



Please reply to:

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Oxfordshire Plan Team
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By e-mail: info@oxfordshireplan.org

1st October 2021

Dear Sirs

OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050 POLICY OPTIONS CONSULTATION

I am writing on behalf of Railfuture* Thames Valley and wish to comment on the latest documents relating to the above plan.

We welcome the broad principles of the Vision behind the plan and the five key themes which were agreed by the Oxfordshire Councils in July.

However, we are concerned that you are requesting detailed suggestions for development locations at this stage. This is very much the cart before the horse. For too long, the City and District Plans have been stuck with arbitrary housing number requirements set by national government without any consideration of sustainability and connectivity. As a result they are forced to allocate too many housing and commercial development sites away from public transport or active travel routes. An example is Chipping Norton where the housing allocation was arbitrarily increased by over 250% without consideration of easy public transport access to employment elsewhere in the County. Quite simply the houses should be taken to the trains and not playing catch-up by trying to get the trains and fast buses to the houses after they are built. Good examples from elsewhere are Aylesbury Vale Parkway built and operational before housing built nearby and the Borders Railway in Scotland which has enabled significant housing along its route.

Only electric rail, light rail or tram, coupled with active travel infrastructure, will really achieve the decarbonisation we all want to see. A delivery plan for this should be established and funding (including revenue support for buses) agreed before any thought is given to sites in the next round of Local Plans.

The improvements which need to be implemented with urgency:

Cowley branch line for passengers;

Oxford Station additional platforms with associated bus station;

Re-doubling of North Cotswold Line from Wolvercote Junction to Hanborough;

Additional island platform at Hanborough station along with connecting bus services to Eynsham and Salt Cross Garden Village;

Grove/Wantage Parkway station;

Electrification from Didcot to Hanborough along with 4-tracking;

Rapid transit (rail or tram-train) from Yarnton on North Cotswold Line to Witney and Carterton with Park+Rail sites at Witney and Carterton;

Cross-Oxford City tram routes, firstly from Botley P+R via Oxford Station to JR Hospital;

Begbroke Station;

Upgrades to intermediate stations between Didcot and Oxford to enable more frequent services;
Fast Bus links from all stations to smaller settlements along with outer circular routes avoiding the congestion in Oxford e.g. Banbury-Chipping Norton-Burford-Witney-Abingdon-Culham;
Railfreight terminals and distribution centres for final distribution by smaller electric vehicles

We should be pleased if you would take on board our comments and incorporate them into the final Plan going out for formal consultation later in the year.

Please come back to us if you need further clarification on the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Rose

Vice-Chairman

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** Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation, campaigning for improved rail services and promotion of the contribution rail can make to sustainable transport. In the Thames Valley we have several hundred members, including the affiliation of most local Rail User Groups. We are independent of the industry, political parties and trades unions, and always seek to put rail users first, be they freight or passengers.*