



Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Foreword

We want Oxfordshire to be a thriving county which adapts to a changing world but remains a special place to live, work and visit. This Structure Plan is central to that vision.

The Structure Plan is our strategy for the development and use of land in the county and covers a wide range of issues which are vitally important to the everyday life of all in Oxfordshire. These wide range of issues include policies that seek to support economic development, protect, conserve and enhance our natural and built environment, provide homes that people can afford and manage and develop transport in the county. The Plan also includes policies that provide minerals and waste management, help to maintain and enhance our town centres, provide recreation and leisure for all and support energy conservation. Providing the necessary infrastructure needed to support new development is also essential and the Plan has a crucial role in achieving this.

The Plan has been prepared taking account of the views of a wide range of individuals and organisations. I am grateful for their input, which I believe has helped to ensure that this is a Plan that genuinely reflects *Oxfordshire* concerns.

Changes to the planning system mean that this will be the last Structure Plan before it is in time replaced with the regional spatial strategy for the South East – the South East Plan, which is being prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly. Although its shelf life may be limited, the Structure Plan will play a crucial role in guiding development in the county up to 2016.

Roger Belson

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development

1. Introduction

What is the Oxfordshire Structure Plan?

- 1.1 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan is the County Council's strategy for the development and use of land in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 The Structure Plan consists of a written statement of the County Council's policies illustrated by a key diagram. The Plan is supported by explanatory text (the "explanatory memorandum"), which is the remainder of the document. The strategy is in chapter 2 and the policies which support it in the subsequent chapters. The Plan should read as a whole, in conjunction with relevant local plans and local development documents.
- 1.3 This is the last Structure Plan to be adopted for Oxfordshire. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act was enacted in 2004. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan will eventually be replaced under the new system by the South East Plan which will provide the strategic framework to guide development in Oxfordshire¹.

The role of the development plan

- 1.4 Structure plans provide the strategic policy framework for the development and use of land. They should ensure that the provision for development is realistic and consistent with national and regional policy.
- 1.5 The County Council in reviewing the Plan has taken account of Government policy set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs), Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and other guidance, which are referred to throughout the Plan. The overall aims and objectives of the Plan, which are set out below, have been drawn up taking into account the Government's sustainable development objectives².
- 1.6 In particular it is recognised that climate change is one the major environmental challenges facing the world. The strategy in the Plan seeks at a local level to contribute to the mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change.

¹ The South East Plan is being prepared by the South East of England Regional Assembly. It will contain sub-regional policies for parts of Oxfordshire, covering some of the issues addressed by the structure plans. Local plans will be replaced by local development documents prepared by the district councils for all matters except minerals and waste, which will be covered by a development document prepared by the County Council. Structure plans that had reached the statutory deposit stage by the Act's commencement date continued to adoption with such plans being saved for three years from adoption. Policies will then be replaced by revisions to the new Regional Spatial Strategy.

² A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK.

- 1.7 The Government aims to create sustainable communities³ in which people want to live which:
- are economically prosperous;
 - have decent homes at a price people can afford;
 - safeguard the countryside;
 - enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment; and
 - are effectively and fairly governed with a strong sense of community.
- 1.8 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)⁴ provides the framework for development and the preparation of structure and local plans in the South East region up to 2016.
- 1.9 Key aspects of RPG9 which are relevant to Oxfordshire are:
- urban areas should be the main focus for development;
 - an average of 2,430 new dwellings should be provided in Oxfordshire each year;
 - high value-added activities including business clusters should be encouraged;
 - at the regional level 60% of new development should be on previously developed land;
 - greenfield development should normally take place only after other alternatives have been considered;
 - the development of housing should provide a better mix of sizes, types and tenures;
 - development should be located and designed to enable more sustainable use of natural resources and assist in reducing pollution;
 - there should be continued protection and enhancement of the region's biodiversity, landscape and built and historic heritage;
 - the life of the countryside and rural communities should be sustained through economic diversification; and
 - there should be increased ability to meet travel needs through safe walking, cycling and public transport with reduced reliance on the car.

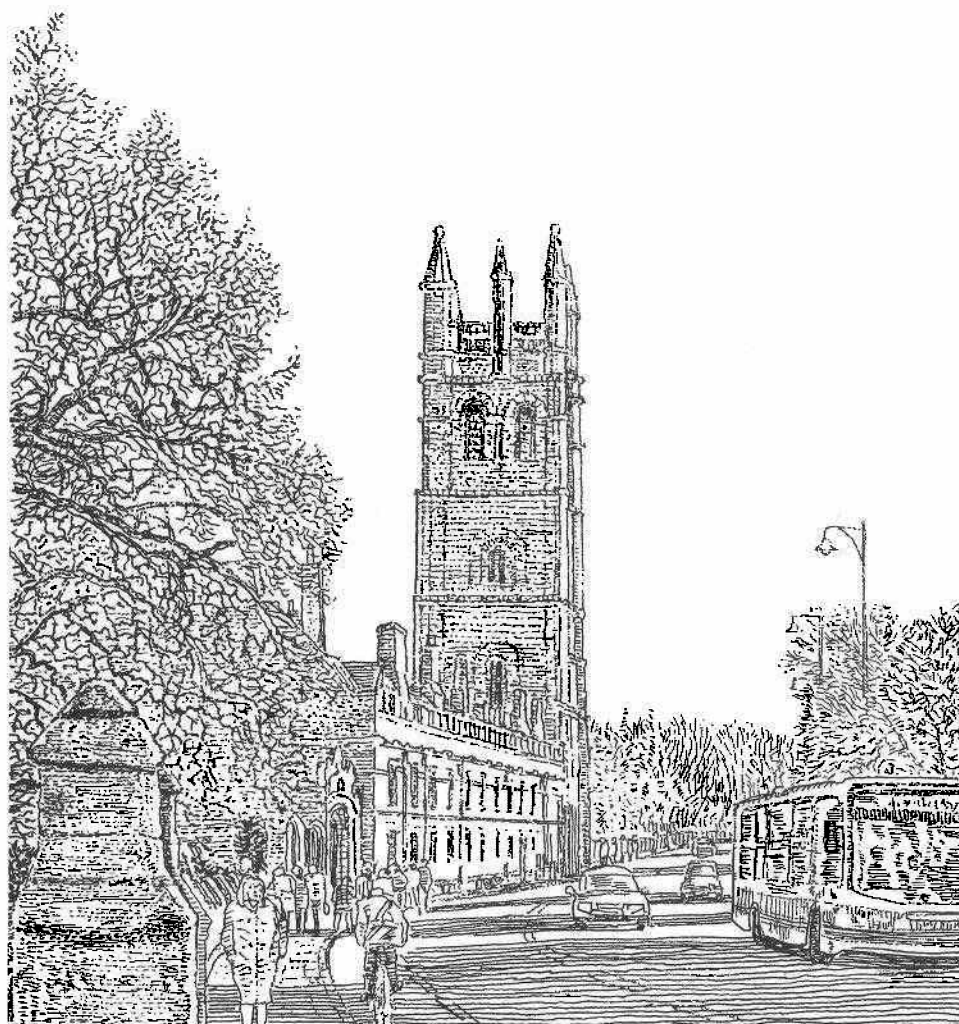
Improving the quality of life in Oxfordshire

- 1.10 Oxfordshire is a diverse county, recognised as one of Europe's leading centres of enterprise and innovation, as a centre for culture and for the quality of its attractive countryside and historic towns and villages. It is best described as a "city region" in which Oxford and the rest of the county are closely interlinked and interdependent.
- 1.11 The Oxfordshire economy is one of the most successful and dynamic in the country. Oxfordshire is acknowledged globally as a centre of excellence for learning and research, with some of the world's foremost academic institutions and major research and development organisations, with strong linkages between research and business across the county.

³ "Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future" is a national programme of action setting out how the Government intends to achieve sustainable communities for all. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003.

⁴ Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), Government Office for the South East, March 2001.

- 1.12 Oxford with its two universities, hospitals and research establishments plays a central role in the economy of Oxfordshire. Many other important research establishments are in other parts of the county, for example Culham Science Centre and the Harwell International Business Centre for Science and Technology. A large number of the companies in the research sector are outside Oxford.
- 1.13 Economic success is fundamental to the quality of life in Oxfordshire. However, it also brings problems such as high house prices, lack of affordable housing, traffic congestion, recruitment and retention problems and pressures on the environment. There are pockets of deprivation and poverty in many communities, including rural areas where there can be greater isolation, limited public transport and poor access to services and jobs.
- 1.14 The County Council's priorities are set out in the Oxfordshire Plan⁵. The aim is to improve the quality of life of Oxfordshire's people by helping them to fulfil their potential; protecting the environment; safeguarding our communities; sustaining prosperity and raising the performance of the Council to improve services and promote Oxfordshire's interests in the region, nationally and in Europe.



⁵ Oxfordshire Plan 2005-2006, Oxfordshire County Council.

- 1.15 Healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities can only be achieved with involvement by the people who live and work in those communities. The Government sees local strategic partnerships (LSPs) as key to developing new ways of involving local people, the voluntary sector and business in identifying and implementing changes to improve their quality of life. The Oxfordshire Community Partnership⁶ has prepared a Community Strategy for Oxfordshire. Key priorities for action include increasing the provision of affordable housing, transport and safe and supportive communities.
- 1.16 A priority for the County Council is to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth by supporting the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership strategy to sustain and develop the educational, scientific and technological economy, working with major employers and business to provide affordable housing and with the farming community.
- 1.17 The Economic Development Strategy for Oxfordshire⁷ aims to raise Oxfordshire's profile as a pioneering, world-class economy that fulfils the potential of its inhabitants through continually developing its capacity for innovation, business and personal development, research and education, and through the effective management of its high quality environmental resources. The Strategy recognises that economic growth can only be sustainable if it goes hand in hand with protecting and enhancing the county's environmental assets, which include three areas of outstanding natural beauty, Oxford – a city of international historic importance, attractive towns and villages, historic buildings and important sites for wildlife and nature conservation.
- 1.18 The Structure Plan will contribute to meeting the County Council's priorities, by providing a land use and transport planning framework which meets the needs of Oxfordshire's people and economy, whilst protecting its environment and heritage, and which contributes to the economic success and prosperity of the county.
- 1.19 The County Council's vision for Oxfordshire over the next twenty to twenty five years is of a county where the natural, historical and cultural environment continues to be protected and enhanced, and where the quality of life of all Oxfordshire's people will be improved. Oxfordshire's role as a centre of excellence for learning and research will be supported by a pattern of development which sustains the prosperity of the economy, meets needs for housing, including affordable housing and provides for a choice of travel options less dependent on the car.

⁶ A partnership of all main stakeholders in Oxfordshire from the public, private, voluntary and community sector.

⁷ Economic Development Strategy Oxfordshire 2001-2005. Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, December 2001.