



Listening Learning Leading

Joint Local Plan governance arrangements

10 August 2021

Introduction

The two councils are working on a Joint Local Plan. The Joint Local Plan covers the following Local Planning Authority areas:

- South Oxfordshire
- Vale of White Horse

Once adopted the Joint Local Plan will be a statutory planning document, forming an important part of the development plan for decision-making on development proposals. It will contain site allocations, as well as both strategic and non-strategic planning policies.

Context

The Joint Local Plan is being prepared in the context of another joint plan the councils are working on with the other Oxfordshire districts and Oxford City Council, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which will contain the strategic planning framework for Oxfordshire.

The government's Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework covers a wider geography and will provide a policy framework for both the Oxfordshire Plan and the Joint Local Plan.

The Joint Local Plan will cover the period to 2041, shorter than the 30-year time horizon for the Oxfordshire Plan, which runs to 2050, and the Ox-Cam Arc Spatial Framework which will plan for 2050 and beyond.

Joint Plan Decision

The decision to progress a Joint Local Plan was taken by full Council for Vale of White Horse on 24 March 2021 and South Oxfordshire on 25 March 2021. At these meetings the Joint Local Development Scheme was also agreed, containing the timetable for the preparation of the plan.

The Councils agreed the principle of governance to prepare and produce a Joint Local Plan under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Councils' decisions authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic, in consultation with the Head of Planning and the relevant members*, to agree the detailed governance arrangements.

*For Vale: these are identified in the Council's decision as the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Transformation and Cabinet Member for Democratic Services. For South: the Leader, Deputy Leaders, and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Cabinet Member for Legal and Democratic.

Overview of Joint Local Plan governance

With a Joint Local Plan prepared under Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the final, formal decisions at key local plan stages (consultations, publication, submission, adoption) are made either separately by each council or via a voluntary joint committee.

Beyond that, the arrangements are not set out in legislation and can be tailored to what will work for the councils. In this case, having taken examples from elsewhere including the councils' experience of the Oxfordshire Plan (another joint plan being prepared under Section 28), the arrangements of roles and responsibilities will be:

- **Officer Team:**

The officer team will prepare the Joint Local Plan, reporting to the Planning Policy Project Board. The team responsible for planning policy is already a shared team, working for South and Vale councils. The team manages the Joint Local Plan budget which has been agreed by the councils.

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), with its key infrastructure and transport responsibilities, will be an important partner in this joint planning work. Officers will hold monthly liaison meetings with OCC officers to secure input and involvement of the county council.

Officers will work for both councils where the councils share a common interest. If the interests of the councils diverge on any particular aspect of the Joint Local Plan preparation, the potential conflicts of interest will be reported to the Chief Executive who will determine what conflicts of interests protocols need to be put in place.

- **Planning Policy Project Board:**

Held fortnightly to report progress and seek approval or sign off of papers and processes. Consists of the head of service, the service manager and the team leader responsible for the Joint Local Plan. Provides a regular steer and decision making on detailed Joint Local Plan matters to the officer team. Considers reports, evidence and plan drafts including recommendations from the Officer Team. Gives advice to the Officer Team. Proposes agenda for Steering Group meetings, to be subsequently confirmed with the two Cabinet Members. Administration by the team responsible for planning policy.

- **Senior Management Team:**

Senior Management Team provides the ultimate senior officer oversight for the project, providing high level corporate input and direction. It meets weekly and consists of the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executives and all Heads of Service, including planning, legal and democratic and finance. Administration by Executive Support.

- **Joint Local Plan Steering Group:**

An informal Member Group which provides policy ideas and a political steer to the work of the Joint Local Plan. The Steering Group oversees progress on the Joint Local Plan and secures political buy-in and support for the Plan's proposals. The Steering Group is not a decision-making body. It will steer officers on Joint Local Plan matters as appropriate. Considers advice and recommendations from Planning Policy Project Board, including reports and draft plans. It will meet approximately monthly, but this will be varied to reflect Joint Local Plan workload.

Consists of three members from South and three members from Vale, including one portfolio holder covering planning policy from each council. The Steering Group make up will reflect the decision taken by full Council for Vale of White Horse on 24 March 2021 and South Oxfordshire on 25 March 2021. The Head of Legal and Democratic will appoint members to the Steering Group in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leaders.

The Steering Group will be attended by the appointed Members, plus the head of service, the service manager and the team leader responsible for the Joint Local Plan, and other officers as needed.

Meetings will be chaired by one of the portfolio holders covering planning policy, on a rotational basis to be agreed between them.

Administration will be carried out by the team responsible for planning policy who will be responsible for meeting invitations, circulation of papers and reports and meeting notes.

The group will be expected to consider officer recommendations and provide high level political feedback on matters such as:

- Timetable and process
- The implications of evidence and other information
- All Councillor Joint Roundtable outcomes
- Draft policies and proposals
- Engagement with members and public engagement
- Any other matter which bears on Joint Local Plan preparation and contents

- **All Councillor Joint Roundtable Meetings:**

Provides wider, informal councillor input to plan preparation through workshops, discussion and other appropriate methods. Will support the preparation of plan policies and proposals including private discussion of draft plan proposals before they are formally considered by each council. It will meet quarterly or more often as needed. Consists of all members from both councils, including all the Members on the Joint Local Plan Steering Group. Meetings will be attended by the Project Board officers. Administration by the team responsible for planning policy who will be responsible for meeting invitations, circulation of papers, giving presentations and meeting notes.

- **Wider Member Engagement:**

Wider member engagement is to be determined within each council as required. These governance arrangements are not intended to represent the entirety of member ability

to influence and engage in the Joint Local Plan process, or indeed to limit how members of the steering group seek to ensure they are able to represent the wider views of members as well as their own.

- **Local Planning Authorities:**

Decisions on the Joint Local Plan contents, up to and including its adoption, are made by the two local planning authorities through their own decision-making structures. The governance bodies referred to above (the Joint Plan Steering Group and All Councillor Joint Roundtable Meetings) are intended to ensure the Joint Local Plan progresses through these formal processes without undue delay.

- Cabinet for each authority, following consultation with Scrutiny, will make the decision on the Regulation 18 consultation stage.
- Full Council for each authority will make the formal decisions on Regulation 19 publication and final adoption of the Joint Local Plan.

Principles

The Joint Local Plan is being developed by consensus, with officers and elected members from both authorities working together at every stage of plan-making process to ensure that individual and collective views are taken into account. Neither authority can impose decisions on the other authority. This is because at the key stages of the plan-making process, both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils will be asked to formally approve the emerging Joint Plan and ultimately to adopt it.

These governance arrangements can be reviewed and amended by the Head of Legal of Democratic, in consultation with the relevant members who were consulted on their preparation.

Joint Local Plan Governance Chart

