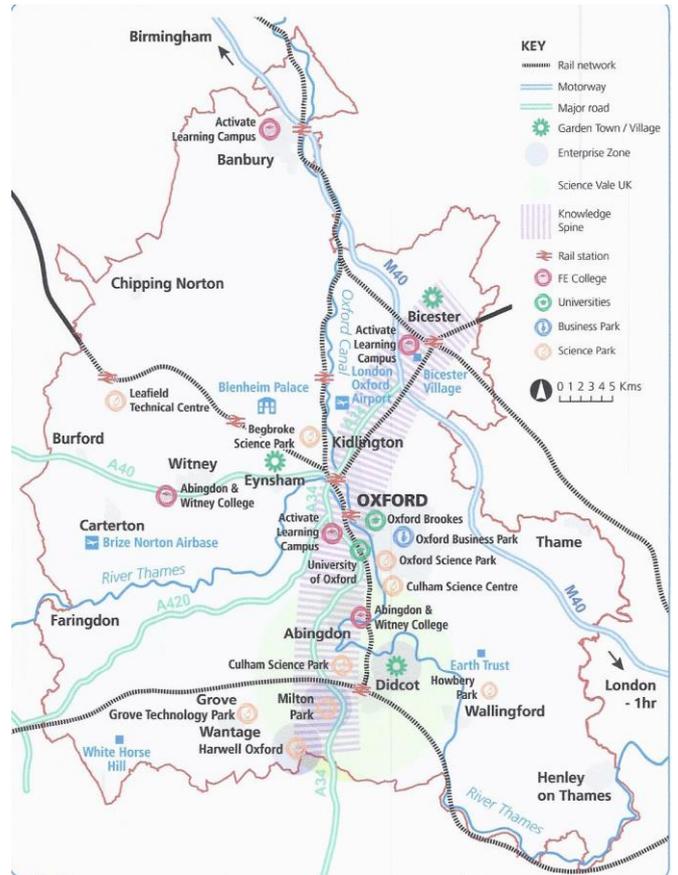


OXFORD CIVIC SOCIETY



SHAPING OXFORD'S FUTURE

**OXFORDSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
STAGE ONE REPORT CONSULTATION
Comments from the Oxfordshire Futures
Group of the Oxford Civic Society**



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Comments from Oxfordshire Futures Group, Oxford Civic Society

1. We very much welcome the joined-up thinking that the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) initiative demonstrates. We encourage the continued strengthening of inter-authority and multi-sector planning and especially the strengthened relationship between inter-authority development planning and infrastructure planning. However we believe that the Stage 1 early output of OXIS is seriously flawed.

2. What is presented is an attempt to meet the demands of the development proposals of the finalised or about to be finalised Local Plans of the Districts and City. However each of these has been prepared independently without the benefit of an overall spatial plan and without an assessment of current and prospective strategic infrastructure capacity. Hence an infrastructure strategy is being retro-fitted to 5 Local Plans but without an analysis of the economic efficiency and sustainability of their development proposals using infrastructure capacity as a basis for the analysis. Nor does it include an assessment of their effectiveness (e.g. to what extent the Local Plans are implementable) or facilitate the accommodation of the final mile (few miles) of the E-W Oxford –Cambridge economic corridor in ways which are economically efficient.

3. It is noted that the assumption is made that existing employment and housing growth projections are the principal development drivers. Little attention is given to intended social and environmental characteristics of future growth including reduced carbon emissions, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and improved public health. All of these require a clear analysis of existing and prospective future infrastructure capacity and, based on this, the identification of an optimal economic, social and environmental allocation of employment and housing growth.

4. We had also expected a report on the capacity of Oxfordshire's infrastructure to be the basis of the proposed Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). But there is no mention of this. Instead, at least at this stage of its preparation, the infrastructure strategy offers a series of short term fixes with no consideration of demand (or scope for its management) over 30 years or more. The general tenor of OXIS at this stage of its development is that infrastructure should serve the needs of planned development on a 'predict and provide' basis.

5. This leads to inadequate attention to innovative infrastructure investments especially in the transport and energy sectors. The prioritization process is also inadequate, with a very narrow perspective which appears to imply that there is no economic gain to be derived from schemes which benefit existing businesses and transport users. It would potentially disqualify many transport schemes whose benefits cannot be linked directly with any particular development sites. This applies especially to schemes in and around Oxford.

6. We recommend that as work on OXIS continues, linked with the JSP, a different approach is introduced: one in which development would be directed to where it contributes to the most efficient use and enhancement of infrastructure especially, but not only, transport networks. Ideally this consideration would have fed into the *current* Local Plan site allocations.

7. It is recommended that this perspective is considered in subsequent work on the detailed content of the infrastructure strategy. We recommend that there will be scope for refining the content of OXIS over time as work is undertaken developing the JSP. This would encourage a role for OXIS and JSP as a bridge between current and future Local Plans and will prevent them from becoming entirely 'backward looking', i.e. serving past decisions rather than influencing future ones.