



2. A strategy for Oxfordshire

Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter sets out the proposed pattern of future development for Oxfordshire: it includes firm proposals for the distribution of housing and other development for the period to 2016. The strategy seeks to take forward the aims and objectives of the Plan by:
- providing for the development of new homes, jobs and services and facilities to meet the needs of Oxfordshire's people;
 - concentrating housing development in urban areas where it can be easily accessible to jobs, shops, services, community facilities and public transport;
 - providing for an increased number of affordable houses, including housing for key workers;
 - providing the framework to help sustain prosperity and develop Oxfordshire's economy;
 - protecting the countryside, towns and villages and the landscape setting and character of Oxford city;
 - providing in rural areas for development to support the economic and social well being of communities;
 - ensuring supporting infrastructure and services are provided to support development;
 - encouraging the location and design of development to promote high quality environments, make efficient use of energy and other resources and to help reduce the need to travel; and
 - providing the necessary raw materials, for example minerals to enable development to take place.



General

- 2.2 The focus for development in the county will be on the existing larger urban areas, where most homes, jobs and services are located. The Plan seeks to maintain and enhance the role of town centres and to improve the range of services and facilities that help to create attractive communities.
- 2.3 A priority is to ensure that best use is made of previously developed land and buildings within urban areas to reduce the need for greenfield development. This priority is supported by a policy to secure higher density housing development, particularly in the main urban areas and close to town centres where there is good public transport. Higher density development must, however, also achieve higher quality of design and add to the attractiveness of the built environment.
- 2.4 Taking account of the regional target that at least 60% of all new housing will be built on previously developed land, the local authorities will monitor the potential for new housing on sites within built up areas and the timing of the release of new greenfield sites will be managed and phased accordingly.
- 2.5 Because of high house prices across Oxfordshire a priority issue is the provision of more affordable housing, including homes for key workers. Policies in the Plan seek to provide a framework for securing higher levels of affordable housing than in the past. Many of the houses to be built on previously developed land will be built on sites in Oxford, which together with policies to secure affordable and key worker housing being pursued by Oxford City Council, could provide more houses in the city for those who cannot afford to buy or rent in the open market.
- 2.6 The strategy and policies support the need to sustain economic prosperity and to build on Oxfordshire's strengths – in particular the development of its educational, scientific and technological economy. The Plan looks to achieve a better balance between homes and jobs across the county to help spread the benefits of Oxfordshire's prosperous economy, to ease pressures on Oxford and to reduce the need for commuting to Oxford.
- 2.7 The Plan reflects Oxford's central role in the life of the county. The County Council wants to see Oxford thrive as a first class vibrant city, modern in outlook with a diverse economy. The Plan promotes Oxford's role as a sub-regional centre for shopping, leisure and cultural activities. Oxford will continue to build on its strengths – education, health and related research and development activities. One of the priorities for the County Council is to progress plans for the urban renaissance of the West End of Oxford for the benefit of everyone who lives in Oxfordshire⁹.
- 2.8 This does not mean that Oxford should grow unchecked, so as to damage its heritage and landscape setting and increase pressures on transport and other services. Because of the substantial imbalance between jobs and workforce in Oxford, the overall growth of employment in the city will continue to be limited. Land is however available within the city to support the development of employment sectors that need to be located there. Other activities will be encouraged to continue to locate outside Oxford. Support is given for small-scale development which helps to maintain the diversity of the Oxford economy.

⁹ Oxfordshire Plan 2005-2006, Oxfordshire County Council.



Rural communities

- 2.9 For the rural areas of Oxfordshire the Plan seeks to ensure that the countryside is protected whilst the needs of rural communities for affordable housing, jobs and services and diversification of the local economy are met.
- 2.10 The role of the smaller towns and villages as service centres needs to be maintained. A particular concern is the decline of some rural centres and the difficulty that young people, for example, face in being able to stay in their local community. It is not always possible to maintain all shops and services in smaller settlements. The Plan, therefore, seeks to channel a limited amount of development to the smaller towns and larger villages in which there is a reasonable range of shops, services and community facilities already and which can serve a group of surrounding villages. Small-scale development on the edge of some villages could help to meet local needs for affordable housing.



The proposed pattern of development 2001-2016

- 2.11 The Plan emphasises the concentration of development on the main urban areas, including Oxford, where a larger amount of housing growth is provided for compared to previous Plans. A large number of houses and other development are planned already at Oxford, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney under the previous Structure Plan. This Plan adds Grove to the locations which are planned for significant additional development. The main locations for new employment development will be Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney to encourage a more balanced and diverse range of employment in the towns.
- 2.12 Grove is proposed as a main location for development in the south of the county where it will help to contribute to the needs of the expanding employment base in southern Oxfordshire including major sites at the Harwell complex, Milton Park and Didcot. Development at Grove will require improved secondary school provision and should help to improve the range of shops and services at Grove and the attractiveness of Wantage town centre. Improved public transport services to Didcot, Milton Park and Harwell Campus will be necessary. Substantial improvements on the A417 will be needed to provide priority for public transport at congestion points and to bring the route to an adequate standard of safety. The County Council will continue to press for rail services to call at a reopened Grove station. This Plan supports development at Grove which could extend until 2021. As there are already problems with the transport infrastructure, it is essential that the required improvements are in place before any development is occupied. Before planning permission can be given, it will be necessary to carry out a full environmental assessment into the possible risks of flooding both locally and further downstream.





- 2.13 Provision is also made for relatively modest development in other towns and larger villages where there is a reasonable range of employment, services and community facilities, in particular for affordable housing to meet the needs of people living in the immediate area.
- 2.14 The timing of the release of new greenfield sites in the Plan period will depend on the review of regional planning guidance, the potential for housing development on previously developed land within the built up areas and the delivery of necessary infrastructure and facilities, including transport improvements. The potential need for additional waste water treatment capacity, particularly at Bicester, should be taken into account early in the process of planning land releases for housing.
- 2.15 The deposit draft Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 gave an indication of a possible pattern of development for the period after 2016. However, the South East Plan will now set the development framework for the longer term. In particular, the draft regional spatial strategy, the South East Plan, proposes a development strategy for the Central Oxfordshire sub-region. The Structure Plan will provide an important interim strategic framework to guide the preparation of local development documents until the new South East Plan is adopted. Work to advise the Regional Assembly on a district housing distribution for Central Oxfordshire and the rest of Oxfordshire has been led by the County Council working with the district councils and other stakeholders.



Implementing the strategy

- 2.16 The delivery of the strategy will require close working between the County Council, the district councils and other partners to ensure essential infrastructure and facilities to support the development of attractive and viable communities. Policies in the Plan look to secure from developers the provision of infrastructure and services from development when it is needed.
- 2.17 Transport infrastructure will be a key factor in implementation. Where development depends on transport provision and management on the strategic routes this will require close working between the County Council, the Government, the Highways Agency and the rail industry to co-ordinate the necessary strategic transport investment.
- 2.18 The definition of the County's principal transport corridors serving Oxford recognises the significance of the north south strategic corridor which serves the principal economic and development areas of the county.
- 2.19 The County Council's transport strategy is set out in the Local Transport Plan¹⁰ (LTP). The review of the LTP is taking account the proposals in the new Structure Plan (see paragraph 4.5).

¹⁰ Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006, Oxfordshire County Council.