Oxfordshire Strategic Vision
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED

February 2021

Contents

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides a summary of the responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision public engagement exercise which began on 16 November 2020 and ended on 4 January 2021. The purpose of the engagement exercise was to gather the views of members of the public, councillors, stakeholders and partner organisations concerning the content of the Draft Vision, enabling a wide range of voices to influence and shape a revised document.

2. In total, 113 responses were received to an online public survey carried out through [Oxfordshire Open Thought](), together with 28 email responses, including 9 member organisations of the Growth Board. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person engagement activities were unable to take place. However, virtual workshops were held with the City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, and 76 follow up responses were received after those events. A further workshop was held with Oxford Brookes students.

BACKGROUND

3. The Oxfordshire Growth Board was established in 2014 as a Joint Committee[1] of the six councils of Oxfordshire, together with key strategic partners. Its role is to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits. It does this by overseeing the delivery of cross-county projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver in a collaborative way – between local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership and wider partners and stakeholders.

4. Oxfordshire has considerable and diverse strengths. It is also facing significant change, but with change comes the opportunity for progress based on new ways of thinking. Conversations between Growth Board partners and the public, and innovative work on economic inclusivity, have shown that there is a desire to see a different approach to planning for the future of Oxfordshire. Through the Growth Board, the councils have collectively expressed their desire for plans, strategies, programmes and investment priorities for Oxfordshire to be ambition-led and outcome-focussed. Achieving these ambitions will require all those who make future decisions about investment, and those planning for and delivering place-making across Oxfordshire, to maximise impact by working together based on shared strategic priorities and by embracing innovation to develop solutions. Developing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire is a unique opportunity to respond to this challenge.

5. Building on the success of recent engagements and consultations, the Growth Board partnership wishes to consider in a positive, open and transparent way what the ambition for Oxfordshire should look like and how it can be achieved by drawing on new ways of thinking about sustainable development. The Draft Vision is intended to be the start of a conversation with our communities to build consensus around a common set of goals for Oxfordshire, strengthening and improving the Vision. In doing so, the Strategic Vision is not intended to replace or set the specific vision for any of our individual communities or partner organisations. The Vision should also be read by partners beyond Oxfordshire as a statement of intent by the partnership that has prepared it.

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[1] *under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.*

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6. The Vision has a specific role and a clearly defined non-statutory status, as is the status of its engagement exercise. While the Draft Vision is looking to 2050 and is intended to support the development of the Oxfordshire Plan indirectly, it is not part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 itself. It explicitly does not deal with the quantum of housing or economic growth for Oxfordshire, nor direct where it should go. The Vision can however 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. A copy of the Growth Board's pre-engagement report and draft of the Strategic Vision can be found [here](), first considered on 30 October 2020.

REVIEW METHODOLOGY

Design

7. When considering the design of the engagement process, it was important to create something highly accessible that was able to gauge the sentiment of the public towards the draft Vision while allowing room for comments, challenges and suggested amendments. In order to focus responses on the key elements of the Vision, the draft text was broken down into more digestible sections, particularly highlighting "our ambition", "our desired outcomes", "definitions of good growth", "our guiding principles". A simple form was designed with a consistent 'agree, challenge, comment' format towards each section.

8. One objective of the engagement was to explore 'how far and how fast' people wanted to proceed with each of the outcomes and consider how to prioritise outcomes given the likelihood of competing commitments. As such, open questions allowed respondents to suggest how success could be measured, what targets could/should be set and how quickly they could/should be reached. Respondents were then given a ranking system between 1 and 3 for each outcome as to how high they should be prioritised, before a final open question allowing any further comments and a tool for uploading any additional statements or evidence.
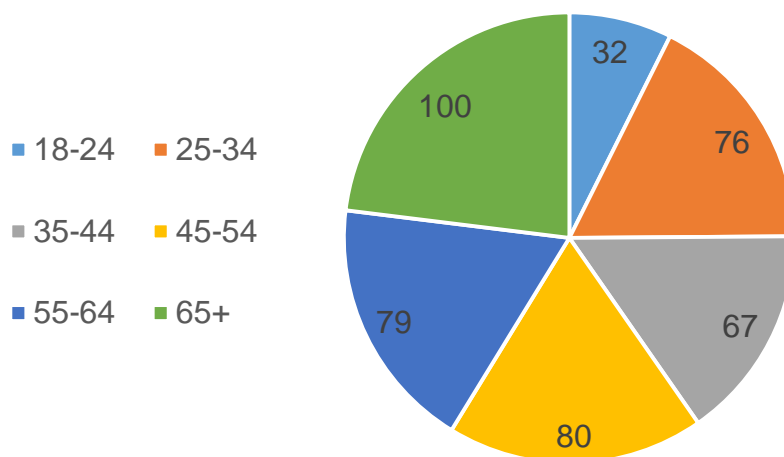
Delivery

9. Following its previous success in not only generating significant engagement, but also appealing to younger harder-to-reach-demographics, it was decided the Oxfordshire Open Thought platform – a bright, accessible user-friendly website - would be the most effective and efficient way to deliver the engagement exercise. The draft Vision was deconstructed into easily digestible sections and presented in a dynamic fashion that was both simple to navigate and attention-grabbing. Hyperlinks were positioned at regular intervals on the website that took the user directly to the online form allowing respondents to give their views at any point of the Vision content.

10. The draft Vision content went live on Monday 16 November 2020. A direct mailout with a link to the site was sent to all subscribers on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 mailing list (approx. 1,400 people). A press release was published on the Oxfordshire Growth Board and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 websites. There was a co-ordinated comprehensive six-week social media campaign across Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn – posts were shared by key partners to increase reach. The engagement was promoted internally via newsletters and senior council officers. Briefings were given to Oxfordshire's local authorities and key strategic partners such as the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The deadline for submissions was Monday 4 January 2021.

11. Throughout the process, there has been an ongoing commitment to engage with young people, recognising they will be the ones who benefit from our planning most in the future. As such, two college engagement sessions were held – one with business students from Oxford City College and one with student representatives from Abingdon and Witney College, while another session was held with Oxford Brookes students. An online survey was also sent out via Voice of Oxfordshire Youth to its members for complete in their own time.
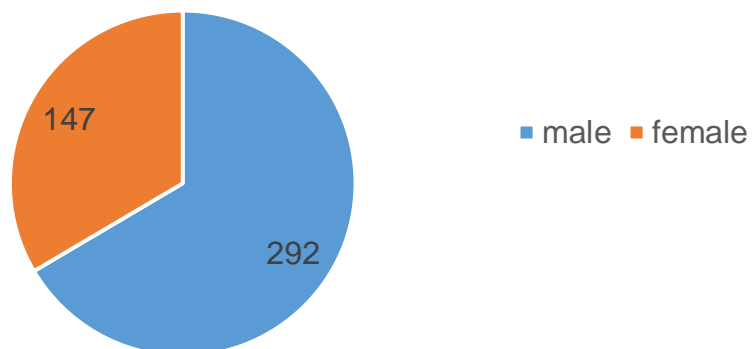
Analytics

12. Across the Open Thought platform, there was plenty of interest shown in the draft Strategic Vision with 1,265 users accessing the website and 3,759 page views during the engagement period (Monday 16 November 2020 to Monday 4 January 2021). Users spent on average 2.5 minutes on the site. 113 responses were received via Open Thought. Below are breakdowns of age and gender based on those recorded via Google Analytics – 34% and 35% of overall respondents respectively – rather than those who submitted a response.

User age
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)

Legend: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+

Values shown: 32, 76, 67, 80, 79, 100

User gender
(Of those recorded via Google Analytics)

Legend: male, female

Values shown: 147, 292

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13. Analytics demonstrate the effectiveness of direct mail to subscribers, with the majority of users coming from this source, while social media was also vital in bringing people to the site [please note "email" is not direct mailing].As well as those submissions received via Open Thought, some 28 were sent directly via email.

Users by acquisition

| ■ Direct | ■ Social | ■ Organic Search | ■ Referral | ■ Email |
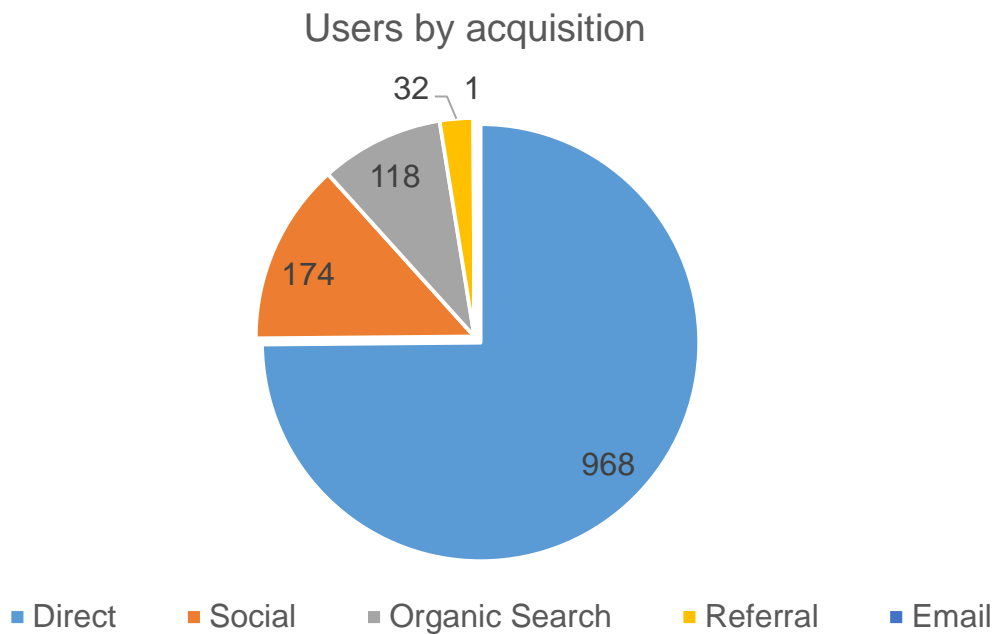
PART 2: STATUS AND INTENT OF THE VISION

14. This engagement exercise set out to ask respondents about their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. Whilst terminology and the strength of sentiment differed between respondents, a significant majority offered strong and broad support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. Across each of the specific engagement sections related to Outcomes, Guiding Principles and Good Growth, there was also wide-ranging support. Within the support offered however, there were some specific caveats or conditional red lines, which often concerned redistributing the weight or emphasis given to specific themes within the document (e.g. climate change, economic development and tackling inequalities)**.** Several responses identified great value in long-term strategic planning through the Vision, particularly concerning the need to plan for net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and to support wider spatial planning including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Many welcomed the Draft Vision as a positive step in planning for Oxfordshire's future.

15. Some felt that the document should be more ambitious in specific areas, while noting that the broad intent was right. A significant number of respondents however said there was an appropriate balance through the document. Some commented that the Vision was overdue and welcomed the document as a "good starting point" and essential for clarifying what the collective ambitions for Oxfordshire should be. Indeed, respondents who offered stronger criticisms of the document acknowledged that the overall ambitions were hard to disagree with. Their concern often related to the challenges associated with measuring and evaluating the delivery of high-level strategic intentions. They accompanied this critique with suggestions that the Vision should either provide more detail about how it will deliver and measure success or be clearer from the outset about the status of the document and

how it will be used. Some also commented that the vision was too lengthy and repetitive, though this conflicted with the view that the document required greater detail, referencing and specificity.

16. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall intent of the vision are set out below.

- *We believe it (the Vision) can play an important role in helping to articulate the vision of the Growth Board partners to local communities, residents and businesses.*
- *We fully support the draft Strategic Vision and endorse its high ambitions for the future of Oxfordshire.*
- *The Principles are coached[sic] in such vague but positive terms that it is impossible not to support their pious and laudatory intentions.*
- *Yes, we are in general agreement that the outcomes you have identified are the correct ones as high-level objectives, I can support them. At a practical, day to day level, I remain to be convinced.*
- *(We) support the intent of the draft vision as an expression of the collective ambition of partners to enhance the well-being of people in Oxfordshire.*
- *The targets you have set out are pretty good already. The challenge will be making these strategic and ambitious goals effective at a grassroots level.*
- *The Vision is balanced between environment, wellbeing and growth/infrastructure, and should stay that way.*
- *In general, I agree with the desired outcomes.*

17. Some respondents recommended that the Vision should have a clear and unambiguous statement about its intent and status, and its relationship with other key strategies and plans. The requirement for such clarity was implicit in some responses, as a small number of respondents misunderstood the broad intent of the Vision. For example, some thought the Vision should identify housing numbers and areas for development, which is not the intention for this work.

18. Respondents highlighted that without clarity there will be inherent tensions between this Vision and other strategies across partner organisations. The Growth Board's Scrutiny Panel similarly recommended that careful consideration is given to continuity between this Vision and other policies and plans, and other respondents echoed this sentiment. The relationship of this vision with the Oxford 2050 Vision (Oxford City Council), University Sustainability Strategies and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, for example, were all suggested to need recognition in the document, as a way of better explaining the Vision's status. An accompanying communications strategy was also suggested as a way of widening local understanding of the Vision's role.

19. Notwithstanding the need for clarity, some respondents went further to suggest that the Draft Vision had the potential to conflict with other existing plans and strategies. Some suggested the Vision should identify how it will manage conflict when it arises between the ambitions of the Growth Board partnership, and individual member organisations. Similarly, several submissions sought to understand how the Vision will manage conflict when the Guiding Principles, or outcomes of the Vision, might conflict in specific circumstances. Some suggested, for example, that not giving priority to carbon neutrality over ambitions for economic development and housing development might hinder that outcome, though others disagreed.

20. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Vision's purpose and usability are set out below.

- *The high-level outcomes identified address the three tenets of sustainable development, as defined in the NPPF. The challenge is of course delivering these outcomes simultaneously, and determining, where conflicts arise, which outcome (or outcomes) should take priority.*
- *(There is a need for) clarity about the relationship between the Vision and Oxfordshire Plan 2050.*
- *Economic growth and combating climate change are uneasy bedfellows.*
- *There will be inherent tensions and choices to be made in balancing the aspirations in the document, for example, achieving economic ambition set out in the Local Industrial Strategy and supporting significant housing growth whilst enhancing the natural environment and achieving carbon reduction.*
- *There is a need for a strong communication strategy and consideration needs to be given to how that will evolve over time.*
- *The document says nothing about what happens when these principles are in conflict, and how that conflict will be resolved, to ensure that the Vision is resilient. The same point applies where the Vision may be in conflict with existing plans and strategies that exist across Oxfordshire.*

PART 3: STRATEGIC VISION OUTCOMES

21. The Open Thought engagement exercise asked contributors to give their views on whether the outcomes in the Vision were the right ones for Oxfordshire. While respondents gave mixed and competing views on the extent to which specific outcomes should be emphasised or prioritised over one another, there was broad support for the seven outcomes. Many commented that the Vision had struck the right balance in seeking to deliver long term sustainable forms of development and create the environmental, social and economic conditions in which Oxfordshire can thrive. There was a strong sense from some contributors that certain outcomes should take priority over others, most often tackling climate change, though there was no universal view on which outcomes should take priority. This section of the report summarises feedback under three thematic areas which elicited the greatest level of response: Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality, Inequalities, and Transport and Digital Connectivity.

22. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the overall outcomes identified in the Vision are set out below.

- *We have to create neighbourhoods and towns which are inclusive, have access to services and open space. Never has environmental, social and economic wellbeing been more important. It is essential that we create places which properly intertwine those three aspects*
- *Some of the outcomes are obviously the right ones, but not all. Others leave important questions unanswered. This is why I have had to say no, I do not agree with them].*
- *Your strong emphasis on improving the ecology, strengthening local communities, decreasing inequalities and combating climate change with local solutions is ambitious and necessary.*
- *The outcomes outlined in the engagement draft of the Vision statement rightly reflect the need for enhanced wellbeing, carbon neutrality and preserving the natural environment.*

Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality

23. The strongest theme to emerge among these responses concerned the importance of planning for a sustainable future in which Oxfordshire reaches carbon neutrality as soon as possible, while simultaneously making systemic changes to how we live and work in order to protect and enhance the natural environment, reduce waste and increase bio-diversity. The strength of conviction and sentiments expressed with regards to climate change and environmental sustainability and renewal were significant. Contributors welcomed the prominence of these issues within the Vision, while some felt it needed more emphasis and ambition in this area. Respondents often noted that environmental sustainability and recovery was integral to the success of other outcomes within the Vision, particularly relating to health and wellbeing. Some pointed to the value of employing circular economics - keeping resources in use as long as possible - as a means of reducing waste, reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable living.

24. Numerous submissions referred to the importance of meeting HM Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050 as a minimum, and as many also called for much earlier local targets, as soon as 2025. Respondents explained that this was not a choice, but more an absolute necessity to preserve Oxfordshire's future. The responses also illustrated confusion and misunderstanding about what Oxfordshire's specific ambitions were relating to carbon neutrality. Those seeking emphasis said there should be greater references to withdrawing carbon from the atmosphere (sequestration) and planning for a carbon negative future. Some commented that tackling climate change should not be perceived as stifling economic development, and instead advocated that it provides an avenue for economic growth and innovation through zero carbon technology. Some however expressed that the economic ambitions within the vision were incompatible or fractious with the environmental ambitions.

25. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning environmental sustainability and carbon neutrality are set out below.

   - *If we don't tackle the ecological and climate crises then everything else becomes, at best, a lot worse.*
   - *Emphasis should be given to reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, banning fossil fuels and removing atmospheric carbon dioxide by, among other measures, natural sequestration.*
   - *It is refreshing to see natural capital being taken seriously.*
   - *It is considered that climate change is of the utmost importance… It is critical that we give people the opportunity to change the way we live.*
   - *The key statement in all the notes for me is that of looking to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state for our children than how we found it.*
   - *Becoming carbon neutral is no longer optional given the context of climate chaos.*
   - *The natural environment is not a luxury… These objectives, particularly, those relating to the countryside and carbon neutrality, play strongly to that end.*
   - *Natural capital should quite rightly be part of the approach to tackling climate change.*
   - *We should be more ambitious, looking at bio abundance and net carbon reduction.*
   - *Not tackling climate change equals disaster. At the same time, measures that reduce climate change can also create a healthier, more pleasant environment and way of life for all. The vision recognises this.*

Economic, Health and Social Inequalities

26. Another strong theme from the feedback concerned the need for the Vision to give greater emphasise to the need to tackle economic, health and social inequalities. Some respondents expressed how large inequality gaps were stifling opportunities for people in accessing suitable housing, education and employment, and to predetermining a series of poor quality of life outcomes. One recent example given concerned the inability of some families to access appropriate online learning facilities for their children during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was also a strong desire to ensure that economic development happens in a way that is fair and inclusive of everyone.

27. Many responses highlighted that inequalities were universal across Oxfordshire in both rural and urban settings, while specific localities experienced this to a greater extent than others. Areas of deprivation, poverty and homelessness were all highlighted as areas of serious concern. Some highlighted that inequalities were an influential factor in determining health and wellbeing outcomes, and it should therefore take higher priority within the document, given how acute these challenges are for Oxfordshire. Amid these submissions was a broad desire to see the removal of discrimination within society and to improve equality for all.

28. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning inequalities are set out below.

    - *There is a correct and important stress on environment climate activity. However, poverty and inequality should be given a higher profile as they are the key drivers of public health. Digital connectivity is also vitally important.*
    - *Inequality, as a factor which is so pervasive and determinative of achieving the overall outcome of enhancing well-being, requires greater emphasis throughout the vision.*
    - *Whatever targets you set you should aim to address issues of inequality more rapidly than the others.*
    - *We would wish to see greater emphasis on economic development and tackling inequalities throughout the document.*
    - *Include more emphasis on ensuring no one in our communities is left behind.*
    - *Gross inequality of income and wealth and of worsening inequity is putting many households at the margins of our society in terms of quality of life.*
    - *Inclusivity is key. I want to see Oxfordshire be inclusive to everyone.*
    - *The document should also include reference to effective social care being vital to reduce inequalities.*

Transport and Digital Connectivity

29. A final key theme in the feedback related to the importance of planning for a more connected society. Specifically, complementing responses concerning climate change, many asked for the Vision to increase emphasis on reducing the demand for personal car use, while simultaneously encouraging zero carbon and active forms of transport. Respondents made numerous references to the importance of digital connectivity in bringing people, businesses and communities together, particularly considering the shift to virtual meetings and social events as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, there were several explicit requests to give digital connectivity a higher profile within the Vision.

30. Some commenters expressed that the Vision needed a high-level strategic approach to ensure that developers built houses close to sites of employment, and that the Vision

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should encourage working from home opportunities. The emphasis was principally about reducing the demand on physical transport infrastructure and boosting digital capacity and capability. Respondents mentioned that access to key services should be available through virtual means, and there should be improvements to access to the natural environment. Some also considered the development of autonomous and electric vehicles to be important for the future, though this was at odds with requests to reduce personal car use.

31. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning transport and digital connectivity are set out below.

   - *In light of the opportunities arising from the response to and recovery from COVID 19 and local efforts to encourage more active travel as a means of reducing congestion and carbon emissions whilst improving health and well-being, the Vision should include greater emphasis on creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling.*
   - *I don't agree that physical connectivity and mobility is what we should be highlighting - what about digital connectivity and the ability to both live and work in diverse and flourishing communities?*
   - *(We) support improvements in digital connectivity which enable an increasing proportion of activities to be undertaken virtually, reducing the costs and adverse effects of physical transport.*
   - *The importance of digital connectivity should be emphasised. The rural areas in particular need better access to fibre to enable businesses to flourish and to better enable home working thus reducing car usage, which is high in the county in part due to the rural nature of the county.*
   - *(A) highly relevant example is the delivery of better public transport and active transport options to facilitate the move away from private transport as the dominant mode.*

PART 4: A DEFINITION OF GOOD GROWTH

32. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the definition of Good Growth contained within the Draft Vision. Most indicated that they agreed with the definition provided often with specific minor amendments or changes in emphasis. Contributors welcomed the definition as a positive step towards better defining what they saw as a complex and sometimes contentious concept. Many responses said the definition achieved a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Most respondents described the definition in positive terms by most respondents such as "common sense, laudable and reasonable," while a minority of views suggested that it "lacked detail, should be abandoned or is too vague."

33. The strongest theme emerging from the responses concerned the importance of preserving and improving the natural environment. Many respondents emphasised that growth must not have a negative impact on the environment, and that it should be used as a vehicle to improve the environment through, for example, biodiversity net gain (leaving habitats in an better state in which they are now). Accordingly, while some felt that the principles of sustainability were suitably engrained in the definition, others requested more emphasis on the importance of sustainable development and protecting the natural environment, such as ambitions for zero-carbon homes. Some submissions also said that quality of life and equality should have a greater emphasis within the definition. Another key theme was the importance of circular economics (maximising the service life of local resources), as explained earlier in this report. Many suggested that the Vision should embrace circular

economics as a way of mitigating environmental impacts and increasing economic inclusivity within Oxfordshire, with some providing links to studies and books on the subject.

34. There were also recurring themes, which are covered in more detail elsewhere in this summary. For example, several submissions explained that it was difficult to object to the definition because it offered a broad and positive view of growth, though a lack of measures to effectively evaluate how this growth is achieved was criticised. Some suggested that the definition of Good Growth or the concept of growth more generally created tension and friction between the Vision's outcomes, particularly with regards to carbon reduction and environmental enhancement. A few said the two were incompatible altogether. Among alternative terms to substitute for growth were prosperity and sustainable development. There were also suggestions that the Vision should take a similar approach in defining sustainability and resilient communities.

35. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the definition of Good Growth are set out below.

- *The definition implies a balance between economic growth and a positive social impact which seems a very laudable objective.*
- *The definition of good growth covers the 'triple bottom line' of positive economic, environmental and social outcomes.*
- *Yes, I agree. Good growth has to be genuinely socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable embodying the principles of the circular economy.*
- *We have to move away from the emphasis of growth meaning more of the same, as in more material, consumption-based growth. We need growth to be associated with thriving - thriving communities with thriving people.*
- *I'd like to see a circular economic model which links in with your sustainability objectives but doesn't fully embrace them.*
- *It strikes the right balance while addressing a sustainable balance and growth.*
- *Whilst growth provides the opportunity to improve the living standards of all, ideally those most disadvantaged, doing it at the expense of the natural environment benefits nobody*

PART 5: STRATEGIC VISION GUIDING PRINCIPLES

36. The engagement exercise asked respondents whether they agreed with the 11 Guiding Principals set out in the Draft Vision, and for their wider views on their appropriateness for Oxfordshire. Respondents noted that the guiding principles were wide ranging and agreeable, and most responses indicated that they were the 'right' ones. However, as with the support offered to other sections of the Vision, there were often caveats and requests for emphasis. Many strongly supported the guiding principles, and in some cases, respondents said they aligned with the ambitions of other organisations responding to the engagement exercise. Some were more brief in suggesting that the principles "seem right" or "sound good."

37. Contributors spoke of the need to balance the principles in a pragmatic way to ensure that the Vision did not pursue one at the expense of another. There were also suggestions for additional or stronger guiding principles related to transport, sustainability and the natural environment. Some asked that the Vision used more active language to promote delivery against the principles, and this was most often linked to the natural environment. For example, one person said, "*there should be a principle to be active in promoting nature recovery not just valuing the 'natural capital' we have already."* Another added that "*the Guiding Principles should seek not only to enhance Oxfordshire's natural capital assets, but*

also to grow them." The emphasis was to be bolder and more ambitions in the language used throughout the principles. As a cross cutting theme in the responses, several contributors said it was hard to quantify and measure achievements against these principles because of their abstract or broad nature. This summary covers the issue of measurability and evaluation later.

38. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement concerning the Guiding Principles are set out below.

- *They reflect current and contemporary concerns on a wide scale, but can also be addressed and personalised on a small scale which makes them inclusive and facilitates greater involvement and ownership.*
- *Seem reasonably well balanced, would like even greater focus on solving the biodiversity and climate crisis.*
- *We particularly support the guiding principles that expect high-quality development and will deliver homes that meet the needs of current and future generations.*
- *The references to wellbeing are supported, particularly the importance of mental wellbeing in Guiding Principle 2, given the current situation pertaining to the pandemic.*
- *They are well thought out and address the needs of the population whilst striking the balance of protecting the natural environment and resources.*
- *They offer a route to a happier and healthier lifestyle, that is sustainable both economically and environmentally.*
- *They reflect national and international concerns such as climate change, equality and diversity, mental health, community, economy and homelessness. They also interlink and connect with each other so there's cohesiveness.*

Examples of alternative guiding principles offered by respondents

- *We will safeguard and promote accessibility while diminishing the adverse effects of transport.*
- *We will reduce emissions within the county to net zero by 2030 - making efforts to reduce 'imported' emissions.*
- *We will manage the location and design of new developments including supporting facilities so as to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to promote the use of shared and active modes.*
- *We will continue to manage road space to give priority to the needs of sustainable modes.*
- *We expect to manage the introduction of autonomous vehicles so as to improve the overall efficiency and safety of traffic movement and reduce inequalities amongst people and places otherwise experiencing limited accessibility.*

PART 6: OXFORDSHIRE'S DIVERSITY AND THE NEED FOR SPECIFICITY

39. There was a strong and overarching feeling from respondents that the Vision needs to be more Oxfordshire specific. Responses highlighted that Oxfordshire is an inspiring, diverse and unique place in many respects, having world leading strengths, but also facing some significant place-based and socio-economic challenges. The county has wide-open spaces and dense urban areas, each home to sites of international importance. Respondents felt that the Vision needed to better reflect the diversity of the urban and rural environments, increasing specificity about Oxfordshire, its assets, and the diversity of its people and institutions.

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40. As one respondent summarised: "*Having a Strategic Vision for a place which reflects the particular characteristics of the place is more likely to be useful.*" Another suggested that the Vision should still be identifiable as Oxfordshire when it removes all references to the county, as a test to ensure specificity. At the centre of these responses was an acknowledgement that a fuller understanding of the county's specific circumstances, strengths and challenges should lead to a more tailored and focussed Vision.

Rural and Urban Spaces

41. Several responses said the vision should include greater reference to the City of Oxford, as a dense urban area with a unique historic core, rich natural environment and vibrant cultural offer. The city also has greater ethnic diversity among its population than neighbouring districts, as well as a significant student population, who attend world leading research institutions, which in turn employ a significant proportion of the county's population. Submissions highlighted that the Vision celebrate this and ensure it has a role in shaping a more specific place-based vision for Oxfordshire.

42. A similar balance was given in responses asking for the Vision to celebrate the rural character of the county and distinguish its importance. As one respondent explained: "*As Oxfordshire is the most rural county in the South-East Region, it would be helpful to recognise the challenge this provides in terms of our rural population's accessibility to services and facilities.*" Other contributors similarly echoed this view. Across rural and urban spaces, some respondents also wanted the Vision to recognise the unique historic assets that exist within the county, and their relationship with the natural environment and local economy.

Businesses and education

43. Some representations drew out the importance of local businesses and education institutions, their diversity, and in many cases, world leading significance; recent successes with the Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine being one of many examples. Comments highlighted a relative absence of references in this regard. Responses were unequivocal that the Vision should specifically refer to, and situate, Oxfordshire as a place of global significance. Some respondents were clear however that a focus on world leading innovation should not imply exclusivity. Respondents highlighted that these assets make Oxfordshire incredibly unique, important to the national economy, and a place to be celebrated. One submission pointed out the capacity for local businesses and institutions to help Oxfordshire meet the ambitions of the vision.

Challenges and Opportunities

44. Contributors explained that drawing out Oxfordshire's diversity and assets would help to better contextualise the acute challenges and opportunities that exist for the county. Accordingly, this would support a stronger and more robust rationale for the Vision's outcomes. There were several strong responses asking for increased emphasis on providing high quality, efficient and affordable homes, in the right places for residents; a challenge that is more critical for Oxfordshire than in many other areas. Some expressed that this challenge was particularly sharp for younger people and older people, and that the vision should focus on addressing the challenges for future generations.

45. Respondents raised the strain placed on road infrastructure and the need to reduce congestion as a specific challenge for the area, together with the emissions and wider disbenefits generated from personal car use among a large commuter population. Again, respondents expressed this to be a more significant challenge for Oxfordshire than in other areas. Many emphasised however this issue provided a real opportunity to rethink our approach to movement, travel and connectivity in Oxfordshire. This included creating the conditions to facilitate more walking and cycling, reduce travel times, and prioritise public transport while discouraging car use. At the same time, responses highlighted challenges relating to broadband access and speeds for both rural and urban communities, stifling opportunities to develop a better digitally connected society and economy.

46. As a strong theme explored elsewhere in this summary, comments repeatedly referenced economic, health and social (including education) inequalities as serious challenges for Oxfordshire's future, which often linked to challenges with housing affordability and availability. Respondents expressed wealth and health disparities across the county were severe and called for greater economic inclusivity and access to opportunities for all. In addition, comments often referenced inequality of access to green open spaces, leisure facilities, and Oxfordshire's unique natural and cultural heritage assets. Respondents highlighted several other thematic challenges were as Oxfordshire-specific by respondents, included funding for public services, caring for and housing an ageing population and utility stress.

47. Typical examples of the responses received during the engagement asking for the Vision to be more Oxfordshire specific are set out below.

- *I am surprised at how little attention is given to the role of the City of Oxford. It clearly has a functional economic area surrounding it that is long established and of national importance. The new Plan should seek to build on that success, not ignore it.*
- *There is no mention of the historic environment, the county's architectural and archaeological heritage, the vernacular architectures of our towns and villages.*
- *Oxfordshire is an important and productive farming area yet is not mentioned even once in the document… the rural economy is ignored.*
- *The outcomes are positive in principle but come across as quite generic and could be more spatially specific and related to strategic issues that Oxfordshire faces.*
- *The present draft is not embracing and building clearly on Oxfordshire's unique national and international assets and is, therefore, indistinguishable from any other area… Equally, the draft omits in any meaningful way Oxfordshire's position as a global innovation hub and the opportunities this brings.*
- *The most important outcome is to deliver homes in sufficient in numbers, location, type, size, tenure and affordability to meet the needs of residents.*
- *The document must include more references to Oxfordshire's educational assets such as its world class universities and the schools in the county.*
- *(I) would like to see more specific reference to 'diversity' in all senses.*
- *We are very concerned that the present draft does not reference nor acknowledge businesses.*

PART 7: DELIVERY AND EVALUATION

48. The Open Thought platform asked contributors how they would want to see progress measured against the outcomes identified in the Vision, and the speed at which to meet targets. There was a strength of feeling that success against the Vision's ambitions would

be difficult to quantify and evaluate because of their broad and abstract nature in some instances. Several comments suggested how this might be done.

49. There was a slight balance in favour of taking a quantitative approach to measuring success. For example, many asked for key metrics and performance indicators. Some however said that a qualitative approach would be best, based on measuring public opinion. Despite the challenges identified in evaluating the Draft Vision, respondents gave were numerous examples given of quantitative metrics that the Vision could use, and that it could review on an annual basis. There was an emphasis on using measures that were SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely), already established within the county, and recognised as universal indicators globally.

50. Some asked for a more nuanced approach to measuring success. Many advocated that the best way to measure success would be through asking residents directly for their views. Specifically, a few suggested that citizen assemblies, focus groups and neighbourhood forums would be a good way of understanding local satisfaction against the Vision's ambitions. Commenters expressed matters of wellbeing and happiness to be complex and multifaceted issues which through key performance indicators might not reasonably measure. One respondent suggested monitoring how the Vison has influenced wider plans and strategies to measure progress, and another said progress should be categorised under the parameters of human, environmental and economic welfare.

51. Typical examples of the responses received concerning delivery and evaluation of the Vision are set out below.

- *It will be very difficult to quantitively measure but qualitatively you will know by the satisfaction of new residents and if people are travelling sustainably.*
- *There is a need for a qualitative assessment of happiness of communities.*
- *Index the number of homes with solar panels, the number of electric car charging points, air quality, broadband speed, school class sizes, child poverty / food back usage, and average commute times.*
- *The Vision should be measured qualitatively through neighbourhood and citizens' assemblies.*
- *We should include a metric on the impact on future generations.*
- *Digital connectivity is urgent and could be easily measured.*
- *Defra metrics e.g. farmland and woodland bird index, butterfly index, extent of priority habitats in good condition or re-created.*
- *Publishing KPIs that are evaluated and reviewed on a 5-year rolling basis.*
- *Set clear goals i.e. annual carbon emissions measured against targets, put resources into properly quantifying biodiversity values (i.e. species diversity and abundance) and measure annually against net gain targets.*

PART 8: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

<u>Colleges</u>

52. Alongside Open Thought, officers made special effort to engage with young people on the Strategic Vision. Working with staff from City of Oxford College and Abingdon and Witney College, officers devised a targeted and tailored workshop that sought to inform young people on the Vision and gauge their thoughts on the document. Students at City of Oxford College took part in the 45-minute workshop, held virtually with on December 11. Abingdon and Witney College students participated on January 19. A remote survey version of the session was also distributed to members of Voice of Oxfordshire Youth – a countywide

forum of young people aged 11 – 18 and up to 25 with additional needs. In total, 76 young people responded.

<u>Outcomes</u>

53. The workshop asked young people how much they agreed with each of the seven outcomes. There was broad support for all of the outcomes, with having a "happier, healthier and more equal" society and "greater connectivity and mobility" scoring the highest. The session then asked students to rank the outcomes in terms of importance. Improving our natural environment ranked highest, with creating a healthier, happier and more equal society second highest. Creating a strong sense of community and greater connectivity and mobility ranked least important. When asked if there was anything young people believed was missing from the outcomes, many responded that mental health needed to be a prominent part of our outcome looking at health. This included the provision of support and education around mental health issues. They also mentioned more job opportunities and housing availability for young people.

Rank	Outcome
1st	Our natural environment will be in a better state than currently
2nd	We'll all be healthier, happier, more equal, and excited about the future
3rd	We'll work to stop releasing gases that harm our environment
4th	We'll have energy efficient, well-designed affordable homes for all
5th	Our economy will be successful and sustainable
6th	There will be a strong sense of community
7th	It'll be easier than ever to move around and connect with others

Which outcomes are most important to you? *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

COVID-19

54. This section asked students to consider some of impacts the pandemic has had on their lives and how the Vision might reflect this. Firstly, the workshop asked young people what they missed most during lockdown. Friends and family featured prominently, as did social activities including attending college, going on holiday, shopping and simply going out. Officers then asked respondents if there was anything they value more since lockdown started. The students frequently mentioned family, along with exercise, nature, walks and going to college. When asked if they felt more or less connected during lockdown, the majority felt less connected (47%) with 30% feeling more connected and the rest feeling no difference. When asked what changes they have made during lockdown they may continue with in the future, most mentioned some form of exercise or self-care such as learning new skills and hobbies or enjoying activities that made them feel better.

What three things do you value more since lockdown? (Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)

Success

55. This section sought to better understand how young people might consider any vision as successful in the future and what sort of metrics officers could use to measure that. Asked what happiness meant to the respondents, most mentioned love, health, stability, family, friends, and positivity. The exercise then asked what wellbeing meant to them. Mental health, positivity, stability p particularly financial, love, and exercise were the most used terms. When asked what success meant to them, respondents mostly said happiness, financially stable, and a good job.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

In a word, tell us what happiness means to you. *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

How far and how fast

56. The final section looked at how far and fast we should consider each outcome. The workshop tasked respondents with distributing "virtual money" to each outcome as they saw fit, with only a limited amount available. Most wanted to put resources into improving our natural environment and making society healthier, happier and more equal. The students also gave the virtual money to having energy efficient homes and reducing carbon emissions, while creating a strong sense of community attracted the least resources. Officers then asked the groups how quickly the Vision should seek to achieve each outcome. They said improving our natural environment and having well-designed energy efficient affordable homes were the outcomes that should be achieved quickest, followed by reducing carbon emissions and creating a healthier, happier and more equal society.

Bearing in mind your previous answer, how quickly should we aim to reach each outcome? *(Slide from Abingdon and Witney College engagement session)*

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57. Final thoughts submitted by the young people reiterated the need for more mental health support, creating a more equal society through eradicating homelessness and poverty and everyone being able to access the same opportunities, and providing stability in the future. Respondents appreciated that they had the opportunity to give their views and hoped officers would considered their views as part of revising the final Vision.

58. The impact of Covid was clear in young people's responses. The biggest message was that mental health needed to be a central part of the Vision. This included provided more support for mental health, more education around mental health, and ensuring access to green spaces and the ability to exercise to help improve mental health. Linked to this was the over-riding feeling that young people wanted stability in the future, understandable given the huge disruption in their lives. The Vision provides an opportunity to offer them the positivity they crave for their futures, with the promise of a stable job, access to affordable housing and being able to socialise with friends and family.

University

59. In addition to the college sessions, officers held a special virtual workshop with students from Oxford Brookes University on November 5. The students came from two courses: BA Planning and Property and BA Urban Design, Planning and Development. They were all third-year undergraduates doing the Strategic Planning & Policy module and in total about 50 students joined the session.

60. Officers asked the students to discuss and feedback on the following questions:
    1. Are these the right outcomes for Oxfordshire?
    2. What needs to be done to achieve these outcomes?
    3. What should our targets look like – how far & how fast?

61. The overall priorities were creating places that allow healthy lifestyles (in the widest sense and including because it reduces demands on public services), an economy that provides good job prospects, and a green economy with a reduction in carbon emissions and congestion.

62. Students thought high-quality community green space was really important, along with quality public space in the built environment. Some mentioned the importance of mental wellbeing and mindfulness in this context. The students also linked green infrastructure with physical exercise, biodiversity and food production (allotments, private gardens). The right mix of housing in terms of tenure, type and size was important, with affordable housing a priority, along with a need for homes for the elderly. The need to improve space standards was strongly emphasised.

63. Respondents thought smaller communities were better in terms of creating a sense of community. Homes needed to be fit-for-purpose for the long-term (e.g in terms of climate change and adaptability as people's need change). There were lots of references to the importance of community assets. The students thought it important that planning of places and services was long-term, co-ordinated, clean and green. In terms of reducing carbon emissions, the students suggested there was more scope to reduce reliance on the private car and/or to use electric vehicles, improve fast broadband, and use principles from the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

Responses received to the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic engagement exercise 2020/21

PART 9: LIMITATIONS AND LEARNINGS

The draft Strategic Vision is a high-level overarching document considering the kind of place that Oxfordshire should be over the next 30 years. Context is also vital when considering the number of responses. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has seen huge shifts in lifestyle and uncertainty over both people's short and long-term future. In such circumstances, the initial challenge is cutting through the Covid coverage to make people aware of the draft Vision and the engagement exercise. There is clearly also difficulty in asking them to consider a wide-ranging document that looks decades into the future while many are struggling to simply get by day-by-day.

64. A combination of pandemic restrictions, timeframes and efficiency meant officers hosted and promoted the engagement exercise online. This unfortunately results in excluding those who are either not able to get online or who are not comfortable using IT. Statistically these are likely to be older people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This needs to be taken into consideration when analysing the responses received.

65. While direct emails were the largest source of users to the Open Thought site, analytics show about 45% of all subscribers opened the email inviting them to take part in the draft Strategic Vision engagement, and about 17% clicked on the link to take them to the site. Future work is needed in establishing what can be done to increase both of these rates to further the reach of our engagement.

66. Similarly, there were 1,839 views of the online form on the Open Thought website, and 708 starts, but 115 responses (including two tests) meaning a response rate of 16%. Timeframes meant extensive testing and refinement of the form was not possible, however there is clear room for improvement in future engagement exercises to increase the response rate.

67. There were a handful of respondents who appeared to confuse questions and responses, as well as a small number who it seems attributed low scores to outcomes they wanted to prioritise the most, rather than a high score. These anomalies are negligible in regards to altering the wider interpretation of responses in the engagement, but quantitative measurements have not been included in the report as a result. They will also be considered in the evaluation of the online form.

PART 10: CONCLUSIONS

68. The Strategic Vision engagement exercise set out to ask the public and partners for their views on the Draft Oxfordshire Strategic Vision. The feedback demonstrates strong support for the principle of establishing a Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, and for the ambitions set out within the document. This includes support for the Outcomes, Guiding Principles and definition of 'Good Growth.' There were however a range of suggestions for increasing emphasis and ambition, most often in respect of tackling climate change, protecting the environment and tackling inequalities.

69. Respondents wanted to see the Vision take a more tailored approach to the challenges and opportunities facing Oxfordshire, and for it to make more of the unique people, places and assets within the county. A significant number of responses indicated concern over how the Vision would be evaluated and delivered, most often because the Vision's intent was considered broad and wide ranging, and therefore difficult to measure. Finally, many said

that there needs to be greater clarity about the Vision's status, and its relationship with other organisational strategies and plans; particularly where tensions might arise between the two. A small minority of responses had more fundamental critiques of the Vision, most often related to deliverability and the perceived tensions between delivering good growth and the environmental ambitions within the document.

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