the preparation of the Plan and details the various forums and organisations we work with on a regular basis to debate and coordinate strategic planning issues. Actions resulting from cooperation with other local planning authorities or organisations will be reported in the monitoring report.

525.	Our Monitoring Report will assess the effectiveness of the Oxfordshire Plan including the rate of delivery of allocated sites by measuring performance against the indicators identified in the Monitoring Framework.

526.	Annual monitoring will inform future local plan reviews. These reviews may be in response to shortfalls in the implementation of the Plan's policies and in the delivery of infrastructure, to changes in national policy or strategic needs or due to the need to roll forward the Plan period.

Joint Monitoring Framework

527.	The Monitoring Framework will be developed in conjunction with the completion of the OxIS between the Regulation 18 and 19 stages. Linked to the OXIS monitoring system, metrics are likely to include:

Climate Change and the Environment
- Carbon Emissions
- Climate Change Impact Resilience
- Natural Environment & Biodiversity
- Waste & Recycling
- Water & Noise Pollution

Health
- Health Inequality
- Access to Spaces for Physical Activity
- Health Service Access
- Air Quality
- Mental Health & Wellbeing

Communities and Place-Shaping
- Liveable Communities
- Community Safety & Security
- Heritage & Culture
- Socially Integrated Communities
- Inclusive & Integrated Active Travel

Transport and Connectivity
- Digital Connectivity
- Clean & Secure Energy Grid Capacity
- Secure Water Supply & Wastewater
- Transport Connectivity & Performance within Oxfordshire
- Strategic Transport Connectivity

The Economy and Productivity
- World Class Inclusive Education & Skills Development
- Reduce Oxfordshire's Socio-Economic Inequalities
- Attract & Retain Talent in Oxfordshire
- Global Business Innovation Ecosystem
- Drive Productive Economic Growth & Employment

Housing

- Affordable Housing
- New modes of construction