

**To:** Oxfordshire Growth Board  
**Title:** Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire  
**Date:** 30 October 2020  
**Author:** Bev Hindle - Director Oxfordshire Growth Board

**Executive Summary and Purpose:**

This report introduces a Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire's Long-Term Sustainable Development (attached as Appendix 1). The report explains the purpose of this unique approach, the scope and content of the Vision and the benefits we believe will come from wider engagement and future Growth Board endorsement.

**Recommendations:**

That the Oxfordshire Growth Board:

1. Discusses and agrees the content of the Draft Strategic Vision attached as Appendix 1, which will form the basis of a programme of public engagement, and return for Growth Board endorsement by March 2021;
2. Agrees that any minor changes to the Draft Vision are agreed by the Chair of the Growth Board Executive Officer Group in consultation with the Chair of the Growth Board before public engagement begins.

**Appendix 1:**

Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development – Engagement Draft

**Introduction**

1. This report introduces a Draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire. We want the plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire to be ambition-led and outcome-focussed and we know that in Oxfordshire there is a desire to see a different approach to place shaping. The public's responses to the consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 document gave us a clear steer that there is an appetite for an approach that:
  - is more ambitious, radical, innovative and creative
  - is more Oxfordshire-specific and reflects local people's views
  - prioritises climate change

- focusses on social, economic and environmental well-being, not solely on a narrow definition of growth.
2. Similar thoughts have been reflected in the One Planet Living Oxfordshire Shared Vision, through the Growth Board's own Open Thought initiative and in the current Growth Board Terms of Reference. We have bold economic ambitions that have been brought to life in an investment plan and innovative work on inclusive growth has highlighted the need for us to recognise and address the inequalities of our success.
  3. The Draft Strategic Vision sets out for engagement what the shared ambition should look like and how it can be achieved.

### **Purpose & Status of the Draft Strategic Vision**

4. The Strategic Vision has been prepared as a collaborative leadership approach for the Oxfordshire Growth Board. Delivering the Vision will require long-term collective commitment and investment by the partners that make up the Growth Board but also, crucially, by a wider set of strategic stakeholders and partnerships. The Strategic Vision will establish a common and shared ambition – but it is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. And we fully recognise that delivering the Strategic Vision will require place-focussed responses to specific challenges and opportunities that reflect particular circumstances.
5. Our Vision should be read by partners within and beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it. Of particular significance is the Government's announcement in March 2020 of its backing for a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire will look to influence any framework for the Arc based on this Strategic Vision to help achieve our collective ambition.
6. While it is similarly looking to 2050 and intended to support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan indirectly, it is not part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 itself. That plan will deliver parts of the Vision, but as a statutory planning document, OP2050 cannot address all aspects involved in delivering this Vision. Local plans, infrastructure plans, economic strategies and associated plans and programmes will also have important roles to play.
7. The Strategic Vision is part of the existing portfolio approach to plan and strategy development in Oxfordshire. The Vision has a specific role and a clearly defined non-statutory status. It explicitly does not deal with the quantum of housing or economic growth for Oxfordshire, nor direct where it should go. Those are matters more appropriately dealt with through other plans and strategies (eg. Oxfordshire Plan 2050, Local Industrial Strategy, Local Plans). But the Vision can play an important role in seeking to drive improvements to environmental, social and economic well-being which may be reflected in emerging plans, strategies and programmes.

### **Scope of the Draft Strategic Vision**

8. The Draft Strategic Vision is high-level, overarching and long-term. It is positive and optimistic, and we have set our ambition high. We have set out how we want our plans, strategies and programmes for Oxfordshire, including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, to be ambition-led and outcome focussed. We want to facilitate a

step-change in our approach to delivering sustainable development in Oxfordshire.

9. The Strategic Vision is intended to be transformative, centred on people's well-being, with Oxfordshire a place where current and future generations thrive. Well-being of individuals is important but we have also taken the opportunity to think about well-being in the round in ways that make important connections because we understand the intrinsic links between the environmental, social and economic dimensions of well-being and how these need to be underpinned by improved resilience.
10. Our ambition is to utilise the unique opportunities and assets in Oxfordshire to shape healthy, sustainable, resilient communities in which it is possible for all communities to thrive.
11. The Strategic Vision defines our ambition for Oxfordshire as a set of outcomes, which if we are successful, will have been achieved by 2050. To help achieve our ambition we have defined what we mean by 'good growth', with our approach based on improvements in quality and circumstances for individuals and society. We want growth in Oxfordshire to be inclusive, focussing on progress in improving health and well-being, transitioning to a low carbon future, addressing inequalities and prioritising our natural environment, alongside greater resilience to climate and economic change. We have also developed a set of Guiding Principles (or inter-related ground rules) which together articulate how Oxfordshire will change as a place over the next 30 years.
12. We recognise that delivery against a 30-year vision will require pragmatism and realism as the tools of our innovation and ambition develop. However, we also recognise that decisions, actions and investment are required now to place Oxfordshire on the pathway to delivery by 2050.

### **Engagement and Next Steps**

13. From discussions with the Growth Board's Oxfordshire Plan Advisory Sub-Group at two workshops over the summer and a process of internal review and external challenge from an independent expert on the use of non-statutory strategic frameworks and legal counsel, it is clear that the Vision's relevance and use goes well beyond the Oxfordshire Plan. Indeed to be most helpful to the Plan and other emerging plans and strategies, the Vision should be seen and agreed on its own merit, separate from the statutory Plan process – first through endorsement by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, strengthened and improved through public engagement and then, depending on support generated, potentially agreed by our individual organisations across and beyond the Growth Board. Having a 'whole system' agreed vision of where we are heading and our expected outcomes would go a very long way to help align our work, our infrastructure programmes and even, potentially, our services in the future.
14. The timing of this work is important. The Government announced backing for a spatial framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Oxfordshire will want to be well-positioned to influence that work as it gathers momentum early in 2021. Likewise, if the Strategic Vision is to play a role in supporting the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, it will need to be agreed no later than Spring 2021 (ahead of the pre-election purdah period which traditionally begins six weeks before the May election date).

15. Preparation of the Draft Strategic Vision is the beginning of a process. Because we want to open about what we are trying to achieve we are proposing to carry out bespoke public and stakeholder engagement, providing an early opportunity for people to share and shape our thinking through public discussion and debate. It is proposed to engage widely, starting in mid-November and ending just before Christmas.
16. Due to concerns with COVID-19, we will once again use the Oxfordshire Open Thought digital engagement platform which has already proved very helpful in engaging on wide-ranging topics and long-term thinking. Engagement on the Strategic Vision will respond to that earlier conversation, and use Open Thought to seek support, build consensus and make improvements. Using a digital platform will allow us to link to a wide range of contextual information that will be helpful for engagement purposes.
17. We will then refine the Vision taking account of engagement and further work (we are seeking informal sustainability advice on the Vision for example). It may also be prudent to seek legal advice following engagement but prior to agreement of the Vision, to ensure the agreed language of the Vision moving forward is helpful to, rather than in conflict with, the emerging next stage of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.
18. It is intended that we will seek Growth Board endorsement at its meeting scheduled for March 2021. The Growth Board is asked to agree the recommendations set out at the start of this report.

## **Background Papers**

19. None