

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Town Infrastructure committee
Meeting date	12 January 2023
Agenda item	12

Update from South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils on Joint Local Plan 2041

Time to plan the right future for our districts

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have agreed a revised timetable for the creation of their Joint Local Plan.

Both authorities are working to create a Joint Local Plan, which will seek to deliver the councils' ambitions for zero-carbon, sustainable development and genuinely affordable homes in the districts up to the year 2041.

The plan's timescale had previously been scheduled around the creation of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – a county-wide plan being produced by all of Oxfordshire's planning authorities, which would have set housing numbers and decided the broad locations for larger-scale developments.

The five Oxfordshire councils were unable to reach agreement on the approach to planning for future housing needs and so they all mutually agreed that it was best to end work on the county-wide plan. While continuing to cooperate the councils will tackle all these issues locally through their own Local Plans.

The Cabinets at South and Vale have therefore both agreed to adjust the timetable for their Joint Local Plan work, to allow time to carry out local versions of the work that would have been carried out as part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

The new timetable for the Joint Local Plan allows South and Vale to assess the need for housing at a local level. It also allows both councils to shape and develop even stronger policies on climate and ecological action that could lead the way nationally.

Work to understand local views on the future of the districts has already begun. In May, both councils launched a joint consultation using interactive maps, and an easy-to-use survey that was met with a great response. This innovative approach has been praised by government officials and is being considered by government as an exemplar for other authorities to use.

Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson, Cabinet Member for Planning at South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “We know it’s important for our residents that their communities come first, and so a great benefit of this new timetable is a renewed focus on housing that’s appropriate for our district. We’ll work with communities and leave space in the planning policy framework for neighbourhood plans to make decisions that are right for their areas.”

Councillor Debby Hallett, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Transformation at Vale of White Horse District Council, added: “We’ve already been taking a positive and innovative approach to our Joint Local Plan, and we’ve now given ourselves the time to be much more robust when tackling important issues like the climate emergency.”

The Councils will still be able to use much of the collaborative work produced as part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, as well as the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision that sets a series of guiding principles for ‘good growth’.

Both councils agreed the revised timeline for the Joint Local Plan at Cabinet meetings in December as part of an item to update the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out what the development plan consists of and contains the timetable for the production of new Joint Local Plan.

- The full LDS is available on the councils’ websites:
 - [Vale of White Horse District Council](#)
 - [South Oxfordshire District Council](#)