



I. Introduction

1.1 This is the Local Plan for West Oxfordshire. It sets out a vision of the District in 2031 and provides an overarching framework to guide and deliver that vision. The plan has been shaped by extensive community engagement which has helped to ensure that it focuses on those issues of greatest significance to West Oxfordshire. Some of these issues are locally specific such as traffic congestion on the A40, whilst others are broader in nature including housing affordability, climate change and the need for economic growth.

1.2 A strong message received throughout the preparation of the Local Plan is that this part of the country is a special place which is highly valued by the people who live here and which must not be eroded by incremental decisions to accommodate inappropriate future development or other change. A key challenge for the Local Plan is to deliver the new development that is needed to support economic growth in a way that does not compromise the quality of life and the environment enjoyed by those who live and work in the District.

1.3 The Local Plan is therefore underpinned by a general presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' and seeks to articulate what this means in the context of West Oxfordshire and how it will be achieved.

The role and status of the Local Plan

1.4 Local Plans sit at the heart of the planning system, setting out a vision and framework for the future development of an area. They seek to identify how much development is needed, what type, where it will take place and when it will come forward as well as what infrastructure is needed to support it. Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic about what can be delivered.

1.5 All local authorities are required to prepare a Local Plan and once adopted, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.6 In this regard Local Plans help to provide certainty for local communities, service providers and those looking to invest or move into an area. Local Plans also provide an overarching framework for Neighbourhood Plans which can be prepared by local communities to guide development at the local level. Once made (adopted) neighbourhood plans form part of the statutory planning framework alongside Local Plans. This Local Plan also provides a context for the preparation of an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the planned 'Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village' north of Eynsham to address Oxford City's unmet housing needs.

The Plan Period

1.7 This Local Plan covers the 20-year period 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2031. It will however be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate typically every 5 years or so, unless circumstances dictate that this needs to happen sooner – see reviewing the Local Plan overleaf.

Key influences

1.8 In line with the duty to co-operate, the Local Plan has been shaped by ongoing engagement with local communities and organisations including other local authorities, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Thames Water, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

1.9 A further key influence has been the application of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which has helped to determine the choice of certain options over others. A separate SA report of this Local Plan has been prepared including a non-technical summary.

1.10 Other key influences include:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategies
- District Council Strategies such as Housing and Tourism
- Adopted and emerging Local Plans in neighbouring local authorities.
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and planning guidance
- Local Plan consultation responses
- Information, including site suggestions for development, provided by parish councils, landowners, developers and their agents
- Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)
- Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-31
- Oxfordshire Growth Board apportionment of Oxford City's unmet housing needs
- Other evidence base studies on issues such as housing and economic needs, development viability, transport and flood risk¹

Structure and content

1.11 The Local Plan is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** sets out a brief profile of the District, highlighting its key characteristics and drawing out the key issues and challenges to be addressed through the Local Plan.
- **Section 3** outlines our vision for West Oxfordshire in 2031 which is underpinned by a series of core objectives.
- **Section 4** sets out the overall strategy for the District, which is based on five key principles including a presumption in favour of sustainable development, locating development in the right places, ensuring the prudent use of natural resources, high quality design and provision of supporting infrastructure.
- **Sections 5 – 8** deal with a number of specific aspects of the overall strategy including the provision of new homes, sustainable economic growth, transport and environment and heritage.
- **Section 9** sets out the local strategy for each of the District's five sub-areas.
- **Section 10** explains how the various elements of the Local Plan will be implemented and monitored.

1.12 The plan contains a number of policies to manage change and to ensure that all new development is sustainable. These include 'cross-cutting' policies that apply to all forms of development regardless of location, 'topic-based' policies that apply to certain types of development and 'placed-based' policies that apply to certain locations within the District.

1.13 The policies replace many of those set out in the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan (2006). Further information is provided at Appendix I.

¹ See www.westoxon.gov.uk/ldfevidence

Measuring progress

- I.14 Section 10 sets out a delivery and monitoring framework explaining how each Local Plan policy will be delivered and monitored. Planning has a key role to play but is only part of the way forward. Successful delivery of many elements of the strategy will only be achieved through working in partnership with the many organisations that have a responsibility or interest in some aspect of West Oxfordshire, particularly local communities, landowners and developers.
- I.15 The degree to which the Local Plan policies are being successfully implemented (or otherwise) will be assessed through regular monitoring reports.

Reviewing the Local Plan

- I.16 As a general guide, Local Plans tend to be reviewed every 5-years or so. This helps to ensure that any new evidence (e.g. housing or economic needs) can be properly taken into account and addressed through a plan review where appropriate.
- I.17 This Local Plan includes a specific commitment to an early review of the plan in the event that, post-adoption of the plan, there is consistent under-delivery of new homes against the required supply (see Policy H2).
- I.18 In addition to this Local Plan the Council will prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the planned 'Oxfordshire Cotswolds Garden Village' north of Eynsham to address the issue of unmet housing need arising from Oxford City.
- I.19 The Council will also continue to work jointly with the other Oxfordshire local authorities on matters of cross-boundary importance such as an updated assessment of housing need and will take that work into account in any decision to review the Local Plan.