

Scrutiny Committee



Report of Head of Planning

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Wards affected: All

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OXFORDSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Recommendation

to review the summary of the OXIS study given in this report and raise any queries that they may have with officers and the Cabinet Member for Planning

Introduction

1. This report gives information on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) which was undertaken for the Oxfordshire Growth Board in 2016/ 2017, and how the work has been used since it was finalised.

Background

2. In 2016, the Oxfordshire Growth Board agreed that an Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy should be undertaken, which would look at existing and proposed infrastructure, linked to planned areas of growth, as set out in adopted or emerging Local Plans. It also set out to look beyond our Local Plan period to 2040 and to prioritise infrastructure across the County. A brief for this work was endorsed at the Growth Board meeting, 26 May 2016, and is given in **Appendix 1**.
3. The OxIS document helps to evidence and map strategic infrastructure requirements for Oxfordshire over the next 15- 25 years and better position partners with information on priorities to inform funding and investment discussions across all level of Government. It is not a statutory document but provides evidence that can shape and influence local plans and service providers.

4. In Autumn 2016, consultants AECOM were appointed to undertake the study. The project was client managed by the County Council in association with the Growth Board Partnership Programme Manager, with an officer steering group set up with representatives from the County Council and each of the districts. Officers provided regular updates of the study progress with the Cabinet Member for Planning and at key milestones with Councillors. Progress updates were also given to the Growth Board, including presentations on final draft reports, and press releases and coverage given when key outcomes of Stage 2 were published for comment in Summer 2017.
5. AECOM produced a Stage 1 report, published in April 2017, and a Stage 2 report, published in November 2017. Both of these reports are available to view on the growth board website at the following link:

<https://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/projects>

Stage 1 Report

6. The Stage 1 report summarises information on the infrastructure situation and likely forecast requirements by topic areas, including transport, education, healthcare, utilities, waste and flood defences. It also highlights some key schemes, such as strategic transport improvements, that have already been identified to support growth outlined in local plans until 2031. The report further looks to a timescale of 2040, recognising that growth in housing and jobs will continue beyond the current local plan periods. This was done through extrapolation of housing growth from the end of current plan periods to 2040, based on growth planned to the period to 2031.
7. The report includes sections on housing and employment growth, with mapping of committed/ (proposed) allocated sites based on information provided by the districts. It also reviews population forecasts for Oxfordshire, which were used to estimate overall infrastructure needs by topic areas. The report does not detail infrastructure for development sites, which local plans set out in their relevant infrastructure delivery plans. The report focuses on overall future infrastructure requirements at a strategic; Oxfordshire, level and priorities by topic area. It also reviews likely funding requirements for this infrastructure, taking into account secured funding where known.
8. Stage 1 included engagement with infrastructure providers by topic area, which helped to inform finalisation of the report. It also helped ensure that the evidence base for the report took into account relevant study and policy development for each infrastructure area. The section on Healthcare, for example, included assessment of the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the developing Oxfordshire Healthcare Transformation Programme. The section on electricity included analysis of a feasibility study on network constraints and proposed improvements needed to support growth undertaken by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for the area.

Stage 2 work

9. Stage 2 of the work classified schemes identified through the Stage 1 work into regional, countywide and local infrastructure, summarising local schemes into several identified growth corridors. These corridors are shown in **Appendix 2**, and for the Vale this includes the Knowledge Spine South area, which covers Abingdon and the

Science Vale area, and the A420 corridor. Several schemes which are expected to have impact over a wider area are also identified in a regional or countywide list. For the regional list, this includes the proposed new station at Grove and associated new rail service. For the countywide list, this includes the proposed new road crossing of the River Thames between Culham and Didcot, Didcot Science Bridge, and the proposed new Park and Rides at Lodge Hill north of Abingdon and at Cumnor.

10. All identified strategic infrastructure schemes were appraised against a common set of criteria, giving each an overall score. They were also split into topic areas, in particular transport, education, health and social care, green infrastructure, energy, water, waste and flood defences. The criteria for assessment of schemes was discussed in detail and agreed at the district/ county officer reference group. In summary, the criteria were:
 - Growth: Level of homes and jobs supported
 - Deliverability: Level of commitment, complexity of delivery, level of inter-relationships
 - Associated impacts: Social benefits, environmental benefits
11. Each infrastructure scheme was given a score, based on the level of positive impact they had against each criteria. The appraisal was also weighted, with higher possible scores for level of homes and jobs supported, recognising the importance of the link to economic and housing growth. The criteria scores were totalled to give an overall score for each infrastructure scheme. A full list of criteria and the scoring within these criteria are given in **Appendix 3**.
12. The outcome of the scoring and assessment exercise is shown in the Stage 2 report, and includes for each identified corridor a list of expected larger housing and employment sites, as of mid-2017. The results of the assessment of schemes within the Knowledge Spine South and A420 Corridors are given in **Appendix 4**. It is noted that for schemes in these areas, and for those schemes identified as having countywide impact, it is generally the transport schemes that score better against the criteria assessment.
13. Stage 2 work also included a number of stakeholder engagement exercises. This included:
 - A full day workshop split into four working sessions covering transport, utilities, green infrastructure and social infrastructure.
 - A half day drop in event at Said Business School, presenting findings of the Stage 2 report in September 2017. Attendees included representatives from environmental, business and infrastructure organisations.
 - An opportunity for any interested parties to submit comments on a summary of key findings from the Stage 2 work over an 8 week period from July to September 2017, as highlighted to South and Vale councillors through In-focus updates in August.
14. The Stage 2 OXIS report was considered and endorsed by the Growth Board (subject to finalisation, including taking into account consultation responses in full) at its meeting in September 2017. The board also agreed that OXIS should be periodically updated. The final report was then published in November 2017, with some minor amendments made following full consideration of consultation responses received between July and September.

Use of OXIS

15. OXIS has provided a useful way of bringing together and appraising the benefits of key strategic infrastructure schemes and summarising them by area against expected growth. It has also helped in identifying those schemes put forward for external funding, in particular as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal and Housing Infrastructure Fund bids. For example, several key transport schemes within the Garden Town area were able to easily be identified as priorities for the HIF forward funding expression of interest bid (submitted in October 2017), based the OXIS work.
16. However, OXIS does not replace the requirement for each district to produce Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs) to identify in more detail that infrastructure needed to support development identified in Local Plans. In particular, it is seen as a strategic, Oxfordshire wide document and as such does not give detail on infrastructure schemes linked to each proposed development.
17. It is also noted that the assessment of schemes is very much based on a certain moment in time, and that planned growth, associated infrastructure priorities, policy and evidence base in different infrastructure areas can clearly change. For example, once central government has decided on the corridor and then route of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway (OxCam) this is likely to have significant implications on both the direction of future growth, and how transport networks around Oxfordshire develop. It is therefore seen as important that OXIS is updated in due course to take into account of such major changes in circumstances.
18. It is also important that the evidence underpinning the OXIS report is considered in future planning policy development, and that any updates to OXIS consider the latest local plan positions across Oxfordshire. There will in particular, be linkages with development of the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) that will need to be carefully reviewed.
19. At present, it is proposed that OXIS is updated in draft by the end of 2018, with a final version produced in Spring 2019. However, these timescales have yet to be fully agreed by the Growth Board partners. It is expected that the Vale would be appropriately engaged in any update process.

Finance

20. The budget for this work was covered in contributions of £21,500 per council (total £129,500), which for Vale was part of our annual Growth Board contribution. Any updates would be expected to be similarly funded, subject to the appropriate budget sign-off processes.

Conclusion

21. This report gives an overview of the OXIS work undertaken to date, and how it has been used to help prioritise schemes for funding. In line with the recommendations of the Growth Board, it is expected that an update will be valuable within the next year as JSSP progresses and we know more about OxCam.

Recommendation

22. Scrutiny is asked to review the summary of the OXIS study given in this report and raise any queries they may have with officers and the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Growth Board agreed brief for the OxIS

Appendix 2. Growth corridors for Oxfordshire identified in OXIS report

Appendix 3. OXIS summary table of criteria used for scheme prioritisation

Appendix 4: List of schemes for the Knowledge Spine South and A420 Corridor