



OXFORDSHIRE GREEN PAPER

Oxfordshire is an “innovation engine”, one of the most significant and best connected centres of research and enterprise in the UK and Europe.¹

From all over the world, each year, we attract new businesses and enterprises; investment from public and private sources; and the brightest and best students and researchers. We convert the energy that they bring into a constant flow of new products, businesses and scientific breakthroughs.

We are able to attract and inspire ideas and investment because we have nurtured a **dynamic innovation ecosystem within a beautiful and historic environment**. It is that combination, of history and modernity, of urban and rural, that makes Oxfordshire such a special place. As US Ambassador Matthew W. Barzun put it, following his visit in late 2015, Oxford is ‘inspired by the past but focused on the future’.

With that focus on the future in mind, where do we envisage this engine will propel us over the next twenty years? How do we nurture an Oxfordshire that is even more dynamic and offers an even better quality of life?

In recent months, regional partners have come together in a spirit of cooperation to address these questions. We do not claim to have all the answers or agreement on all points. Nonetheless, it is important that we keep asking the questions and debating the answers.

To that end, this green paper sets out some thoughts on a shared future with the hope it will spark a wider dialogue about what Oxfordshire may look like.

We explain in the final section how you can contribute your thoughts and ideas to the debate.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Signed, in a personal capacity

Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader, Vale of White Horse District Council
Councillor John Cotton, Leader, South Oxfordshire District Council
Professor Steve Cowley, Chief Executive of the UK Atomic Energy Authority
Professor Alistair Fitt, Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University
Professor Andrew Harrison, Chief Executive Officer of Diamond Light Source
Dr Bruno Holtorf, Chief Executive, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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Councillor Sir Barry Norton, Leader, West Oxfordshire District Council
The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, The Dean, Christ Church
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¹ www.sqw.co.uk/insights-and-publications/oxfordshire-innovation-engine



View of Oxford from Headington by William Turner

Our starting point

Oxfordshire has many strengths on which we can build our future.

In economic terms, we have the **most innovative regional economy** in the UK, the best educated workforce, a unique cluster of big science and research facilities including the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy and at Harwell the UK's national synchrotron and neutron facilities. Together with strong retail, manufacturing and service sectors; a strong industrial base with specialisms in areas such as motorsports; nationally and internationally recognised businesses; and a retail outlet at Bicester that is recognised worldwide. Commercial activity in the region is more than matched by **voluntary and community entrepreneurialism**. We made a successful bid to become the UK's first official 'Social Enterprise Place'. The award recognised the wide range of social enterprises dealing with an equally broad spread of social issues. Prime Minister David Cameron described us as “beacon for social enterprise”.²

We have world-leading museums and a thriving arts and culture scene that draws on Oxford's proud history and the creativity of its diverse population.

Academically we are one of the leading global regions for research and education. The University of Oxford is one of the oldest and best universities in the world. Oxford Brookes University is one of the best new universities in the UK. The two institutions work closely together and complement each other's specialisms.

All of this activity takes place in a **very attractive natural environment**, which includes two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Blenheim Palace is a world heritage site. The dreaming spires of Oxford and the unspoilt rural setting for our towns and villages have inspired painters and poets down the ages.

Other regions have some of these things. Only Oxfordshire has all of them, and within an hour of London by train, as well as links to international transport hubs such as London Heathrow.

As the ‘innovation engine’ report notes, Oxfordshire “has an outstanding local knowledge base allied to the established benefits of international connectivity, and it offers an excellent quality of life”.

Oxfordshire is not only a great place to live, it is also a great laboratory in which to work and learn.



Front: Oxford city skyline, MRI at John Radcliffe Hospital, Diamond Light Source – UK's national synchrotron science facility at Harwell, Magdalen Bridge, JET – Culham Centre for Fusion Energy, bluebells in Wytham Woods, the Uffington White Horse.

Back: Biochemistry laboratory, Harcourt Arboretum ecopod, quantum technology laboratory, Ashmolean Museum, autonomous vehicle, genetic scientist loading frozen crystals onto X-ray diffraction equipment.

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National context and contribution of the region

The future of our region is not just important to the people of Oxfordshire. We make a huge contribution to the prosperity and quality of life of the UK. We acknowledge the responsibility that brings.

We make a particular effort to connect with other geographical and technical areas (both in the UK and globally) that can assist us in providing the best possible opportunities for business to succeed.

As an innovation engine, we attract and grow the high-tech, knowledge-intensive businesses that keep the UK at the forefront of commercial innovation. Our specialisms in areas such as biotechnology, satellite science, pharmaceuticals, engineering and electronics, and telecoms, to name a few, are closely aligned with the UK's 'eight great technologies' and we also have complementary advanced manufacturing and services sectors.

We contribute approximately £15.5 billion a year to national output, and are one of only three

areas that are net positive contributors to the Exchequer.³ State investment in Oxfordshire delivers greater growth and yields a rate of return that is higher than any other part of the UK.

With Cambridge and London, we form a 'golden triangle' of research excellence, and we act as a bridge to the midlands and the north. Our geographical location means we can collaborate and build partnerships with all parts of the UK.

We have Universities, a LEP and business community who are committed to highlighting the benefits of UK skills on the world stage.

Our national significance was underlined last year, when Chiltern Rail opened the first mainland rail connection to the capital in over a century.

When Oxfordshire is successful, the UK is successful.

This makes it all the more important to look to the long term and set out a vision for sustained and sustainable development.

Vision

Let us look ahead, twenty years from now. What do we want life to be like in 2035?

The starting point for the partners who have developed this paper is simple: we want Oxfordshire to be more prosperous and offer an even greater quality of life. We do not see a tension between these two goals. We do not become more prosperous at the expense of liveability, nor increase liveability by constraining economic development. Innovation and knowledge exchange will generate the ideas and income we need to maintain and further improve all the things that make Oxfordshire a great place in which to live.

Our aspiration is that the people of Oxfordshire in 2035 will live in affordable homes, set in well designed and maintained neighbourhoods that are sustainably connected to their places of work. Partners will work together to ensure that housing need is anticipated and met, so home ownership is within reach of those on average incomes, alongside high-quality rented accommodation.

To get around the region, people will be able to choose from a range of efficient, low-cost, and connected travel options. The air quality will be excellent, as our forward-looking decision to introduce the UK's first zero emissions zone pays off.

The University of Oxford will continue to be a global leader in research, education and innovation. It will be home to more postgraduate students and researchers and have even stronger links with business. Its estate will have grown proportionately and sustainably to accommodate these ambitions. Oxford Brookes will be further established as one of the UK's leading universities.

We will still have the best educated workforce in the UK, and aim to have closed the gap in attainment between

our schools at primary and secondary level. We will support a wide programme of top-quality vocational training and apprenticeships, and a network of Enterprise Zones that nurture businesses to grow and create jobs.

We will build on our successes at Harwell and Culham by securing the next generation of big science facilities in the UK. In Oxfordshire we will lead the world in the rate and scale of successful knowledge-intensive business spin-outs.

We will attract businesses to the county and nurture local enterprises by offering them a well-connected, enterprise-friendly, innovation ecosystem in which they can grow. We will lead the UK in the number of start-ups and scale-ups that we support. Cutting-edge, high-tech companies will see us as their natural home, where they can benefit from high-quality workspaces in convenient locations that are well connected to houses.

We will attract global leaders to a place where their ideas can have an impact locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, contributing to prosperity and wellbeing.

We will have delivered the goal, set out in the Strategic Economic Plan, of generating an additional £6.6bn in additional economic activity and creating 85,000 new jobs, and at least half this growth will be in the knowledge-based economy. We will have delivered the recommendations of the innovation engine report, enabling us to realise fully our growth potential and make an even greater contribution to the national economy. These achievements will be driven by strong partnerships in which business and social enterprises play a leading role.

Taking these elements together, we think that the goal of making Oxfordshire an even greater place to live, work, learn and do business can be realised.

Working

To nurture a place that is both more prosperous and more liveable, we will work together on some of the challenges that face many cities of our size and age.

We will need to manage environmental risks, such as flooding, and the unpredictable consequences of climate change.

Cutting-edge scientific and medical research facilities will be required to support the innovation ecosystem, as well as high-quality public spaces.

We will need to build more of the right kind of homes at the right price, in attractive, mixed and well-connected settlements that contribute to urban density and buzz.

We need to ensure that the homes we build are physically and digitally connected to high quality workspaces so that we can compete to attract and retain high-tech global companies.

We will need to ensure that the development of new businesses does not lead to others being crowded out because we cannot offer an environment that is designed for growth.

We will need to use inventive ideas to make it quicker and easier to get around the region when we need to travel, but use technology to avoid travel where possible.

Within our small and historic city of Oxford, we must make creative use of our precious real estate. We will need to use smart city solutions to come up with innovative answers.

Although a relatively small county we have no shortage of groups, skills and community keen to assist in making our community a success but also in helping those that might need our support.

We will need to invest in letting the whole world know what we have to offer and be seen as an important world player in our areas of specialism.

We will need to work closely with our neighbouring areas and beyond, throughout the UK, to maximise our potential for the benefit of the whole community.

None of these challenges can be tackled by one organisation alone. Indeed, the answers will come not come from institutions at all, but from social enterprises, community groups and businesses. We will work hard to ensure such groups are well connected and effective.

If we do not tackle these challenges or take full advantage of the many opportunities described, it will become ever more difficult to maintain our status as a world leader in academic excellence, economic innovation and quality of life.

We cannot take our future for granted. Staying at the forefront and fulfilling our potential requires commitment and investment.

Shaping the discussion

Now is a great time to have a discussion about our future and how we want to shape it.

The Strategic Economic Plan for Oxfordshire, setting out long-term economic objectives, is about to be refreshed. This process will be led by the Local Enterprise Partnership and will involve looking beyond the already ambitious targets we have set ourselves. The findings of the planned science and innovation audit and the developing Oxfordshire Innovation Strategy will feed directly into the refresh.

The collegiate University and the City Council have jointly commissioned the production of a Development Framework Plan, to capture the vision for their Oxford-wide estate ambitions, and to assist with informed consultation with the public. Both the collegiate University and Oxford Brookes are developing their future estate strategy and investment plans beyond 2018.

The devolution deal with central government creates new investment opportunities and new ways of doing business locally.

The ideas outlined in this paper will feed into each of these developments, and more.

As we explained at the start, this paper is a starting point, not the final word. We are not consulting on a pre-prepared plan. We want to develop our thinking together, creatively, collaboratively and openly.

To that end, we would be delighted to hear from you. We would be particularly interested in your thoughts on these three questions:

- ◆ **What else should be included in the vision?**
- ◆ **What other challenges will we need to address?**
- ◆ **How do we make it all happen?**

To share your views, please email info@oxfordshirelep.com



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