

Local Plan 2040 Preferred Options Natural Resources Background Paper

Introduction

1. The 2040 Vision for Oxford is that the environment will be central to everything we do; it will be more biodiverse, better connected and resilient and resources will be used prudently to mitigate impacts on the soil, water and air. The policy options that have been drafted seek to promote this vision ensuring good stewardship of the city's natural resources.
2. This paper builds upon the context and updates where applicable, the Air, Water and Land Quality topic paper, prepared for the Issues consultation in summer 2021.
3. The Issues Consultation did not result in a huge number of responses around the natural environment however those received from Thames Water encouraged a policy approach around water efficiency, surface water drainage the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within new design. More details of these issues are set out in the flooding background paper. Natural England raised the need to consider air quality impacts on protected sites, in particular the Oxford Meadows SAC (Special Area of Conservation). The need for more evidence to understand the hydrogeology of the Lye Valley SSSI was also raised.

Context

4. The responses from the Issues consultation have led to us commissioning a hydrogeological assessment of the Lye Valley and consideration of the impacts of new development. This work has recently been tendered and consultants have now been appointed. Owing to the need for two winters of ground water monitoring data the evidence will not be concluded in time for the draft plan (Regulation 19) document however there will be reference to the study and any updates on progress within the next iteration of the 2040 Plan.
5. Discussion is ongoing with Natural England and the County Council as to the transport modelling that needs to be undertaken to ensure that any new development in the 2040 Plan resulting in more traffic movements does not have a detrimental impact upon the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Air Quality Assessments and Standards Policy options

6. It will be important to develop a policy in the Local Plan that ensures proposals for new development assess local air quality in major development and that where required appropriate mitigation measures are in place before development commences.
 - a. Air Quality Assessments and Standards preferred option is to require Air quality assessments (AQAs) for all major development with impacts to be mitigated
 - b. In combination with preferred option a there is the option to require all new major development within the city's AQMA to comply with the local

air quality standard for Nitrogen Dioxide as set out in the city's most up to date [air quality action plan](#)

7. There is a clear link with these policy options and those options around new builds which in order to be zero carbon building would need to restrict the use of fossil fuel heating such as gas boilers in new development. This will help to limit addition air pollution.

Water Quality

8. Ensuring that water quality is maintained is essential to ensure the supply and availability of clean drinking and bathing water and to ensure the protection of our sensitive ecological sites. The preferred policy option is to not include a bespoke policy for water quality as it would result in duplication across the plan but to address this issue in policies around resilient design and construction and ensuring that sustainable drainage systems are incorporated into new development to manage surface water and safeguard water quality

Soil and Land Quality

9. Oxford has areas of contaminated land owing to its long history of development. As such, there are areas of the city which are likely to be affected by poor soil quality and the presence of contaminants that could be harmful for human health. It will therefore be important to ensure that the quality of our soils and the stability of the land is protected as well as ensuring that people are not brought into contact with harmful contaminants that may arise from the land we build on, particularly in instances where historic land uses may have left contamination behind. The policy options include a preferred approach that requires the submission of details of investigations of any site suspected to be contaminated and details of remedial measure which then must be carried out.