

Background paper 014

Grey and Digital Infrastructure

This paper addresses the provision of grey infrastructure (including roads, rail, sewers and energy) and digital infrastructure (including telecoms and broadband) to meet the community's needs and support the growth of the city.

Relevant Local Plan 2045 Objectives:

- Create opportunities for supporting the transition to more sustainable/active forms of transport, including by reducing the need to travel, supporting good bicycle parking facilities and avoiding on and off-street car parking where possible across the city.
- Curate a built environment that supports and enables people to be physically and mentally healthy.
- The city's water resources are utilised efficiently with consideration for the future, whilst water quality is protected and enhanced for the benefit of the wider environment.

Relevant SA Objective(s):

1. To achieve the city's ambition to reach net zero **carbon emissions** by 2040.
6. To provide accessible essential **services and facilities**.
8. To reduce **traffic congestion and associated air pollution** by improving travel choice, shortening journeys and reducing the need to travel by car/ lorry.
9. To achieve **water** quality targets and manage water resources.

SEA theme(s):

Water, climatic factors, material assets, human health, landscape, population and air.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Infrastructure generally consists of facilities and services that meet the needs of the local population and help support development and growth.

1.2 Infrastructure is often broken down into broad sub-groups. These sub-groups are usually made up of following infrastructure categories:

- Physical infrastructure (such as transport, utilities infrastructure);
- Social infrastructure (such as schools, healthcare and community centres);
- Green and blue infrastructure (such as parks, waterways and cemeteries) and
- Digital infrastructure (such as high-speed internet, mobile telecoms and smart grid energy)

1.3 Infrastructure needs can arise from deficiencies in current provision; additional requirements to support new development; or as the result of increased demand due to population growth. This topic paper focuses on physical and digital infrastructure. It sets out an overview of the policy context relating to transport infrastructure provision. However, a more detailed discussion on transport infrastructure can be found in Background Paper 12 – Transport. A discussion about social infrastructure can be found in Background Paper 013 - Liveable city and a discussion on green and blue Infrastructure is covered in Background Paper 005a – Green Infrastructure.

2. Policy Framework/Plans, Policies, Programmes (supporting Task A1 of Sustainability Appraisal)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1 Infrastructure provision and delivery to support new development has become increasingly recognised as an important national planning priority in recent years. The most recent NPPF (December 2024), acknowledges the importance of new, upgraded, and/ or expanded infrastructure that is required to support the developmental aims and ambitions of the Labour administration.

2.2 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for: infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk, and provision of minerals and energy; and community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure).

2.3 Paragraph 35 of the NPPF sets out that Plans should set out the contributions expected from development and that this should set out the levels and types of infrastructure required providing such policies do not undermine the viability of the plan. Both physical and digital infrastructure (both of which are relevant to this topic paper) are included.

2.4 Paragraph 77 off the NPPF sets out that the supply of large numbers of new homes should be “supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities”. While Chapter 6 of the NPPF sets out the Government’s approach to the supporting economic growth through the planning system. The NPPF now includes digital infrastructure as one of the Government’s five named key sectors supported by the NPPF to “meet the needs of a modern economy”. It also sets out that planning policies should make provision for “new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries”. While Paragraph 86 sets out the importance of delivering infrastructure and associated improvements, where it is recognised that identified inadequacies are a potential barrier to investment.

2.5 Chapter 10 of the NPPF recognises the importance of digital infrastructure and sets out that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. The NPPF also stresses the importance of plans supporting the expansion of next generation mobile technology and sets out that full fibre connections should be prioritised to existing and new developments.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance section on Plan-making refers to infrastructure within several different contexts. A selection of these are set out below:

- The potential need for additional cross-boundary infrastructure;
- Understanding if there are barriers to investment (e.g., lack of housing, infrastructure, etc.);
- In working out developer contributions, a proportionate evidence base should include a plan-level viability assessment;
- Providing confidence that new homes will be supported by appropriate infrastructure in a timely manner and providing policy support for identified deficiencies.
- To be able to demonstrate that any critical infrastructure required to support the level of growth proposed in the plan is deliverable within a reasonable timeframe;
- To use the Infrastructure Funding Statement to support infrastructure delivery throughout the plan period.

Oxford Cambridge Growth Corridor

2.7 In January 2025, the Chancellor unveiled new plans to deliver the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor that will boost the UK economy by up to £78 billion by 2035, catalysing the growth of UK science and technology. Sir Patrick Vallance has been appointed as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor Champion to provide senior leadership to ensure that the Government’s ambitions are delivered. The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor will provide a clear strategy for the entire region backed by funding for housing and infrastructure. A new growth commission for Oxford was also announced in January to review how nationally significant growth for the city and the surrounding area can be unlocked and accelerated.

Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP)

2.8 The [LTCP5](#) was published in July 2022 and follows on from the previous Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP4). The vision is of a net zero travel system for the county that protects the environment and makes for a better quality of life for communities that live there.

2.9 The LTCP is supported by a number of supporting strategies. The objectives of these strategies are to reduce the need to travel, reduce reliance on individual private car use and to promote alternative modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public/ shared transport as natural first choices.

2.10 There is a strong emphasis on promoting a 'decarbonised' transport network, air quality and productivity on a sustainable basis, which includes highlighting role of digital infrastructure in enhancing connectivity and reducing the need to travel.

Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP)

2.11 Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIPs) are being prepared for several parts of Oxfordshire. The [Oxford City LCWIP](#) was adopted by Oxfordshire County Council in March 2020. The plan sets out evidence in relation to achieving a 50% increase in cycling in Oxford. The City LCWIP:

- Lays out a comprehensive cycle network to focus expenditure for best value;
- Identifies a list of infrastructure improvements for both walking and cycling based on best practice and the Cycle and Walking Design Guides;
- Summarises the evidence for supportive measures, such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and controlled parking zones; and
- Provides cost estimates for these schemes that can be used in future bids and in planning decisions.

Local Area Energy Plans for Oxfordshire

2.12 In February 2025 an announcement was made that all the Oxfordshire authorities including all district councils and the county council (supported by the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee) are to deliver a Local Area Energy Plan (LEAP) for the county. This will help address climate change and provide recommendations for the development and improvement of energy-related policies, regulations and incentives including securing cleaner, more affordable energy.

Oxford Local Plan 2036 (Infrastructure Policies)

2.13 The Oxford Local Plan 2036 contains several policies relating to infrastructure. These policies help support new development by ensuring that appropriate infrastructure is provided in

a timely manner. For instance, Policy V8 – Utilities, requires planning applications to be supported by information that capacity issues have been explored with the appropriate utilities providers and sets out that development will not be supported without sufficient evidence regarding utilities capacity. Whereas Policy V9 – Digital Infrastructure, supports development that delivers full-fibre broadband connection speeds and appropriate electronic communications infrastructure provided that a set of criteria are met.

3. Current situation (supporting Task A2 and A3 of Sustainability Appraisal)

3.1 Infrastructure investment usually either comes directly from new development in the form of developer contributions or direct delivery, or indirectly, through the attraction of central and local government funds associated with new development. Through Local Growth Funds 1 and 2, the [Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership \(LEP\)](#) secured £118.4m to support dynamic economic growth funding numerous infrastructure projects. They were also awarded £24.16m, as part of Local Growth Fund 3, enabling the support more projects to benefit local people and business.

Infrastructure needs can change over time, for instance, as changes in demographics occur, or new technologies emerge, investment in infrastructure does not always keep up with the pace of development, especially in areas where the cumulative effects of smaller developments are felt more acutely, such as in Oxford. When this happens, a deficit is created which can impact on the existing and future population.

3.2 Figure 1 shows the development pressure arising from the planned growth set out in the Local Plan 2036. This area-based analysis divided the city into four broad sectors, each of which has planned housing growth of more than 1,000 units. Development pressure also exists adjacent to the boundary of the city with new around 4,800 new homes planned adjacent to the city's South Infrastructure Area. In addition, there are more than 1,100 homes proposed outside the East Infrastructure Area. A similar number of new homes are also planned (around 1,400) adjacent to the Oxford's North Infrastructure Area. Although these developments are outside the city there is the potential for them to put pressure on existing infrastructure facilities and services in the city.

3.3 Figure 1 also shows the locations of the city's Category 1 employment sites. This shows that there is a cluster of existing employment sites located in the south of the city, which is presently not well-served by public transport. Important infrastructure projects such as the redevelopment of Oxford Station and the re-introduction of passengers on the Cowley Branch Line will improve the connectivity and accessibility of these, and other employment sites in the south of the city across the county and the wider growth corridor.

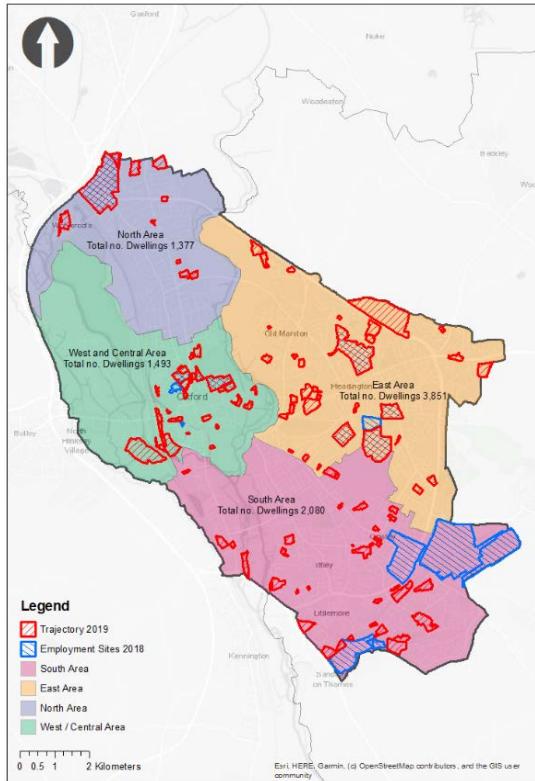


Figure 1: Area-based analysis of the Local Plan 2016-2036 requirements for ca. 11,000 new homes and 25ha of new employment land in Oxford. This map only shows Category 1 employment sites (LP2036)

How is infrastructure funded?

3.4 Currently in Oxford, Section 106 (S106) agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) are the main mechanisms in place for generating funds from development to be invested in infrastructure to help mitigate the impacts of development. S106 agreements can set out legal obligations for on-site infrastructure needs, are often on major sites and can include affordable housing contributions. CIL is a charge levied on the new floor space of new developments and is accumulated from developments across the city to be reinvested into infrastructure needs of the city.

3.5 The City's [Infrastructure Funding Statement \(IFS\)](#) summarises the amount of developer contributions obtained, allocated and spent in the previous financial year. CIL receipts for the 2023/24 monitoring year were just over £5.67 million and S106 contributions in 2023/24 were just over £190,000. The S106 money received was put towards a variety of contributions including affordable housing, highways management, air quality monitoring, and community facilities. Non-financial S106 contributions included public open space, affordable housing and footpath links.

3.6 [Oxfordshire County Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement \(IFS\)](#) is also available online and identifies income and expenditure for education, highways and public transport, fire service, libraries and other county responsibilities.

Analysis of current infrastructure provision

Utilities: Water resources

3.7 Thames Water has a duty to maintain the security of the water supply, and every five years they produce a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) which sets out how they plan to meet customer's needs while protecting the environment over the plan period. The latest version WRMP24 [published in October 2024](#) looks ahead to 2075.

Utilities: Wastewater treatment

3.8 The Oxford sewer network manages demand from over 250,000 customers sited in Oxford and the surrounding areas. The catchment is served by the Oxford Sewage Treatment Works (STW), located just outside the city boundary to the south of the city, and Littlemore Pumping Station.

3.9 The Oxford STW is one of the most important structural assets with respect to future development in Oxford. In the past, it has benefitted from some increases in capacity. However, recently further upgrades to the Oxford STW facility have been shown to be needed. These upgrades are to ensure that the Oxford STW is able to both meet current and future demand for growth in the city and the surrounding area.

3.10 Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Oxford City Council met several times in 2024 to discuss the progress of the upgrades required to improve treatment capacity at the Oxford STW. The purpose of these meetings was to provide confidence and evidence that the planned and proposed growth in the surrounding area can be realised in full (and any wastewater arising from it could be satisfactorily dealt with at the Oxford STW). Thames Water has kept Oxford City Council updated and involved in its capacity upgrade discussions. On 20 March 2025, following a rigorous process to find a solution to unlock new homes, an announcement was made that the EA, Thames Water and Oxford City Council agreed a scheme to provide the capacity needed at the Oxford STW. Thames Water has presented a clear, fully costed and funded programme of work that provides the confidence and certainty that water quality will be protected and communities in the area will have the water services they need, allowing projected growth to come forward.

3.11 The City Council has commissioned a new Water Cycle Study to accompany the preparation of the Local Plan 2045 which will analyse the current situation in the water environment. The Water Cycle Study looks at how the likely development proposed through the new Local Plan could potentially impact the water environment.

Utilities: Energy

3.12 Scottish Southern Electricity Networks (SSE) is responsible for delivering electricity distribution across southern England, including Oxford. Throughout the development of the Local

Plan 2036 the Council liaised with SSE in relation to the likely impacts of proposed development allocations in the plan on their networks; and to ensure that any upgrades to the network that may be required to serve the proposed levels of development will be provided in a timely manner. Continuing these conversations to support the production of the Local Plan 2045 are an important part of infrastructure planning especially as more details are known about the quantum and distribution of development.

3.13 Oxford has set out ambitious objectives in relation to cutting carbon emissions and moving towards being a net zero city by 2040. Renewable energy generation technology is likely to play an important role in this endeavour and there is a variety of renewable energy infrastructure schemes around the city.

3.14 The online platform '[The Peoples Power Station](#)' which was developed by the Low Carbon Hub maps a variety of renewable energy and energy efficiency projects across Oxfordshire and a snapshot of the distribution for Oxford is included in Figure 2, which shows that most installed schemes in the city involve small-scale solar photovoltaics. This reflects the constrained nature of Oxford, and the relatively high density of the existing built-up area means that there are limited opportunities for some larger-scale renewable energy projects (e.g., solar farms). However, the city's higher densities also present opportunities for certain renewable energy projects (e.g., district heating), which need numerous potential users within close proximity to one another.

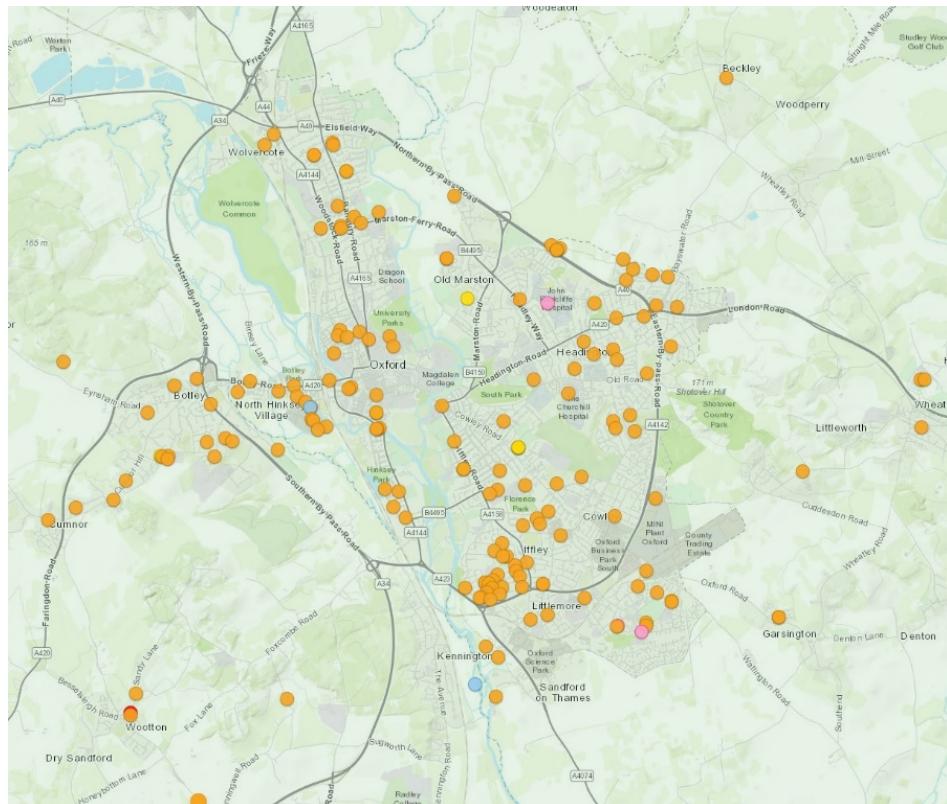


Figure 2: Renewable energy generation schemes in and around Oxford. Orange markers indicate solar photovoltaics, yellow is solar thermal, pink is combined heat and power, and blue is hydro. Source: People's Power Station (accessed 13 January 2025)

3.15 Renewable and low-carbon energy technologies are currently secured in new developments to comply with the policy requirements of the Local Plan 2036. As such they are usually negotiated through commitments secured through the development management process and are therefore generally funded and provided by developers.

3.16 As well as electricity, gas supply is often regarded as an essential utility provision in new development. The national high pressure gas transmission system is owned by National Grid, but the lower pressure local distribution network in the Oxford area is owned by Scotia Gas Network (SGN).

3.17 As part of the development of the Local Plan 2036, SGN assessed all identified sites to identify if there would be any likely issues with the gas network. The results of the network capacity assessment showed that most of the sites would be unlikely to have any issues connecting to the gas network. It will be important to ensure that any new sites identified through the Local Plan 2045 are able to be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing network.

Digital Infrastructure

3.18 Oxfordshire County Council's [Digital Infrastructure Programme](#) aims to improve digital infrastructure across the county and their work includes bespoke projects such delivering GigaHubs with Full Fibre broadband including at more remote locations including village halls, GP surgeries, schools and other public buildings. Other important work involves the delivery of gigabit-capable broadband to around 10,000 premises in Oxfordshire and driving to deliver 5G technology in Oxfordshire as part of a wider regional project across England's Economic Heartland.

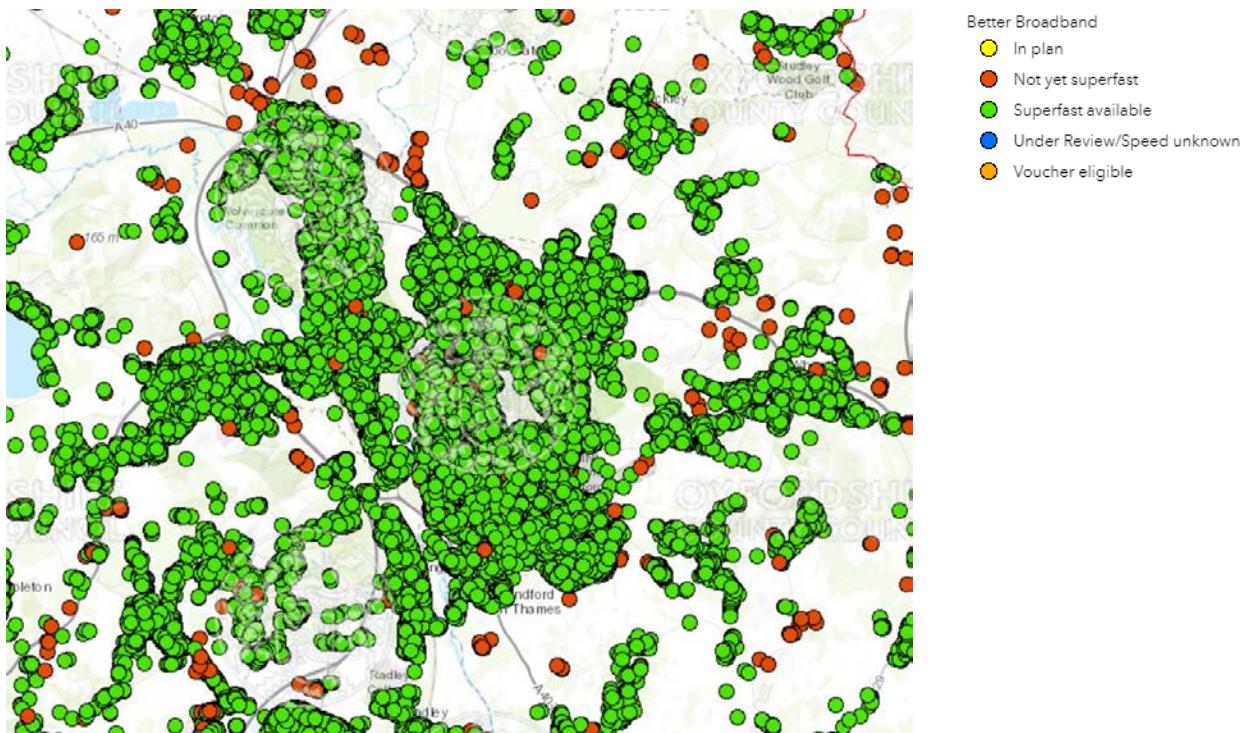


Figure 3: Map of broadband coverage in Oxford City. Source: [Digital Infrastructure Oxfordshire](#).

3.19 Good broadband connections are essential for many highly skilled jobs. Oxford is well covered by superfast broadband connections (speeds of >24Mps). Figure 3 shows the availability of superfast connections across the city is now widespread, although there are still some areas where improvements are needed. Good broadband connections can help support a range of employment opportunities including supporting opportunities that enable flexible and hybrid working styles.

3.20 The County Council has been undertaking work in relation to the roll out of full fibre for commercial buildings, with the aim that this will also support the delivery of high-quality digital infrastructure to surrounding residential properties. Another County Council project is supported by a funding source available from central government which can only be used for the 'final 20%' harder to reach properties and ensure that they have 'superfast' connectivity. Although it is often used to support the delivery of broadband outside of urban areas the fund may apply to some areas of Oxford.

Another important aspect of digital connectivity is coverage of telecoms and mobile phone networks. Coverage varies across the city based upon which of the four main mobile network operators are being used to provide this service, with higher generations of network (up to 5G which is currently being rolled out nationally), being able to offer increased performance and download speeds.

4. Likely trends without a new Local Plan (supporting Task A2 and A3 of Sustainability Appraisal)

4.1 Infrastructure is needed to mitigate the impacts of new development and support its delivery. A new Local Plan provides an opportunity to review and update the existing infrastructure requirements identified to support the current adopted plan. Without a new plan, any infrastructure schemes needed to support the delivery of new additional development (not previously identified within the current Local Plan) may not be delivered in a timely manner.

4.2 Discussions with key stakeholders and infrastructure delivery partners is an important aspect of the plan-making process because key stakeholders can identify infrastructure and funding gaps needed to support development. Having a clear and up-to-date understanding of the likely future development in an area can assist infrastructure partners with infrastructure planning and funding programmes which often do not align with the Local Plan making process. The likely trends without a new Local Plan could mean that key critical infrastructure issues are not identified at an early stage and this could result in delays to infrastructure delivery. A new Local Plan provides an opportunity to identify and address issues with infrastructure providers and key stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to support mitigate the impacts of development.

5. Key Issues through the Local Plan 2045

Overall policy approach to infrastructure provision

5.1 Infrastructure is often delivered by third party providers, whose delivery plans are not always synchronised with the development planning process. Therefore, the Local Plan provides an opportunity to update third-party providers with development projections. The inclusion of infrastructure policies provides a framework by which specific infrastructure needs for different types of development can be identified as much as possible in a transparent and predictable way. Overall this can assist with ensuring infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner to support development.

Land Safeguarded for Infrastructure Policy

5.2 The plan includes a new policy (policy I2: Land Safeguarded for Infrastructure), which did not form part of the Regulation 18 consultation document. The purpose of the policy is to show within the Local Plan 2045, certain infrastructure schemes that are covered by other consenting regimes which fall outside of the jurisdiction of Oxford City

Council's planning powers. The Policy itself covers two specific infrastructure schemes – the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, and East West Rail. The County Council is the determining authority for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, while East West Rail is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Both infrastructure schemes are at stages within their respective consenting regimes where it is appropriate to include information relating to these schemes within the city's Local Plan 2045. Each scheme is considered in turn. The land safeguarded for the East West Rail Project was the subject of a Safeguarding Direction in November 2025 which introduced specific procedural requirements for development proposals within the affected area. While the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme is at an advanced stage in the County Council's development management process.

5.3 Effectively, there are two policy options that were considered. Either to include a policy or not. Neither option is considered to have any significant effects on the sustainability objectives identified within the SA Framework. This is because the safeguarding of land identified within either infrastructure scheme does not significantly affect the ability of locations identified for development that have been identified in the Oxford Local Plan 2045, to come forward. Also, any assessment of whether there was a policy or not would be likely to be broadly similar. However, the inclusion of a policy would be likely to help to support a more transparent and joined-up approach between the different consenting regimes.

5.3 Policy I2: Land Safeguarded for Infrastructure is therefore a policy which provides information about strategic infrastructure schemes (i.e., that cover more than one local authority area) and provides bespoke procedural undertakings for each of the identified schemes. The City Council considers that, on balance, given that such a policy would not give rise to any likely significant effects, and would be likely to help support a more transparent approach, the City Council has therefore included such a policy within the Local Plan 2045.

Appendix A – Regulation 18 Policy options sets

- The Local Plan 2045 includes proposed policies that aim to facilitate provision of physical and digital infrastructure in support of development in Oxford. For each potential policy, options for the specific approach that could be taken for the Local Plan 2045 have been considered, and these ‘options sets’ are set out in tables on the following pages. The tables identify potential positives of the approach, as well as the potential negative or neutral impacts that could arise depending on the approach taken and that have helped inform the preferred position set out for the Regulation 18 consultation.
- Additionally, the options sets have been considered in light of their specific sustainability impacts through a high-level screening against the 12 sustainability criteria forming the assessment process for the separate Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (explained in greater detail in the main Sustainability Appraisal report). A summary of this screening process is included at the end of each options set table.

Policy Option set 014a (draft Policy S3): Infrastructure Delivery in New Development

5.6 National policy requires local plans to make sufficient provision for a range of different types of infrastructure. This option set looks at two options - Option A considers introducing a policy to require development proposals make a contribution towards or deliver the infrastructure required to meet identified needs. Option B, in contrast considers the positive and negative consequences of not introducing such a policy.

Table 5.1 Policy options set 014a – Infrastructure Delivery in New Development

Option for policy approach	Potential positive consequences of the approach	Potential negative/neutral consequences of the approach
Option A Include a policy that sets out how and when development proposals are expected to contribute to, or deliver the infrastructure required to meet identified needs. Make specific reference in the policy to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and set out a selection of specific infrastructure projects. Support the use of on- and off-site contributions and identify appropriate delivery mechanisms (e.g., S106, S278, CIL) to support the timely delivery of infrastructure.	Provides clear advice about how and when infrastructure delivery is needed to mitigate the impacts of development. The IDP forms a key part of the evidence base which helps to demonstrate that there is a funding gap and that contributions from development can be sought. Setting out the specific infrastructure projects in the policy can help the plan achieve its vision.	No specific reference about how best to delivery infrastructure projects that are themselves resilient to future climate change impacts. Policy only explicitly mentions rail and bus infrastructure requirements.
Option B Do not include a policy that supports infrastructure delivery in new development.	Limited or uncertain positive consequences of this approach	Likely to cause uncertainty about future infrastructure requirements and associated costs, all of which need to be negotiated through the development management process. This could lead to delays in the infrastructure provision and result in a more resource-intensive development management process, which could

		<p>increase the time taken to determine planning applications.</p> <p>Would not identify and may not result in the delivery of key infrastructure projects required to support the plan's vision.</p>
Initial sustainability appraisal screening of options sets		
Is there only one option or are there various options we could take? Option A		
High-level screening conclusion? Significant effects unlikely		
Screened in for detailed appraisal? No		
<p>Rationale: Option A is unlikely to have significant effects on the SA objectives. This is in part because the policy provides a mechanism to support the timely delivery of infrastructure, which itself mitigates the identified impact the level of growth proposed in the plan. When considered against the SA objectives, option is likely to have neutral or minor positive effects on SA Objective 6 Services and Facilities, and may support increased accessibility and connectivity through delivering rail, bus and active travel measures which are likely to have an overall neutral or minor positive effect on SA Objective 8 Transport and air quality as a shift away from non-car modes is more likely with the delivery of improved rail, bus and active travel infrastructure.</p>		

Infrastructure Delivery in New Development – draft Policy S3

The preferred approach for the Local Plan 2045 draft policy to take forward is **option A**. This is because the local plan needs to enable infrastructure to be delivered in order to mitigate the impact of the development it proposes. The draft policy provides the mechanism to seek contributions for, or deliver the identified infrastructure needed to support the growth proposed in the plan.

Policy Options Set 014b (draft Policy I1): Digital Infrastructure to support New Development

Table 5.2: Policy options set 014b: Digital Infrastructure to support New Development

Option for policy approach	Potential positive consequences of the approach	Potential negative/neutral consequences of the approach
Option a Require the provision of high-speed digital infrastructure (integration of gigabit ready physical infrastructure, future proofed construction to allow for integration if not immediately available) in all development, including residential, employment and conversions.	Ensures that development schemes connectivity is delivered in a consistent and measurable manner. Compliance with NPPF (para 119) and building regs.	There may not be any need for specific policy as building regs and NPPF already contain provisions for digital infrastructure and connectivity.
Option b Have no specific policy on digital infrastructure, rely on national planning policy.	NPPF already has permissive approach to communications infrastructure (paras 119 – 123), and local authorities are directed to make decisions on planning grounds only, which can already be covered by other relevant policies in plan. There is already growing provision of high quality infrastructure.	NPPF only addresses the provision of infrastructure by service providers, with no specific requirements for levels of connectivity and access at individual user level. NPPF also requires a specific policy so not having one will be in contravention.

Initial sustainability appraisal screening of options sets
Is there only one option or are there various options we could take? Various options (A, B)
High-level screening conclusion? the options are similar to each other from a sustainability perspective
Screened in for detailed appraisal? No
Rationale: The options most directly influence criterion 6. Services and Facilities and may also have relevance to criteria 5. Inequalities , as uneven access to high quality digital services may be an indicator of spatial and socioeconomic inequality. There may also be relevance to criteria 1 and 8 as enhanced connectivity could potentially reduce the need for some journeys. The impacts are not

expected to be more than minimal in the context of the other policies in the plan. Overall, the likely sustainability impacts between the options are not significant and not complex enough to warrant a detailed appraisal.

Digital Infrastructure for new development – draft Policy I1

The preferred approach for the Local Plan 2045 draft policy is to take forward **option A**. This approach ensures compliance with the NPPF, which is supportive of infrastructure provision and requires a specific policy. It also allows the local plan to make specific requirements and set standards at individual scheme level with regards the type of development, level of connectivity, access and type. It will be possible to ensure delivery of infrastructure at a consistent level that can be effectively monitored, and which is response to the local/regional needs of the city's employers and residents.

New Policy Options Set 014c added since Regulation 18 (draft Policy I2): Safeguarding land for infrastructure

Table 5.2: Policy options set 014c: Safeguarding land for infrastructure

Option for policy approach	Potential positive consequences of the approach	Potential negative/neutral consequences of the approach
Option a Include a policy setting out land safeguarded for provision of infrastructure (specifically the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme and East West Rail)	Ensures clarity and flags upfront where provisions from other regimes will require involving other bodies. Helps to be clear about what land is needed for successful delivery of these specific infrastructure schemes. The inclusion of a policy would be likely to help to support a more transparent and joined-up approach between the different consenting regimes.	There may not be any need for specific policy as land is already safeguarded outside the Planning regime.
Option b	The land is already safeguarded so there is no need to bring a policy into the Local	Not including the policy or adding the safeguarded land to the policies map

Have no specific policy safeguarding land for infrastructure, rely on national planning policy and other regimes.	Plan to ensure that the land is protected from other development that would prevent the infrastructure being developed.	misses the opportunity to flag this issue at an early stage so that landowners can design their proposals accordingly.
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Initial sustainability appraisal screening of options sets

Is there only one option or are there various options we could take? Various options (A, B)

High-level screening conclusion? the options are similar to each other from a sustainability perspective

Screened in for detailed appraisal? No

Rationale:

The options most directly influence **criterion 6. Services and Facilities**. Overall, the likely sustainability impacts between the options are not significant and not complex enough to warrant a detailed appraisal. The safeguarding of land identified within either infrastructure scheme does not significantly affect the ability of locations identified for development that have been identified in the Oxford Local Plan 2045, to come forward.

Digital Infrastructure for new development – draft Policy I1

The preferred approach for the Local Plan 2045 draft policy is to take forward **option A**. This approach ensures compliance with the NPPF, which is supportive of infrastructure provision and adds clarity to the Plan. It helps support a more transparent approach, and ensures the need to respond to the safeguarding requirements is flagged at an early stage.

