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**Response to Scrutiny Panel request in relation to
air quality and climate change in the Oxfordshire Plan 2050**

Growth Board Scrutiny Panel has requested an update as follows:

- Air Quality plans as envisaged by the Oxon Plan 2050 Vision & Objectives with a focus on mitigating climate change in these areas of development.

Current and emerging Local Plans in Oxfordshire allocate the sites for development in the period to 2031, 2034 or 2036. Each of those plans (and the policies and allocations therein) are supported by an evidence base that provides baseline information and an assessment of impact of the proposals. That evidence covers a range of topic areas including the environment and in relation to air quality and climate change.

All those plans that are already adopted have been able to demonstrate to an Inspector that they are supported the appropriate level of evidence that the policies are “sound”. The level of air quality or flooding evidence for example will increase in areas that are most sensitive to change (e.g. at Special Areas of Conservation) or where proposals for more sensitive uses are proposed. Further evidence will be required as part of any subsequent planning application in proportion to the level of detail.

Emerging plans (the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Oxford City Local Plan, Partial Review of Cherwell Local Plan and Vale Local Plan Part 2) are currently subject to examination and those Inspectors are considering the proposals and the evidence provided.

Similarly, the Oxfordshire Plan will need to be supported by an appropriate level of evidence to satisfy an inspector that the plan is sound.

The Oxfordshire Plan will need to appropriately consider climate change and air quality issues. This will be assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal process which is a statutory requirement of this and all plans. Detailed air quality modelling will also be needed to satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations should the Oxfordshire Plan recommend areas of growth in locations which would impact on the Special Areas of Conservation (biodiversity sites of international importance). The necessity and extent of this air quality modelling will become clearer once the level and distribution of growth to be proposed through Oxfordshire Plan is available.

The Oxfordshire Plan is still in the very early stages of development. As the plan is developed there will be opportunities for policies to be developed to help address climate change and air quality issues. The vision and objectives of the Plan (tested at the earlier consultation stage) recognise these issues. Responses from stakeholders and the wider public were very supportive of this approach and many requested that this issue forms a strong element of the Plan going forward. The development of policies will be subject to further public consultation and stakeholder engagement.

In addition to the local context for the Oxfordshire Plan, it will be important that the policies and proposals take account of (and seek to further) the aims of wider government policy and strategy in terms of environmental quality and climate change. The Oxfordshire Plan provides and opportunity to apply and embed goals and targets such as those included in the Government’s “25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment”. Detailed policies will likely be included in future Local Plans (as will be the case for other topic areas) but the Oxfordshire Plan can provide the strategic context for those on a county-wide basis.