

Topic Paper 2

Spatial Strategy

February 2019

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Topic Paper is to provide background information on the subject of the spatial strategy of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Further versions of these Topic Papers may be produced at later stages in the Plan making process.

What is a Spatial Strategy?

2. A spatial strategy sets out broad development patterns for where new development should be located. It aims to focus development in the right places, to help balance the need for development with the need to protect and enhance the environment. It also provides an opportunity to think about the linkages between different places, infrastructure and activities and how these can be coordinated and improved to help achieve social, environmental and economic objectives. Having an appropriate spatial strategy is an important part of achieving sustainable development.

National Policy Context

3. The spatial strategy in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 will need to comply with national policy requirements. The main relevant requirements are summarised below:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4. The NPPF¹ states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development. Strategic policies could include locations for new development and the supporting facilities required, requirement for infrastructure and utilities provision, and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment. These matters, and more locally specific matters, may also be contained within Local Plans.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

5. The PPG² provides additional guidance on how to apply NPPF requirements. The PPG is clear that strategic policy-making authorities are required to cooperate with each other, and other bodies (such as the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England), when preparing spatial development strategies.

¹ [NPPF](#) (July 2018) MHCLG

² [Local Plans, Planning Practice Guidance](#) (Sept 2018) MHCLG

Local Policy Context

6. Currently in Oxfordshire, spatial strategies are set at the district or city level through Local Plans. The current adopted and emerging spatial strategies are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Adopted/Emerging Spatial Strategies in Oxfordshire

Local Plan	Summary of Spatial Strategy
Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (Adopted July 2015)	<p>The strategy is to target growth in the most sustainable locations; respect the character and beauty of rural areas by limiting growth in rural areas and direct it towards larger and more sustainable villages; and strictly control development in open countryside.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy focuses the bulk of proposed growth in and around Bicester and Banbury to maximise the investment opportunities in towns.
Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 Partial Review (at Examination stage)	<p>The strategy is to prioritise locations well connected to Oxford and related to the area of the district that has the strongest economic and social relationships with Oxford and locations which are fully integrated with the County Council's sustainable transport policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy focuses development on a geographic area extending north from Oxford to south Kidlington, along the A44 corridor to Yarnton and Begbroke, and up to Woodstock in West Oxfordshire.
Oxford Local Plan 2036 Proposed Submission Draft (Published November 2018)	<p>The strategy focuses on intensifying development on previously developed land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy supports the role and function of Oxford's city centre, district centres and transport nodes as the most sustainable locations for new development; and • Protects Oxford's green spaces.
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 Publication Version 2nd (Published January 2019)	<p>The strategy is "Strengthening the heart of South Oxfordshire" and meeting unmet housing needs of Oxford near to where that need arises; and a strong network of vibrant settlements building upon the existing settlement hierarchy and actively create a sustainable pattern of development.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy focuses development at Science Vale and sustainable settlements, including strategic allocations adjacent to the boundary with Oxford;
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (Adopted December 2016)	<p>The strategy is “Building on our strengths”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy focuses sustainable growth within Science Vale; • Reinforces the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district; and • Promotes thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character.
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (at Examination stage)	<p>The strategy is “Building on our Strengths”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This strategy focuses unmet need for Oxford in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area; and • Supports the allocation of Didcot Garden Town
West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 (Adopted September 2018)	<p>The strategy is to create strong market towns and villages, sustainable communities with access to services and facilities, and protecting and enhancing the environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategy steers a significant proportion of future development into the Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton Sub-Areas, with a particular focus on the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton • A Strategic urban extension at Eynsham • A reasonable scale of development at Woodstock • New garden village settlement north of Eynsham • Some development in villages beyond the rural service centres • Limited development in the small villages, hamlets and open countryside

7. The Oxfordshire Plan will build on the current suite of adopted and emerging Local Plans, and will provide an extended spatial strategy to guide development across the whole of Oxfordshire to 2050. This provides an opportunity to think more widely than the individual district level, and to coordinate the long-term delivery of development and infrastructure across the county to best respond to Oxfordshire’s needs, opportunities and challenges.

8. The Oxfordshire Plan will identify broad locations for housing and economic growth but will not allocate sites except at the request of the relevant Local Planning Authority. Specific sites will be allocated through Local Plans produced by the district councils in the future. Future Local Plans produced at the district level will need to be in broad conformity with the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and help deliver its spatial strategy.

Factors that will Shape the Spatial Strategy

National Policy and Guidance

9. The spatial strategy must be consistent with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and have regard to the Planning Practice Guidance.

Evidence

10. It is important that the spatial strategy is based on proportionate, up-to-date evidence. Evidence needed to inform the spatial strategy includes:

- i) Information about Oxfordshire and its strengths and weaknesses - This includes information relating to:
 - The size, composition and distribution of the population;
 - The current and planned spatial distribution of development across the county (including: the hierarchy of settlements; the location of existing employment uses and key community services and facilities; and the location and scale of development planned to be delivered through adopted and emerging Local Plans);
 - The existing provision and quality of infrastructure across the county (including transport, health, education, communications and green infrastructure);
 - Oxfordshire's economy (the type, distribution and characteristics of businesses operating in Oxfordshire and opportunities for growth);
 - Oxfordshire's natural capital (including the type, distribution and characteristics of areas of landscape importance, agriculture, biodiversity importance, water resources); and
 - Oxfordshire's historic environment (the type, distribution and characteristics of Oxfordshire's built and archaeological heritage assets of international, national and local importance).
- ii) Information about the need for development in Oxfordshire to 2050 – Building upon an understanding of current development needs in Oxfordshire, we also need to consider projections for the amount of new development needed in Oxfordshire to 2050. This includes homes (including affordable homes) and employment and the infrastructure required to support this.
- iii) Information about the land availability – The spatial strategy needs to be deliverable. It is therefore important that it is based upon an understanding of the

amount, distribution and characteristics of suitable, available and achievable land across the county.

- iv) Information about the potential impacts of development and how these might be managed and/or mitigated where needed – for example impacts on flood risk, biodiversity and air quality.

11. In some cases, there may be existing evidence that can be used to inform the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. In other cases, evidence might need to be specifically produced to support the production of the Oxfordshire Plan. Evidence base documents will be published alongside consultations on the Oxfordshire Plan as they produced.

Sustainability Appraisal

12. Sustainability Appraisal is a legal requirement in the production of a Plan and it is to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the Plan's policy options will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives. Through the Sustainability Appraisal process, reasonable options will be tested to understand their effect on social, environmental and economic objectives.

The Oxfordshire Plan's vision and objectives

13. The spatial strategy will need to help deliver the plan's vision and objectives. There will therefore need to be a strong link between these parts of the plan and they will need to be developed side by side.

Engagement and consultation

14. The Oxfordshire authorities (Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council) are working together to produce the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

15. The approach to engagement and consultation in producing the Oxfordshire Plan is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement³.

Other plans and strategies affecting Oxfordshire

16. The Oxfordshire Plan's spatial strategy will need to have regard to the vision and objectives of other overarching plans and strategies affecting the county, including:

- The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan
- The Local Industrial Strategy
- The Local Transport Plan
- The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy

³ Statement of Community Involvement, Oxfordshire Plan 2050 (Feb 2019)

17. There are also many other subject specific documents which are important to understand the issues within Oxfordshire. Where relevant these are referred to in other Topic Papers or evidence base such as the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report⁴.

18. Emerging proposals for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc, including East-West Rail and the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway⁵, and the South East Strategic Reservoir Option⁶ could also have implications for the amount, type and distribution of growth in Oxfordshire and will be a key consideration in creating the spatial strategy.

Next Steps

19. The Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 Part 1 Consultation Document (February 2019) sets out a number of potential spatial strategy scenarios, each of which has strengths and weaknesses. Through the consultation, we are asking for views on the potential scenarios. The comments received will be carefully considered and used help to refine the spatial strategy options for inclusion in the Oxfordshire Plan.

20. At the moment, the spatial strategy scenarios are very broad. It is expected that they will become clearer and more focused as work on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 progresses. However, at this early stage it is important that all the reasonable options are considered.

21. The spatial options may also evolve, taking into consideration the consultation responses received and emerging evidence. The final spatial strategy in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 could follow a combination of these scenarios.

22. In considering the plan's spatial strategy, it is important to note that the Oxfordshire Plan will identify broad locations for housing and economic growth but will not allocate sites except at the request of the relevant Local Planning Authority. Specific sites will be allocated through Local Plans produced by the district councils in the future.

23. Deciding on the future broad locations for growth in Oxfordshire will be challenging, as there are many different factors that need to be considered and balanced. Not everyone will agree on what the best approach is. However, it is important to get the spatial strategy right as it will have long-term impacts on people living in, working in and visiting Oxfordshire and on the economy and environment.

⁴ [Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) (Jan 2019)

⁵ [Oxford to Cambridge Expressway](#), Highways England

⁶ [Water Resources Management Plan 2019](#), Thames Water