# Draft Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy Brief

*1*      *Introduction*

1.1      Oxfordshire is at the forefront of a revolution in growth.  It has around 30,000 businesses, providing over 380,000 jobs, including a high proportion in research, science and technology, engineering, and high-tech manufacturing.  The county's economy is recognised as one of the best performing in the UK and its contribution to the national economy is well above average - workplace Gross Value Added per head in Oxfordshire averaged over £30,000 in 2014, compared to the UK average of around £25,000.   Some 85,000 additional jobs are forecast to be created in Oxfordshire by 2031.

1.2      Oxfordshire therefore has a strong reputation nationally and internationally as an engine for growth – illustrated by:
- The development of the 'Knowledge Spine' concept, the growth corridor linking Bicester, Oxford and Science Vale, recognising Oxfordshire as a centre for science and innovation; much of this employment is located on this corridor
- Designation within this of both Bicester and Didcot as Garden Towns, with significant growth happening and proposed;
- The County's strategic position at both a North/South and East/West Crossroads, including on the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge growth arc - and its associated national infrastructure projects, notably East West Rail and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.

1.3      An Oxfordshire Growth Board has been established, comprising all Oxfordshire Local Authorities (County Council and 5 District Councils) plus the Oxfordshire LEP.   This has established the growth ambition through publication of the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which has identified the need for around 100,000 new homes in Oxfordshire by 2031.  These are being taken forward through joint working across authorities and ultimately District Council Local Plans.  Initial work is focusing on the spatial options to accommodate Oxford's unmet housing need, which has included a strong element of infrastructure planning.

1.4      Housing and jobs forecasts are embedded in the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which has recently been updated and is out to consultation.

1.5      Committed and Planned Growth over the next 15-20 years has been established and mapped, with a documented schedule of envisaged infrastructure requirements and committed / potential funding.  This builds on the infrastructure and growth mapping undertaken to date and is being regularly updated.  This is illustrated at countywide level in annex 1.  This will be updated as decisions about where additional growth and supporting infrastructure should be located are made.

1.6 This work needs to be broadened in its scope and developed into a comprehensive Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy to pick up wider strategic infrastructure requirements, constraints and opportunities, of the county and beyond, and refined to ensure the evidence needed for such infrastructure is clear.

1.7 It is also the intention that the OxIS will be linked with a wider infrastructure strategy covering Oxfordshire and neighbouring authorities that form part of England's Economic Heartland Alliance, which Oxfordshire is a key member of alongside Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and other local authority partners. It will sit within the wider National Framework (a National Infrastructure Commission focus, which has flagged Oxford to Cambridge as a priority corridor with significant further economic potential).

1.8 The OxIS will look at ambitions and projects long term to 2040, so will extend beyond current Local Plan and Local Transport Plan timescales to reflect the delivery timescales of a number of planned and potential strategic infrastructure improvements.


## 2 *Oxfordshire Growth & Infrastructure Context*

2.1 A significant benefit and risk for delivering growth is the timely delivery of infrastructure. While attitudes toward growth are varied, there is consistent support for the principle that if we must have growth we must have the necessary infrastructure provided in a timely way to support that growth and benefit new and existing communities and continue to develop Oxfordshire as an attractive and vibrant place to live and work.

2.2 As local authorities we have statutory responsibility for the delivery and maintenance of specific elements of strategic infrastructure – notably transport, schools and waste management, but also in helping to secure more local community-based infrastructure such as open space and leisure facilities.

2.3 Increasingly, we need to clearly identify what other infrastructure developed and provided by other parties is needed to enable and support planned growth - rail, electricity, water and sewerage, health facilities, broadband etc. - and plan for other forms of infrastructure which mitigate potentially harmful effects of development such as flood alleviation and environmental management.

2.4 It is also in our long –term financial interests to ensure delivery of infrastructure supports growth and development in a way which manages and helps to control future demand on public services – through efficient and appropriate provision of schools and health facilities for example - and does not trigger requirement for costly new infrastructure or expensive service delivery models which cannot be funded.

2.5      Currently, Infrastructure Delivery Plans are developed alongside Local Plans to ensure that, as far as possible, decisions on forward planning are taking account of the infrastructure needs of the area.  However, this tends to be a derived product: the growth options are identified through land availability assessments, sustainability appraisal tests sites alongside deliverability, and viability testing and preferred sites emerge: only then is the infrastructure needed to support these sites identified and tested.  We need to do more to look at our infrastructure supply and demand as an opportunity to inform growth in terms of its location, scale and type and to seek to maximise the benefit and minimise the strain on infrastructure provision.

## *3      What is the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy?*

3.1      The OxIS will identify, map and prioritise our infrastructure requirements to 2040 under the following key themes:

- Transport
- Education
- Health services
- Other strategic community and environmental infrastructure e.g. waste management
- Energy & Utilities
- Flooding & Water management
- Broadband & Connectivity
- Green Infrastructure

3.2      The OxIS is not a statutory policy document, but is aimed at shaping and influencing key documents such as Local Plans and service providers' investment strategies, and enable the Oxfordshire Growth Board and its members to use that information to:

- make better informed choices of where growth should go;
- seek agreed prioritisation of delivery, including priorities between different forms of infrastructure;
- maximise capacity to meet demand;
- better position ourselves with government, selling the Oxfordshire 'brand' (within the wider EEH context) and to demonstrate how Oxfordshire will be an attractive place for business and developers to invest with confidence
- increase our business case success for external funding and streamline strategic developer funding negotiations;
- facilitate informed dialogue with communities, developers and our main stakeholders on the impact of growth

3.3    More specifically, the OxIS will set out the ambition, informed by facts, for the planned infrastructure provision and growth priorities for Oxfordshire over the next 25 years.  As a live document that is intended to be updated periodically alongside the SEP, it would:

- build on existing commitments, strategies and current planning horizons, e.g. LTP4, SEP and Local Plans, enabling Oxfordshire authorities and the LEP, working together through the Growth Board, to  identify and prioritise strategic infrastructure needs and plans to meet Oxfordshire's future employment and housing growth, in the context of an overall spatial planning and infrastructure provision approach that clearly sets out and maximises the benefits and opportunities for Oxfordshire;

- encourage innovative and cost-effective approaches to infrastructure delivery, introducing new technologies or demand management approaches to make the most of existing infrastructure and low maintenance solutions to reduce revenue burdens in future;

- seek to identify various funding approaches available or possible to unlock timely delivery of infrastructure;

- contain a prioritised, costed programme of infrastructure projects that Oxfordshire authorities and other strategic infrastructure providers (e.g. Network Rail, Highways England, Environment Agency) consider necessary to meet the demands of Oxfordshire's growth to 2040;

- seek out opportunities for joined up delivery to inform future Local Plans, the SEP and Stakeholders / the public where and how infrastructure can help shape and deliver planned growth, maximised for public benefit and sustainability;

- provide a strategic context for current devolution proposals and for Oxfordshire's involvement in broader sub-national planning initiatives;

- include supply and demand mapping, in order to provide an effective evidence base for emerging Local Plans, the refreshed SEP, capital programmes, third party investment proposals and other funding streams (e.g. Local Growth Fund);

- create a common platform for all infrastructure providers to outline their investment plans for the future and support the business cases for these proposals.

3.4    The OxIS will add further value by not only mapping out, identifying and refining infrastructure requirements but to also use that information to provide:

- a transparent, interactive, common strategic evidence base, to enable better informed choices of where growth should go, for all Local Planning Authorities and infrastructure providers, delivered through shared resources and expertise across the Growth Board partners. Using open data will also encourage active applications development and invite approaches to take into account the constraints and capacity/demand issues we face;

- a coherent strategic context for local plans, helping to evidence cooperation across Oxfordshire to secure long term investor confidence and providing a shared basis for developer negotiations. Local authorities will be able to ensure that ambitious housing targets can be met and that new homes and jobs are delivered in the most suitable and sustainable locations, supported by the necessary infrastructure;

- the context, evidence and the process for agreement on an infrastructure delivery programme for Oxfordshire. The Growth Board will agree this strategy and keep it under regular review to ensure it is clear on its delivery success and that new opportunities or issues are being addressed in a flexible and timely way;

- agreed prioritisation of delivery, including priorities between different forms of infrastructure, through a forum and process for agreeing and coordinating the strategic infrastructure priorities for Oxfordshire, without taking away any decision-making responsibility from individual authorities;

- a mechanism to feed Oxfordshire priorities into the infrastructure strategy for England's Economic Heartland Alliance;

- a common platform to strengthen our approach to business case development and increase success for seeking external funding either from new development or external sources including devolution, Local Growth Fund or in lobbying for national infrastructure funding through Road or Rail Investment Strategies;

- Infrastructure to be planned and developed in a more transparent and understandable way, in terms of public and Stakeholder awareness, engagement and consultation.

### 4. Project Scope, Specification, Requirements and Phasing

4.1     The Project Team (consisting of Oxfordshire cross-authority officers and consultancy support as required) would focus on the main areas of strategic infrastructure provision outlined in paragraph 3.1 above, to:

- Produce the overall Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy;
- Coordinate input to the Strategy from Oxfordshire Authorities
- Provide specialist advice to advise on major investment strategies in non-authority infrastructure sectors (energy, water, sewerage, health);
- Undertake or commission any required infrastructure survey work i.e. where existing up to date data does not exist in accessible formats;
- Devise and undertake a public and stakeholder consultation process
- Develop and refine a delivery prioritisation process.
- Develop a platform to make this accessible – i.e. an interactive mapping element to bring the strategy to life and act as a mechanism to attract funding/enable investment in projects

4.2     The OxIS should be prepared in line with, but without limitation to the NPPF and PPG: the strategy would add value in relation to strategic priorities rather than duplicate District Council Infrastructure Delivery Plans.  It should consider best practice from elsewhere, including any similar strategic infrastructure plans which have been developed by other authorities similar to that proposed.

4.3     The project is proposed to be undertaken in two phases:

1) Stage 1 – continue to map out all known infrastructure planned or required, including a risk matrix for delivery of such infrastructure within the strategy period. Estimates of total cost will be included in this stage; the outcome will be a draft strategy document, for public and stakeholder consultation.

2) Stage 2 – Reporting back on consultation, including proposed changes, and strategy finalisation.  This will include development of a prioritisation methodology and an assessment approach /tool which reflects local and wider benefits, including understanding the priorities of local communities, and an action plan and programme for infrastructure delivery linked to planned and potential growth.

4.4     The required project outputs are envisaged as being:

- A strategy document, comprising a robust strategy and prioritised delivery plan, which incorporates committed and proposed development and sets out the existing/proposed/potential infrastructure required to support it;

- A clear, interactive map-based approach with supporting narrative – extending the map-based approach already developed to support Oxfordshire devolution proposals to date;
- Identification of each key infrastructure project to be included both in the strategy document and on maps by:
    - time period (e.g. committed/short term/medium term/long term)
    - housing and employment development it would directly support
    - projected costs and funding sources
    - delivery partners
    - interdependencies
- Consultation materials - including a website and other materials, together with a report summarising the outcome of consultation.

## 5. Governance and Project Management

5.1 The Project will be commissioned and owned by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, which meets quarterly and facilitates cross-authority buy-in and engagement from key partners – including the LEP, Environment Agency, HCA, etc.

5.2 The progress of the OxIS would have Executive Officer Group oversight, supported and monitored by a cross-authority project team likely to be similar to the one which has overseen the SHMA process and subsequent "Post SHMA" workstreams.

5.3 Oxfordshire County Council is proposed to act as lead authority in terms of consultant procurement and contract / project management. Any appointed consultant(s) will be expected to be procured and appointed via an appropriate framework. They would work closely with the Project Group, client Project Manager and lead officers, via a single point of contact.

## 6. Budget and Resources

6.1 A project budget ceiling of £120,000 (maximum £20,000 from each authority) has been agreed for this work, to cover:
- Production of the required outputs identified in para 4.4
- Consultation and engagement
- Liaison with all authorities, partners and other infrastructure providers
- All consultancy costs and expenses including appropriate project contingency

6.2 Drawing in partner staff resources, as well as consultancy support, will also need to be considered. As examples, this could cover: programme management, specialist technical disciplines and communications and media support

## 7.     Timetable

7.1     A detailed project plan will be agreed once the resource proposal to support this project has been worked through in greater detail and been agreed.  On the assumption that a consultant would be appointed, an indicative six-month project timetable is envisaged, with key milestones/deadlines as follows:

| Milestone | Deadline |
|---|---|
| Consultancy Brief Issued for Expressions of Interest | June 2016 |
| Formal Tendering and assessment | June-July 2016 |
| **Contract Award signed off by Growth Board** | **25 July 2016** |
| Stage 1 | 1 August-October 2016 |
| Consultation | October-November 2016 |
| **Stage 1 Strategy signed off by Growth Board** | **30 November 2016** |
| Stage 2 Delivery & Prioritisation | December 2016 –January 2017 |
| **Stage 2 Completion and sign off by Growth Board** | **31st January 2017** |

*Version 5 - 06/05/2016*