Oxford Local Plan 2045 Stage 1 Hearings

Good morning, I am Councillor Anna Railton, the Cabinet Member for Planning and deputy leader of the council and I'd like to welcome everyone who is here to participate in these hearings today. I'd particularly like to welcome to our great city the two Planning Inspectors assigned to examine our Local Plan. I hope you manage to find some time this week to see more of Oxford than this industrial estate!

The Local Plan put before you has been developed at pace but with real care. We have sought to understand what residents want for their city and what Oxford needs to continue to develop successfully and sustainably in the period up to 2045.

It's not an easy task to develop a Local Plan for Oxford. There is a great deal of development need in the city, and many constraints and sensitivities. Difficult decisions need to be made and priorities weighed up and balanced.

However it's also an exciting place to plan for, with much potential for positive change to make a more prosperous, resilient and equal city that both residents, people who work here, businesses and people who visit continue to love.

Managed well, development can happen in a way that draws from and enhances Oxford's unique and special characteristics, so that much needed development and growth is harnessed to a positive effect.

The need to reconcile all the competing demands for development, whilst considering impacts on the natural and built environment, is the underlying theme of planning in the city. This Local Plan sets out a policy framework to guide development in Oxford in a way that aims not only to secure more much-needed affordable homes, make Oxford's economy work for all residents but also to tackle the climate emergency.

The Plan helps address people's **housing** needs through identifying sites for more than 9,000 new homes in the city by 2045, and requiring 40% of new homes on major sites to be affordable housing, prioritising social rented housing. We have also continued cooperating

with our neighbours, who have agreed to help take our unmet housing needs and make provision for it in their own plans.

Oxford is at the heart of Oxfordshire's thriving **economy**. Its economic growth is important nationally and locally. It's a centre for education and cutting-edge research, as it has been for hundreds of years, including biotech, quantum technology and AI. It's also a major centre for teaching hospitals. This thriving economy can bring many benefits and we want to make sure these are realised widely. But the economy can't be successful if not supported by homes, infrastructure, strong communities and an environment people want to live and work in.

Despite being a densely developed urban area, Oxford is also very **green**, supporting a wide range of biodiversity from Port Meadow, which is of European level importance, to locally important wildlife sites like the Lye Valley. It is braided by two rivers and one canal, one of which we're nearly sitting on top of, which inform where much of the developable land in the city is and where a lot of these green spaces are. They are multifunctional, essential for the mental and physical health of our residents - from simply having green features to look at, to wander in, to play sports in and travel along by walking and cycling.

It's important that this core network of spaces is protected across the city, and that new development should also include green infrastructure within it.

Climate change is taken seriously by this plan. Climate change is happening around us, with the increasingly hot summers and wet winters we are getting, so to be resilient this must be planned for.

The Plan requires consideration of climate change adaptation, to ensure developments are future-proofed. At the same time, it aims to mitigate climate change by ensuring new development is net zero carbon in operation. We've also taken the ambitious step to put forward a policy that also considers embodied carbon. As well as this, the Plan also sets out policies to deal with protection of various natural resources and to ensure that the development process mitigates its impact on the wider environment.

Striking the right balance between policies that support the city's population growth, that ensure it is a healthy and pleasant place to live, work and study, and also protect the planet, is not easy. We know that we are setting ambitious standards for new developments in Oxford, but we have extensively tested their effects on viability. The Council is satisfied that

the draft Plan successfully balances all these competing issues to deliver sustainable development.

Oxford isn’t a museum, we are not here to preserve it in aspic. To thrive for decades to come it needs to grow and adapt and this plan is how we do this as well as possible.

I therefore commend the Oxford Local Plan 2045 to you.