

Topic Paper 5

Strong and Healthy Communities

February 2019

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Topic Paper is to provide background information on the subject of strong and healthy communities in relation to the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Further versions of these Topic Papers may be produced at later stages in the Plan making process.

What is healthy place shaping?

2. Our ambition is to plan for and shape communities to actively promote health and wellbeing and make it easier for people to enjoy healthy and sustainable lives.

3. Healthy place shaping involves local government working in partnership to create sustainable, well-designed communities where healthy behaviours are the norm and which provide a sense of belonging and safety, a sense of identity and a sense of community.

4. The Growth Deal provides an exceptional opportunity to shape healthy and thriving places where the right policies, environment and partnership working are adopted to empower individuals, communities and organisations to make healthier choices.

5. Healthy place shaping involves the following:

- Shaping the built environment, so people can easily access green spaces and are enabled to walk and cycle more.
- Working with local people and community groups, schools and businesses to support them in adopting healthier lifestyles.
- Developing local health and care services to deliver good local services.

6. The Oxfordshire Plan will seek to further these goals and ambitions and treat healthy place shaping as an integral objective of the overall strategy.

Policy context

7. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ is explicit in its support for healthy place shaping. It states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

¹ [Paragraph 91, National Planning Policy Framework](#) (July 2018) MHCLG

- a) *promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other - for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- b) *are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion - for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*
- c) *enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs - for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling".*

8. In terms of fleshing out what such an approach might look like, guidance produced by the Town and Country Planning Association's *Creating Health Promoting Environments*² and also Public Health England's *Spatial Planning for Health*³, are but a couple of several useful sources of information recently published by national bodies on how to plan places for healthy living. The National Institute for Health Care Excellence (NICE) have produced draft guidelines⁴ for planners to encourage physical activity in the population.



9. And finally, the NHS England's *Long Term Plan* (Jan 2019)⁵ lays down the gauntlet for all those who plan and design places to ensure that they do so with the nation's future health uppermost in their minds: "*Wider action on prevention will help people stay healthy and also moderate demand on the NHS. Action by the NHS is a complement to - not a substitute for - the important role of individuals, communities, government, and businesses in shaping the health of the nation*".

10. Locally, Oxfordshire's emerging and adopted Local Plans contain priorities which directly relate to healthy place shaping principles and a range of policies and proposals that will support the creation of healthy communities. District policies have identified the need for health impact assessments (HIA) to be conducted for all strategic development. A HIA

² [Creating Health Promoting Environments](#) (Dec 2017) TCPA

³ [Spatial Planning for Health: an evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places](#) (June 2017) Public Health England

⁴ [Physical activity: encouraging activity in the general population](#) (2019) NICE

⁵ [Overview and Summary, Chapter 2, NHS England Long Term Plan](#) (Jan 2019) NHS England

identifies and takes account of the health status and needs in the area and provides information about how development proposals will improve health and wellbeing.

11. The following illustrates the existing approach to development as set out in the various local plans across Oxfordshire:

- In West Oxfordshire the Local Plan 2011-31 enables new development, services and facilities in locations which will help improve the quality of life of local communities and where the need to travel, particularly by care workers, can be minimised.
- The emerging Oxford Local Plan 2011-36 requires a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for major development proposals, which ensures that measures will be taken to help contribute to healthier communities and reduce health inequalities through development.
- The emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-34 requires that housing needs be met by delivering high quality, sustainable attractive places and providing access to high quality leisure, recreation, cultural, community and health facilities.
- The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 seeks to build healthy and sustainable communities which protect the environment and respond to climate change.
- Cherwell's Local Plan 2011-31 proposes a number of transformational steps which will all support healthy placeshaping, including securing an excellent transport system; inclusive communities and quality urban, rural and natural environments. The Plan also contains policies that promote innovative approaches to growth, notably those which govern the ground-breaking developments at NW Bicester (Eco Town) and Graven Hill (large scale self-build). The lessons being learned from these projects will inform how the District plans and designs growth in the future.



Supporting strategies

Draft Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-20236

12. Developing a coordinated approach to prevention and healthy place shaping is the first of three interrelated headline priorities which also include:

- Improving the resident's journey through the health and social care system;
- Agreeing an approach to working with the public so as to re-shape and transform services locality by locality;

⁶ [Draft Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2023](#) (Nov 2018) Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group & Oxfordshire County Council

- Agreeing plans to tackle critical workforce shortages.

13. Cutting across all three of these priorities is a commitment to shift the focus to the prevention of ill health, reducing the need for treatment and care whilst also tackling health inequalities.

Economic Growth Through Innovation: Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030⁷

14. Improved health outcomes are amongst the objectives for a “*vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy*” that benefits “*Oxfordshire’s people, places and connectivity*”. Through a combination of partnership approaches, supporting local commercialisation and direct funding, the plan encourages the development of digital technologies to improve health and care services, innovative approaches to reduce air pollution and development of active travel infrastructure within key growth areas.

Strategic Environmental and Economic Investment Plan for Oxfordshire 2015-2030⁸

15. The vision for Oxfordshire envisages “*a high quality, resilient environment which supports economic growth, development, health, wellbeing and prosperity for all*” with specific objectives to promote and enable access to the countryside and engage people in the environment, enabling more sustainable lifestyles

Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP4)⁹

16. All of the over-arching transport goals listed below have direct implications for healthy place shaping:

- To support jobs and housing growth and economic vitality;
- To reduce emissions, enhance air quality and support the transition to a low carbon economy;
- To protect and enhance the environment and improve quality of life (including public health, safety and individual wellbeing).

17. LTP4 also includes countywide mode strategies which impact on place shaping and most notably the Active Healthy Travel Strategy¹⁰ which aims to make walking and cycling “*equally if not more attractive than using the car, for the majority of people*”. Other mode strategies which impact on healthy place shaping include bus and rail transport. County wide network management strategies made under LTP4¹¹¹² also aim to support healthy and thriving communities.

AONB Plans

⁷ [Economic Growth Through Innovation: Strategic Economic Plan 2015-2030](#) (2016) OxLEP

⁸ [Creating the Environment for Growth: Strategic Environmental and Economic Investment Plan for Oxfordshire 2015-2030](#) (Dec 2015) OxLEP

⁹ [Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015-2031](#) Oxfordshire County Council

¹⁰ [Active Healthy Travel Strategy](#) Oxfordshire County Council

¹¹ [Highways Asset Management Plan 2014-2019](#) (Sept 2014) Oxfordshire County Council

¹² [Oxfordshire's Rights of Way Management Plan 2015-25](#) (Nov 2014) Oxfordshire County Council

18. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Plan 2014-19¹³, the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023¹⁴ and the North Wessex AONB Management Plan 2014-2019¹⁵ include community activation objectives and seek to promote opportunities for improving health and wellbeing.

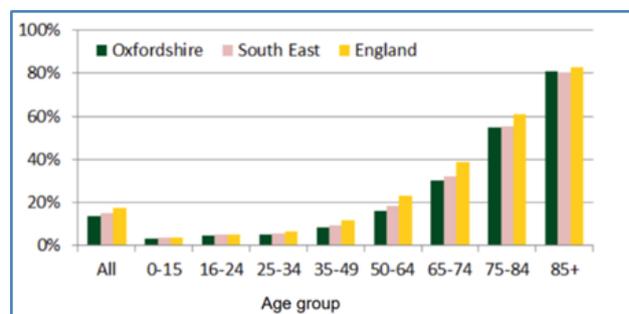


Challenges for the Oxfordshire Plan

19. Against a background of a growing and ageing population, where the number of people with chronic and complex diseases is increasing and housing pressures have exacerbated staffing shortages, the strategic focus of Oxfordshire’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-19¹⁶ approved in July 2017 is to:

- prevent avoidable illness
- reduce need for treatment and
- lower the impact of illness by supporting independence and delaying the need for care

20. Although Oxfordshire is better than the national average for many health outcomes, evidence shows a high proportion of morbidity is preventable such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. This is more pronounced amongst communities suffering socio-economic deprivation. Some groups are at more risk because of the combined effects of where they live, their age, ethnicity, gender and mental health.



21. Current increases in demand on health and care services and infrastructure is unsustainable. Health inequalities undermine productivity and place a disproportionate burden on services. A transformational approach to healthy place shaping is required to address all these issues. The Oxfordshire Plan presents us with a fantastic opportunity to plan the County’s future growth so that it benefits the health and wellbeing of existing and new residents / workers alike.

Percentage of residents in households* by age with daily activities limited by ill health or disability (a little or a lot) 2011, Oxfordshire vs South East and England. Source: ONS Census 2011 from nomis, table DC3302 *excludes people living in communal establishments such as care homes. Extracted from the [Director of Public Health’s Annual Report for Oxfordshire XI](#)

¹³ [Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Plan 2014-19](#) Chilterns Conservation Board

¹⁴ [Cotswold AONB Management Plan 2018-2023](#) (Sep 2018) Cotswold Conservation Board

¹⁵ [North Wessex AONB Management Plan 2014-2019](#), North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership

¹⁶ [Oxfordshire’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) (July 2017) OCCG, Healthwatch Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council

22. But this won't happen unless we make a concerted effort to put healthy place shaping at the heart of how we build and design new places. By having in place a long term and coordinated approach across the County to build new places that make it easy for people to live healthier lives, we will be tackling in a very positive way the strategic priorities set out above.

23. The Oxfordshire Plan will set out the broad strategy for Oxfordshire's growth and how that might be delivered. As such it will set the tone and create the framework for more detailed planning policies that will shape growth at the district level and hence will be contained in district level Local Plans.

What could the Oxfordshire Plan's Healthy Place Shaping Strategy look like?

Strategic principles approach

24. The Oxfordshire Plan could contain a number of strategic principles to guide and inform how the Districts plan for growth at the local level. The benefit of doing so would promote a clear and consistent approach to healthy place shaping across the County and ensure that district level local plans contain relevant and effective measures to create healthy places.

25. The following are some ideas as to what these strategic principles could look like based upon considerations that are generally agreed (and referenced in the above cited sources of guidance) to make a difference.



26. Proposals for strategic scale development and urban extensions must contribute towards shaping healthy communities by demonstrating that they adhere to the following principles to deliver high quality sustainable places:

- must address the existing and projected health and wellbeing needs of an area and consider existing community assets that could be enhanced to help promote health.
- must provide opportunities for people to be more active e.g. street layout and public realm to encourage walking and cycling as modes of transport, open spaces/green spaces for play and recreation, sports and leisure.
- must enable good mental wellbeing through reducing social isolation and loneliness by encouraging social community infrastructure, access to nature and opportunities for social interaction.
- must provide adaptable homes with adequate amenities/room sizes and thermal/sound insulation which can accommodate change.
- must make it easier for people to make healthier food choices e.g. restricting proximity of hot food takeaways to schools and encouraging healthy food provision in public

spaces such as community centres, leisure centres and park kiosks as well as including opportunities for food growing.

- must support the provision of multi-functional community facilities and co-location of services at appropriate geographical level e.g. health, social care and public service provision, community hubs, public spaces and green infrastructure.
- must be designed to allow universal accessibility, making it easier for everyone to maintain their independence throughout their life course.
- must take account of the behavioural change potential of appropriately phased development e.g. people moving into new developments are more likely to adopt healthier day-to-day lifestyle habits when health promoting infrastructure, such as community buildings, walkways and cycle paths, is already in place.

Delegate to Local Plans

27. An alternative approach could be less detailed but set out the requirement that district level local plans make the necessary provision to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their local areas - in essence along the lines of the first bullet point but then let the Districts shape what this might look like. While this could allow the districts more latitude / flexibility to shape what a healthy place looks like in their area, it could lead to a less consistent approach to the issue across the County.



Healthy Place Shaping Principles

28. There is also the option that the Oxfordshire Plan could take its cue from the learning gained from the Healthy New Towns in Bicester and Barton, which is reflected in NHS London Healthy Urban Development's¹⁷ broad determinants of healthy urban planning. This states that there are ten key Healthy Place Shaping Principles which need to be considered when assessing development proposals as follows:



- Work with people to co-produce communities which people value because they have character and a local distinctiveness, which are attractive places to live and work, which promote a sense of identity, and where people feel safe and comfortable.

¹⁷ [Rapid Health Impact Assessment Tool](#) (Apr 2017) HUDU Planning for Health

- Improve health and wellbeing and enable independence, reduce health inequalities and facilitate social interaction where people can meet to create healthy, inclusive and safe communities.
- Enable inclusive social, environmental and economic growth which supports local employment and other meaningful activity.
- Ensure the protection, enhancement and expansion of the natural, built and historic environment.
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change and use a catchment based approach to water management.
- Provide and ensure access to infrastructure that enables people to be active, which encourages active modes of travel and which does not add to congestion.
- Ensure easy access to infrastructure, facilities and services to enable people to live and age well and which provide early opportunities for people to meet and connect with one another.
- Maintain, enhance and expand easy access to green spaces and nature to deliver multiple benefits for people, place and the environment.
- Minimise energy demand and maximise the use of renewable energy, where viable meeting all demands for heat and power without increasing carbon emissions.
- Provide diversity in the residential offer that improves accessibility, affordability and promotes inter-generational connectivity and lifetime neighbourhoods.

29. The advantage of taking this approach is that it is already predicated on local Oxfordshire examples and is specifically endorsed by the NHS. It is also planning focussed, clear and unambiguous in what it prescribes.



How will we know if we've succeeded?

30. The key question is whether any proposed growth will have either a positive or negative impact on physical health and mental wellbeing; e.g. will it increase physical activity; reduce loneliness and obesity and promote personal safety? Over time are we seeing a smaller gap between healthy life expectancy and overall life expectancy?
31. Will new housing options be sufficiently diverse that they encourage inter-generational connectivity and support social cohesion? Can growth enhance productivity by reducing congestion, increasing access to and choice in active travel modes, and create a public realm that is not car dominated? Are businesses benefiting from seeing a reduction in sickness absence, improvement in staff recruitment and retention? Most importantly

growth needs to be inclusive in order to reduce deprivation and resulting health inequalities.

32. And this really gets to the heart of the rationale for the inclusion of some healthy place shaping principles in the Oxfordshire Plan - not least because if we don't set some benchmarks or standards against which to assess what we have built, how will we know what has worked, what hasn't and what needs some improvement? It is important for all of us now and for future generations that we are able to evaluate our performance and use that learning to continuously improve how we design and build places in the future.
33. Comments around healthy place shaping can be incorporated into responses to the Oxfordshire Plan Regulation 18 consultation on Issues and Aspirations which this series of Topic Papers support. If you think building strong and healthy communities that help people to live more healthy lives is an important aspiration for the Oxfordshire Plan, please can you briefly set out your reasons for your answer in your response to the consultation.