

**THE NETWORK RAIL (OXFORD STATION PHASE 2 IMPROVEMENTS
(LAND ONLY) ORDER)**



**TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992
TRANSPORT AND WORKS (INQUIRIES PROCEDURES)
RULES 2004**

**THE NETWORK RAIL (OXFORD STATION PHASE 2
IMPROVEMENTS (LAND ONLY) ORDER)**

**TOWN PLANNING
NOTE ON ISSUES ARISING DURING ORAL EVIDENCE
COLIN FIELD BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI**

Document Reference	NR/Note
Author	Network Rail
Date	7 December 2021

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Town Planning Issues Arising

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. I am submitting this note to the inquiry to pick up on certain matters queried by the Inspector during my oral evidence to the inquiry on 7 December 2021.
- 1.2. In particular, during my oral evidence to the Inquiry, the Inspector asked me about numbers of parking spaces that would be affected as part of the delivery of the project. I was unable to provide the exact figures but stated that I would follow up with the answers once I had checked my correspondence with the LPA during the determination of Network Rail's Prior Approval application.
- 1.3. Secondly, I was asked about the period for the figure of 100,000 homes in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
- 1.4. Thirdly, I address the policy status of the Oxford Cambridge Arc.

2. PARKING

- 2.1. There are two areas of parking affected by the delivery of the OPS2 Project.
- 2.2. Firstly, existing on-street parking in Cripsey Road is affected. Network Rail have confirmed to the Abbey Road and Cripsey Road Residents Association in a letter dated 11 October **(NR27)** that "The proposed design will result in the loss of 8 on street parking spaces".
- 2.3. Secondly, the other parking spaces affected by the project are certain existing railway parking spaces on Roger Dudman Way which will be reduced by the project. There are currently 26 existing car parking spaces (including two blue badge spaces) at the western side of the station.
- 2.4. As part of OPS2 we need to re-provide the two blue badge spaces and 6 operational parking spaces (2 for Network Rail Operational Staff, 2 for GWR and 2 for British Transport Police). There will be no public car parking provided in Roger Dudman Way. These numbers were provided to the LPA in email correspondence dated 1 November 2021.
- 2.5. The exact layout and position of the new reduced car parking provision which will be on Roger Dudman Way will form part of the detailed design and will be finalised as part of the work to design additional cycle parking. Land previously available for car

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parking will now be made available for the additional cycle parking which will need to be secured by the discharge of planning condition 23 (**NR35**).

3. GROWTH DEAL

- 3.1. The Oxfordshire authorities committed in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal to plan for and support the delivery of 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031. The Growth Deal was agreed in 2017 and the Local Plans which plan for the growth were adopted between 2015 and 2020, such that the step change in housing delivery is more recent than the 2011 base date.

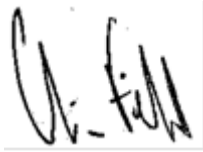
4. OXFORD CAMBRIDGE ARC

- 4.1. In addition to the Arc document at **D21** (The Oxford-Cambridge Arc Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners), I can provide an update on the Arc as follows. Mr Nash was asked about this by the Inspector but I am better placed to provide an update.
- 4.2. A Spatial Framework for the Oxford Cambridge Arc is being developed by the five counties which it spans to include Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire to help government realise their ambition to support sustainable economic growth. In February 2021, the government published a policy paper setting out ambitions for the Arc. This included the East West Rail scheme and improving east-west connectivity (eg paragraph 1.20). **D21** was categorised as a key document under the Government's website for this policy paper.
- 4.3. A consultation document dated July 2021, 'Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc', sets out the government's first public consultation on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework. The document was seeking views to help create a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, and in doing so guide the future growth of the area to 2050. The document again included East West Rail (EWR Connection State 1 Oxford to Milton Keynes is fully funded, with delivery in 2024, which demonstrates government commitment). The consultation ran between 20 July 2021 to 12 October 2021 (e.g. paragraph 4.2).
- 4.4. This spatial framework is therefore a developing policy document yet to reach formal adoption.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. F. M.', is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

8 December 2021

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework>

Policy paper

Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework

Published 18 February 2021

1. [Home](#)
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- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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1. Introduction: Why we need a new approach

1.1 At Budget 2020, the government committed to developing, with local partners, a Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – the area that spans the five ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

1.2 This is an opportunity for us to work with communities and local partners to develop a plan that will:

- support **long-run sustainable economic growth** across the area
- help to **make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in** – for existing residents and future communities alike
- support **lasting improvements to the environment, green infrastructure and biodiversity**

1.3 We will do this by focusing on the strategic opportunities for growth and environmental improvement that cross local administrative boundaries and require more joined-up thinking across the area – such as strategic approaches to support cleaner air and biodiversity net gain, or a more integrated approach to planning for new transport infrastructure alongside new development. In doing this, we will aim to set a framework that supports better, more sustainable planning and growth at the local level.

1.4 This paper sets out:

- why the government is taking this approach
- what it will mean for growth, spatial planning and infrastructure provision in the area
- how we will work with communities and local partners to develop it

Why the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?

A unique economic and environmental opportunity

1.5 The Oxford-Cambridge Arc sits at the heart of England. The area forms a strategic 'Arc', which is home to a unique business, science and technology ecosystem. Oxford and Cambridge are world-leading centres of research and innovation. There are 10 significant higher education institutions within the Arc, including Cranfield University, with its world-leading specialisms in automotive and aerospace engineering, the Open University, and the world-leading centres of learning at the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge. The Arc accounts for 7.1% of England's economic output (measured by Gross Value Added, or GVA) and it is home to some of the country's fastest growing and most innovative places. Cambridge's rate of patent applications – a key indicator of innovation – is the highest in the UK, at over 12 times the national average. Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the [country](#). Work on the COVID-19 vaccine, testing and treatment is the latest example of the Arc's unique innovation and business environment leading efforts to tackle a global challenge.

1.6 The desirability of the Arc as a place to live, visit, work and invest is in part due to the quality of the local environment, the rich and diverse character of its landscapes, and the resultant high value of the area's natural capital. We value the natural environment, so we want to meet the economic potential of the Arc in a way that takes the significant opportunity for environmental improvement. Nature and the environment are not constrained by administrative boundaries, and delivering significant positive environmental outcomes requires long-term coordinated action from the public and private sector. The government has already set out its intention for the Arc to embody England's 25 Year Environment Plan, which we will work together to deliver, including through planning for local natural capital. By working across the Arc, we have an opportunity to drive environmental improvement including recovery of nature and biodiversity net gain, cleaner air, reduction of flood risk and improving resilience to floods,

ensuring communities have better access to green space and more sustainable energy and water supplies, and growing the [£2.27 billion](#) of value the Arc's natural environment provides each year in ecosystem services.

1.7 The Arc is also an area that is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, a stressed and fragmented natural environment, escalating housing costs, and complex local governance. It is at risk of worsening outcomes for the environment if we do not overcome constraints and meet future demands in the right way. Addressing these constraints is key to realising the [full economic and environmental potential](#) of the area.

1.8 Forecasts vary, but successive studies have found that there is a clear transformational opportunity. With the right interventions and investment, economic forecasts suggest that by 2050 we would see economic output growing by between £80.4 billion and £163 billion per annum, with between 476,500 and [1.1 million additional jobs](#). The Arc's success is key to the UK's national prosperity, international competitiveness, and ability to meet the challenges and opportunities we will face as a country over the next century, including climate change and supporting nature recovery, technological change, fighting COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics.

1.9 That is why the government has identified the Arc as a national economic priority area. National and local partners are jointly committed to reaching the potential for [transformational growth and environmental improvement](#).

A unique growth context

1.10 We are taking a strategic approach to planning for growth and infrastructure to realise that transformational opportunity, and our approach reflects the key features of the Arc's economy, environment and places.

1.11 There are a number of urban and economic centres of comparative size across the region. Oxford, Bicester, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge form a west to east spine across the Arc, but

Northampton, Luton and Peterborough are other important centres, and there are a number of north-south corridors connecting them to the core of the Arc. Much of the Arc's economic output relies on connections between these different centres, and in turn their connections south to London, west to Bristol, east to East Anglia and north to the Midlands.

1.12 This is not, therefore, just a story of Oxford and Cambridge and their sub-regions – Milton Keynes and Northampton have the highest economic output in the Arc (measured by GVA). Importantly, the sector profile of these places is different and complementary to Oxford and Cambridge. For example, Milton Keynes is a centre for financial and professional services, high performance technology, and is a key haulage and distribution centre. The area around Silverstone in Northamptonshire is a key location for the automotive sector and high-performance engineering, with strong business and research links to Oxfordshire and Luton. Peterborough, one of the UK's more successful new towns, had its origins as a town of industry, which has laid the foundations for a dynamic business environment. It continues to be a magnet for engineering talent, and trades on its connection to strategic north-south infrastructure. This connectedness is in spite of a severe and longstanding infrastructure deficit – particularly east-west transport infrastructure – [felt across the Arc](#). There is significant potential to foster agglomerative benefits by better connecting people, places, services and businesses, and to see more effective commercialisation of research and development through better, more sustainable transport and truly sustainable patterns of development across the region.

1.13 These centres do not fit neatly within administrative boundaries – they are part of sub-regions with interconnected business and research clusters. The automotive and engineering sector that is concentrated in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Luton and the 'Science Vale' cluster, which covers an area spanning Oxford, Abingdon and Didcot, are examples of this. This is an ecosystem that has grown around the Harwell Campus and Culham Science Centre, home to some of the most globally important facilities for applied scientific research. In the east of the Arc, the Cambridge bioscience cluster is located along a corridor south of the city. We therefore need a more coordinated, cross-boundary approach to planning for growth, and to ensure that the right infrastructure is in place to support it.

Heritage

1.14 There are areas of significant natural and built heritage, with internationally important environment assets, wetlands, ancient woodlands and rare wildflower-rich meadows that support unique biodiversity. The medieval centres of Oxford and Cambridge are key parts of our national built heritage and are surrounded by diverse and historic landscapes. Milton Keynes is a leading example of post-war architecture and place-making with over 6,000 acres of green public space provided in the city. The wider Arc is home to diverse landscapes and rich natural habitats, from the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the south, to the fragments of wet and species-rich fenland in the east, the remnants of ancient hunting forests to the north and central area, and rare wet grassland and ancient woodlands to the west. Yet there is a real need and a great opportunity to deliver nature recovery and an improved environment in the Arc and for this to contribute real benefits to new and existing communities and businesses. This is why the government has invested in a Local Natural Capital Plan for the area, and why the RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust and local Wildlife Trusts are [campaigning for a focus on nature in the area](#). We want to protect, enhance and improve this rich inheritance for future generations and improve access to it as we support growth in the region, and we can only do that by taking a strategic approach to protect and enhance the Arc's heritage and environment.

Levelling up

1.15 This government is committed to levelling up growth and opportunity across Britain. Inequalities within regions are even larger than those between [regions](#). That is true in the Arc, as is not felt evenly, and inequalities between and within the Arc's towns and cities are acute. Bedford, Luton, Corby and Kettering have high levels of deprivation and have not seen the economic growth of their Arc neighbours. This is also true of some of the Arc's more rural areas, such as Fenland, which has been disconnected from the recent economic growth in [Greater Cambridge](#). In many of these places, population growth has been driven by 'overspill' from neighbouring

centres but the economies of these places are characterised by comparatively low levels of productivity and wage growth. [As growth happens](#), we need to ‘level up’ opportunity and outcomes across the region to address the specific challenges the Arc faces. At the same time, inequality is high within the major economic centres of the Arc – Oxford and Cambridge are two of the most unequal cities if the Gini coefficient is used as the metric.

The risk we face – worse outcomes for communities, the economy and environment

1.16 With high growth comes growing pains – and the Arc, like Silicon Valley, is experiencing the pain that comes from the movement of people outpacing the delivery of new infrastructure needed to accommodate them. The Arc has seen significant population growth since 2000, up 17% in that period – only London has seen a higher rate of growth (drawn from internal analysis based on ONS population data). Rates of job creation in almost every authority in the Arc far exceed current jobs targets in local plans, and [housing delivery rates](#) are significantly below the level likely to be needed to accommodate current housing need and future job creation rates.

1.17 There are three areas we are particularly concerned about:

- the natural environment and climate change
- connectivity and infrastructure
- the availability of homes where they are most needed

1.18 These are vital in maintaining and improving the Arc as a great place to live and work.

1.19 **Environmental outcomes are poor, and the risks of further harm are high**, with regional level transport emissions responsible for 46.8% of total carbon dioxide emissions in the area, compared with 36.6% nationally. This is driven in part by car-dependence, with 67% of the workplace population travelling by car, compared to [60% nationally](#). Air quality is poor in many parts of the Arc – reflected in the number of [Air Quality Management Areas](#) established by local

councils – harming the health of local residents. Flood risk is high and growing, with 74,000 properties within the Arc at a 0.1% or greater annual risk of flooding, particularly around the floodplains of the Rivers Great Ouse, Thames and Nene, and in the Fens in Cambridgeshire. Large areas of the Arc have limited ecological value and many parts of the Arc's natural environment are relatively inaccessible to the public. Looking to the future, there is a risk that the development that comes with growth will [harm the natural environment](#) and the ecosystem services it provides to us, rather than restore nature.

1.20 East-west connectivity is poor. Cranfield University is 7 miles from Milton Keynes but getting there by public transport involves a 45-minute bus journey. Cambridge is further away – 45 miles – and can take nearly 3 hours by a patchwork of buses and trains. This is driving up car dependency, which in turn is causing [high and increasing congestion](#). The East West Rail scheme will significantly improve east-west rail connectivity, but more needs to be done to promote sustainable transport, raise first and last mile connectivity around transport hubs, and better connect communities, employers, employees, businesses, cultural attractions, nature and universities, including through public transport, cycling and walking – making these the first choice for journeys.

1.21 Housing affordability is poor. The supply of new homes in the Arc's main centres has not kept up with demand – in Cambridge, the affordability ratio has risen to 12.76, in Oxford to 11.45 in 20 years, and in Chiltern and South Bucks to 17.62 and 15.56 respectively (the England average is 7.83) (ONS, 2019. Table 5C. Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings by LAD). This has put home ownership out of reach for many. The wider economic effect of this is to make it harder for businesses to attract the skilled workers they need, to locate in the most productive locations, and is forcing longer and more polluting journeys as people travel longer distances to get to work. Population growth has been highest in areas of comparative housing affordability – Corby (30% since 2000), Milton Keynes (28%) and Peterborough (27.5%) (this is also explained by the location of existing administrative boundaries, which do not reflect the full spatial coverage of economic centres such as Cambridge, Northampton and Bedford). Huntingdonshire is experiencing inward migration from South Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire due to housing pressures in those areas, in turn leading

to some existing residents moving northwards to Peterborough, Fenland and South Kesteven as house prices have increased. Over the long term, this pattern of growth is unlikely to be sustainable for the economy, the environment or for communities in the Arc.

1.22 We can progress towards a better future by planning better for growth and seeking to provide for future needs before they bite, delivering the right infrastructure in the right places at the right times.

The need for a government-led approach to strategic planning

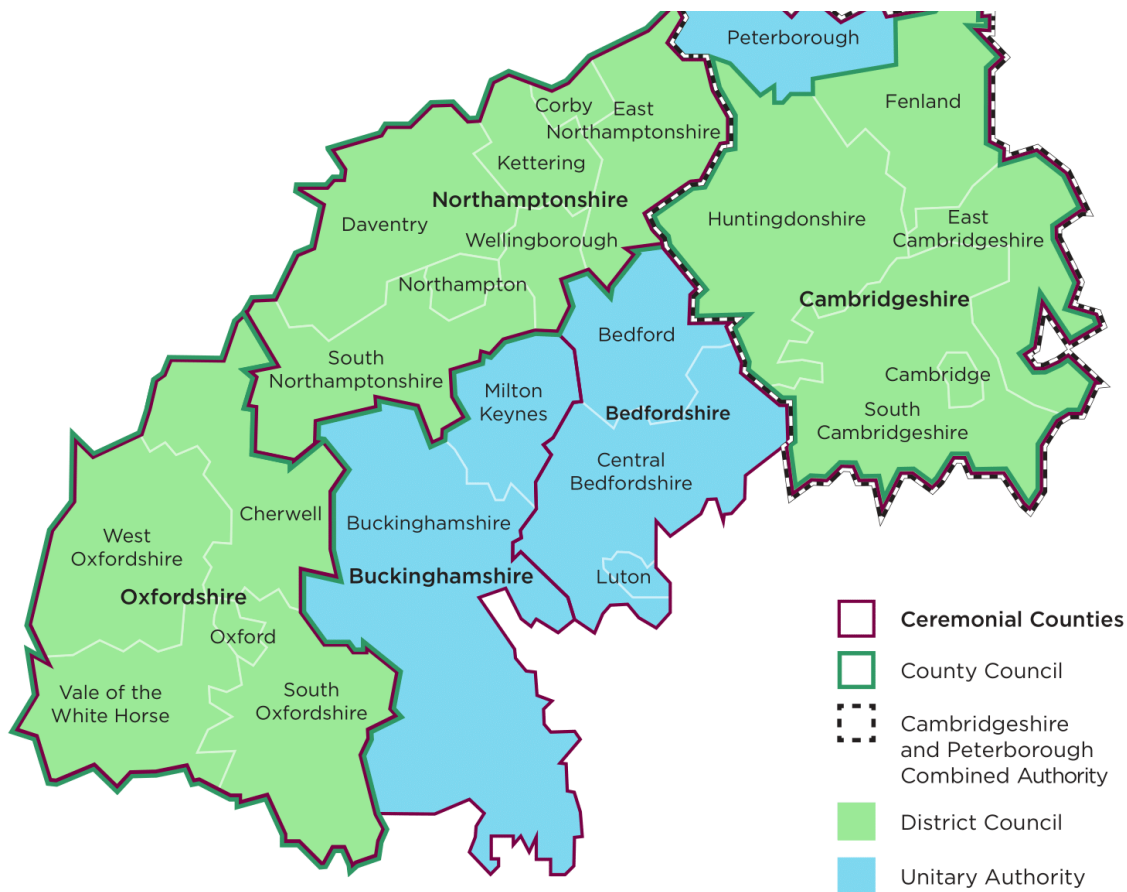
1.23 Addressing these issues requires coordinated action across the Arc, and some coordination is already happening. Unitarisation of local councils in Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire (building on existing joint planning arrangements in place in the latter) will support more strategic planning in those areas, as will the Joint Strategic Spatial Plan in development in Oxfordshire, and the non-statutory Spatial Framework in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Alongside this, the government is investing in the new East West Rail link to connect Oxford and Cambridge and providing over £400 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund investment to support delivery of housing on strategic sites. The Government has also agreed city deals with Oxford and Cambridge – an ambitious growth deal with Oxfordshire as they take forward a joint plan for the county, and a devolution deal with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. We have also made a commitment to examine the case for development corporations, linked to the new transport hubs around East West Rail stations. But action is needed across the wider area on strategic planning, environmental, economic development and infrastructure issues.

1.24 A coordinated approach is difficult because the Arc comprises: 23 local planning authorities; a mayoral combined authority, eight transport planning authorities, the area's Local Enterprise Partnerships (which have responsibility for economic development), and England's Economic Heartland – the sub-national transport body that covers a slightly wider area than the Arc. There is also no single

institution with the necessary competence and authority to lead a coordinated approach. This means that planning at the local level for homes, business space, infrastructure and the environment is not integrated, and is unable to take an Arc-wide view. If we want a better future, we need to plan for growth by thinking about the provision of infrastructure, housing, the environment and the needs of businesses and universities at the same time. We cannot continue to plan for transport, the environment and housing separately, or to think of economic development as separate from housing provision and commercial development.

1.25 To realise the full opportunities – and overcome the challenges – will require coordination of planning functions across the region. Local councils cannot do this on their own because of the level of coordination needed across the area, and because they do not have all the levers needed to develop a genuinely integrated plan. Government needs to play a supporting role to bring together a strategic approach at the Arc level to support better planning and ultimately better outcomes for the economy, environment and communities.

1.26 We can only realise the full potential of the Arc if we also take a different approach to planning for growth in the area. That means planning at the right scale, at the right time, for the right level of growth in the right places. We must do so in a way that will allow us to improve the Arc's natural environment and combat climate change, raise prosperity in lower growth parts of the region, and give existing and future communities a genuine say in the long-term future of their homes and places. That is why calls for an approach of this kind are long-standing and growing – from the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation in 2017, to the recent [County Councils' Network](#) report calling for a new approach to strategic planning, to CPRE's calls for a statutory spatial plan for the area and industry calls for an Arc-wide planning [body](#).



Correct as of February 2021 – unitary authorities due to be created in West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire on 1 April 2021

2. What the Spatial Framework will do

Introduction – core principles

2.1 Our intention is to develop a long-term Spatial Framework for the Arc that will support better spatial planning, provide a blueprint for better-targeted public investment, give investors and businesses greater long-term certainty over growth plans, and allow communities to shape the long-term future of places across the region. The nature

and content of the Spatial Framework will be subject to the outcome of both detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal.

2.2 Our approach to the Spatial Framework will be based on 10 core principles:

- **Collaborative** – we will develop the Spatial Framework with local partners, including communities, local councils, businesses and universities.
- **Adaptable** – we will create a framework that provides certainty for communities, local councils and investors about where growth will happen, and the infrastructure that will support it. But it will also need to be flexible and adaptive to change as it happens.
- **Long-term** – we will plan to 2050 and beyond so that we create the foundation for long-term sustainable growth.
- **Integrated** – the Framework will be based on an integrated approach to planning which spans the economy, housing, environment and transport.
- **Inclusive** – the Framework will aim to bring benefits for existing communities and all places in the Arc – not just the highest growth centres.
- **Digital-first** – we will make better use of digital tools to support better, more collaborative long-term policy-making.
- **Evidence-based** – the Framework will be based on a robust and comprehensive evidence base, which we will make publicly available.
- **Sustainable** – the Framework must strengthen our ability to meet the government's commitment to combat climate change, support sustainable patterns of development, and support lasting improvements to biodiversity and the natural environment.
- **Quality** – we intend to set high expectations for the quality of new development and infrastructure, so that we can create the heritage areas of the future and enhance quality of life in all parts of the Arc.
- **Add value** – we will not duplicate local or national policies and plans, but we will take them into consideration in developing the Framework. Instead, the Framework will be genuinely strategic and focus on cross-boundary issues, policies and opportunities.

What it will mean for:

The arc's economy

2.3 We will take an integrated approach to planning for growth. We can set better policy in the Spatial Framework, and local and national partners can invest more smartly to unlock the area's full potential, if we have a robust understanding of how and where the Arc's economy has grown, the needs of its current sectors and forecasts for future growth.

2.4 As this is not just about land use policy, we will start by developing an Arc-wide Economic Strategy. This will include:

- analysis of the Arc's economy and forecasts of future growth, including analysis of local economies and key sectors, drawing on existing analysis that has supported existing Local Industrial Strategies, and understanding of the monetary value of the Arc's natural capital
- identification of specific employment space and infrastructure requirements to support future growth
- identification of the policies and investments needed to deliver the Arc's economic potential in a sustainable way, working with local partners to identify priorities, and supporting a green recovery

2.5 The Spatial Framework will help us to deliver the strategy by ensuring that businesses have access to the space and infrastructure they need to grow – including the Arc's high-growth, innovative industries, which have specialist requirements for employment space, such as laboratories – and by ensuring that planning for delivery of infrastructure and housing is based on our Economic Strategy.

2.6 Specifically, the Spatial Framework will:

- provide an assessment of existing employment land, planned growth and anticipated future need

- set policies to support local planning authorities in allocating these as Strategic Business Zones or Strategic Industrial Locations, as appropriate
- set policies to support different land uses for different sectors and sizes of business

The arc's environment

2.7 The Spatial Framework will help to protect and enhance the environment and the Arc's natural capital through ensuring that the environment underpins economic, transport and housing and planning decisions. We will seek to support an integrated approach to water management, cleaner air, sustainable land management, nature recovery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, in line with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, Net Zero commitments and Clean Growth Strategy. We will do this by taking a natural capital approach to inform planning and decision-making, and setting policy to:

- support retention of, and investment in, key existing and potential new habitats, and improve access to nature and accessible green space
- set high standards for new development, including on carbon emissions, water management, green space, integrated and functional green infrastructure, e.g. for active travel and biodiversity net gain
- support an integrated water management approach, taking into account sustainable water abstraction and drought resilience, water quality, reducing risk and resilience to flooding and how and where new infrastructure should be developed
- support clean air outcomes, with clear links to housing and transport policies
- embed the enhancement of natural capital across the Arc

2.8 The spatial framework will also identify environmental Opportunity Areas, including water services infrastructure incorporating nature-based solutions, supporting nature recovery, biodiversity net gain and carbon sinks.

Transport and infrastructure in the arc

2.9 Provision of new infrastructure is vital to ensuring the sustainability of development. In practice, that means taking an infrastructure-first approach to growth – identifying and delivering strategic infrastructure priorities as development happens. The spatial framework will help to do this by:

- identifying and mapping the existing provision of health, education, accessible green spaces, social and community infrastructure, utilities, green and blue infrastructure and other infrastructure requirements at an Arc-wide scale
- determining future need based on development, and social and environmental projections, and identifying gaps in existing provision
- using this assessment to create an infrastructure plan to facilitate future growth, including identifying opportunities to:
 - deliver sustainable transport options
 - protect and enhance the environment
 - give communities access to the public services they need
 - ensure our waste is minimised, recycled or disposed of sustainably where this is the only option
 - provide the water, digital and utilities infrastructure needed to facilitate sustainable growth
- proactively setting strategic policies for local transport authorities and local planning authorities to enable this, building on the England's Economic Heartland transport strategy and evidence base
- outlining targeted climate resilience and air quality policies based on air quality modelling to ensure this new infrastructure is delivered in line with our environmental objectives
- outlining wider strategic policies to facilitate utilities investment in line with key development opportunities, including digital infrastructure

Housing and planning in the arc

2.10 We will plan for the right level of growth in the Arc, to ensure it is a great and affordable place to live and work – both for existing

residents and communities of the future. To do this, the spatial framework will identify:

- the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth
- the infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth in those locations, and the key locations for strategic infrastructure to support sustainable growth
- locations for environmental enhancement to achieve greater environmental benefits that can allow development to take place elsewhere

2.11 The spatial framework will also outline policies to enable sustainable, transport-led development. This will include policies to enable:

- new settlements to come forward at the scale and speed needed
- new development to support habitat recovery, delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and provision of good-quality green space within schemes
- brownfield redevelopment and densification, and expansion of existing settlements, in sustainable locations or locations that can be made more sustainable by enhanced access to sustainable transport modes
- housing needs to be met in full, including delivery of much-needed affordable housing

2.12 All policy set in the Spatial Framework will be based on a robust evidence base and local consultation. It will indicate locations but will not include site allocations, and it will not include detailed policies set elsewhere in national policy or better left to local plans.

2.13 The government has also consulted on changes to the planning system more broadly. We will respond to the Planning for the Future consultation in due course, and we will work with local planning authorities in the Arc to ensure that the Spatial Framework supports transition to the new system.

3. How we will develop the Spatial Framework

Introduction

3.1 Over the next two and a half years, a specialist team in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will work with communities and local partners to develop a robust, evidence-based spatial framework. To ensure the spatial framework provides the foundation for better planning and investment for the Arc's communities, economy and environment, we are committed to:

- working collaboratively with residents and local partners, seeking input at each stage of decision-making
- understanding the environmental, social and economic impacts of policies before we finalise, adopt and implement them, by undertaking a full and integrated sustainability appraisal
- developing a common digital platform and robust evidence base to underpin the Spatial Framework and provide the basis for strategic planning in the Arc at the sub-regional level, including through a new and shared digital evidence base

3.2 We will seek to implement the spatial framework as spatially specific national planning policy. Local planning authorities preparing local development documents (including local plans) will have to have regard to the Spatial Framework, as they do with other national policies and guidance.

Indicative timeline

3.3 The timeline for developing the spatial framework covers three core phases:

1. Developing a vision for the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc – We will undertake wide public engagement to shape a vision for the area, through a consultation in summer 2021.

2. Towards a spatial framework – We will develop options for turning the vision into policy, based on engagement and initial evidence gathering and analysis. We will publish these options for consultation in spring 2022.

3. Draft spatial framework – To finalise the spatial framework, we will consider responses to this consultation, and undertake spatial analysis, option testing, impact assessments and stakeholder engagement. We will publish a draft spatial framework for consultation in autumn 2022, with implementation of the final framework shortly after.

Status and implementation

3.4 We will take an integrated approach to planning for the Arc, to ensure we can deliver the sustainable outcomes we want to see. To achieve this, the spatial framework will have the status of national planning and transport policy, providing a strategic framework for local planning.

- National planning policy status will allow it to have significant weight in the planning system for guiding local plan production and in decision-making. It will sit alongside the National Planning Policy Framework.
- National transport policy status will allow it to guide the plans prepared by local transport authorities. Transport policies will sit alongside land use policies in the Spatial Framework in a fully integrated single land use and infrastructure plan.

3.5 This will provide a clearer, coordinated framework for local transport authorities and local planning authorities when developing their own plans.

3.6 To ensure sustainability is at the heart of the Spatial Framework, the government will develop a sustainability appraisal to inform and

underpin development of the Spatial Framework. The assessment criteria will be used proactively to embed sustainability into the development of the strategy. The sustainability appraisal will meet the legal requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment as well as including social and economic factors so that we can best consider the wider impacts of policies as they are developed. We will integrate a Habitats Regulations Assessment into the sustainability appraisal.

3.7 We will underpin the Spatial Framework with a robust evidence base. We will work to ensure it meets a sustainable development test so that the Framework provides a clear and useful starting point for local councils.

3.8 We expect local planning authorities to continue to develop local plans before the publication of the Spatial Framework. These changes will sit alongside wider planning reforms, and as we take forward our response to the 'Planning for the Future' consultation, we will outline transitional arrangements and the role of the Spatial Framework within any new system.

Data and digital tools

3.9 We want to make best use of data and digital tools, in line with our vision for reform of the wider planning system.

3.10 We want to make it easy for communities, local councils and businesses to give their views on the Spatial Framework, and to ensure that we make best use of evidence and data analysis to inform policies it sets. And we have an opportunity to create a common, accessible resource for government and local partners to support better policy-making and planning in the future.

3.11 As we set out in the 'Planning for the Future' consultation, the planning system makes little use of interactive digital services and tools, with the process reliant on documents rather than data. This means that evidence is fragmented, diffuse and inconsistent, limiting the impact it can have. This means we need to go further to realise our ambition for data and digital tools in the Arc.

3.12 First, we will use data and digital technology to support our policy-making. We intend to support development of an open source, digital platform for data and evidence to support collaboration between government, businesses, local councils and communities in decision-making. We will work with local partners to create an accessible digital platform for economic, planning and environmental data, and easy-to-use tools so that people – including the public and businesses – can engage meaningfully in the process.

3.13 Second, it means using digital engagement processes to make it easy for people to raise their views about proposals in the spatial framework, including on smartphones.

3.14 Third, it means the spatial framework will be visual and map-based, standardised, and based on the latest digital technology, so that it is easy to access and understand.

4. How you can get involved

A collaborative approach

4.1 We want to ensure the Spatial Framework is built on the interests and priorities of the communities it will serve. We are committed to working collaboratively with local partners and want to give Arc residents a meaningful voice in development of the Spatial Framework. This will mean:

- we will engage early with local partners to shape a shared vision for growth, on which the Framework will be based
- we will consult meaningfully at each appropriate stage of the process, giving all relevant stakeholders the opportunity to raise views on policies and growth options as they are developed and before the Framework is implemented
- we will work collaboratively with local partners to inform, steer and challenge our approach

4.2 The Arc is home to a wide and diverse stakeholder landscape who will have an interest in the Spatial Framework's development. We intend to engage extensively across different audiences ranging from local councils, universities and business to residents, workers and local communities. We will keep accessibility at the core of our approach, harnessing digital technology alongside more traditional methods of consultation. This will make it easier for a wide range of people to contribute their views.

When you can get involved

4.3 We want to hear from residents and local partners at each stage of the Spatial Framework process:

- Vision – We want to hear from people across the Arc to shape our vision for the area, providing the foundation for policy-making and planning later in the process. We intend to launch this process in early 2021, and we will use what we hear from initial stakeholder engagement to produce a draft vision statement for public consultation in summer 2021.
- 'Towards a Spatial Framework' consultation – Building on the vision, we will develop policy and growth options that we will test through engagement and consultation. We intend to publish a consultation document in spring 2022 and will run an engagement process alongside this to give everyone a chance to have their say.
- Draft Spatial Framework – Once we have refined our preferred approach, we will publish a draft Spatial Framework for consultation. This will give communities and stakeholders a chance to shape the detailed policies and the spatial options it will contain. We intend to publish this in autumn 2022, with the final Spatial Framework implemented shortly after.

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HM Government



OXFORD -
CAMBRIDGE
ARC

Creating a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Consultation

July 2021



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Scope of this consultation

Geographical scope:	This consultation relates to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. This is shown in Figure 1.1 and defined as the area that covers the ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire.
Topic of this consultation:	This consultation is being undertaken to inform our approach to the future of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, which has been identified by the government as a key economic priority. We are seeking views to help us create a vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, and in doing so guide the future growth of the area to 2050. This is in line with the commitment we made at the launch of the Spatial Framework process ¹ in February 2021. The Spatial Framework will form national planning policy and transport policy for the Arc and local planning and local transport authorities must have regard to it when preparing local transport and local development plans and policies ² , and it will be capable of being a material consideration in relevant planning decisions in the area.
Scope of this consultation:	<p>In February 2021, the government published a policy paper¹ that set out how we intend to develop a Spatial Framework to help us realise our ambition to support sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.</p> <p>In this consultation, we are seeking views on what the vision for the future growth of the Arc should be to 2050 to be delivered through the Spatial Framework.</p> <p>We are undertaking a fully integrated Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating a strategic environmental assessment for the purposes of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (commonly referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004 or “SEA Regulations”). The Sustainability Appraisal will also be informed by other statutory assessments and regimes such as a habitats regulations assessment pursuant to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. As part of this consultation, we are seeking views on the initial work we have done to set the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal. Questions related to the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal can be found in Chapter 8 of the Scoping Report published as part of this consultation.</p>

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: An introduction to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, February 2021. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962455/Spatial_framework_policy_paper.pdf

² See s.112 Transport Act 2000 and s.19(2) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

	<p>We are interested in hearing from those who live, work and have an interest in the future of the area – particularly from those who have not responded to a consultation of this kind before.</p> <p>We recognise that we have provided a limited range of options for responses to questions – this is so that the consultation is accessible and easy to respond to, and so that we can more easily collect and analyse the views of everyone who responds at this early stage. However, we are open to other ideas on the vision and will consider all relevant views expressed.</p> <p>There will be further opportunities to have your say. This is the first of three planned consultations on the Spatial Framework for the Arc.</p> <p>For information, where relevant, responses to this consultation may be considered as part of the development of other government led initiatives and proposals in the Arc to help realise economic growth ambitions. It is also highly likely that in parallel to the Spatial Framework consultations, the government will hold other consultations on such further proposals, which may support the development and delivery of the vision for the Spatial Framework.</p>
Impact assessment:	<p>The government is mindful of the Public Sector Equality Duty and its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This includes the need to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work such as shaping policy and delivering services, and the duty to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This duty and other responsibilities will be kept under consideration as the Spatial Framework develops to ensure we consider the impact of its proposals and policies on all individuals including those with protected characteristics. We are seeking, through this consultation, the views of all people, including groups with protected characteristics. We have designed this consultation process to be inclusive and accessible to different people and groups.</p>

Basic information

To:	This consultation is open to everyone. We are keen to hear from the public and interested parties from across the public and private sector.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Duration:	This consultation will last for 12 weeks from 20 July 2021 to 12 October 2021.

Enquiries:	For any enquiries about this consultation, please visit our online platform or our guidance webpage for more information.
How to respond:	<p>You can respond by using our online platform, which we strongly encourage you use. Using the online platform greatly assists our analysis of the responses, enabling more efficient and effective consideration of issues raised. If you are responding in writing, please make it clear which question or questions you are responding to. Written responses should be sent to:</p> <p>Oxford-Cambridge Arc Unit Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF</p>

1. Introduction: Creating a Vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The government's ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc

- 1.1 The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a national economic priority area³.** We believe it has the potential to be one of the most prosperous, innovative and sustainable economic areas in the world, and can make a major contribution to national economic recovery as we seek to build back better from the impact of COVID-19.

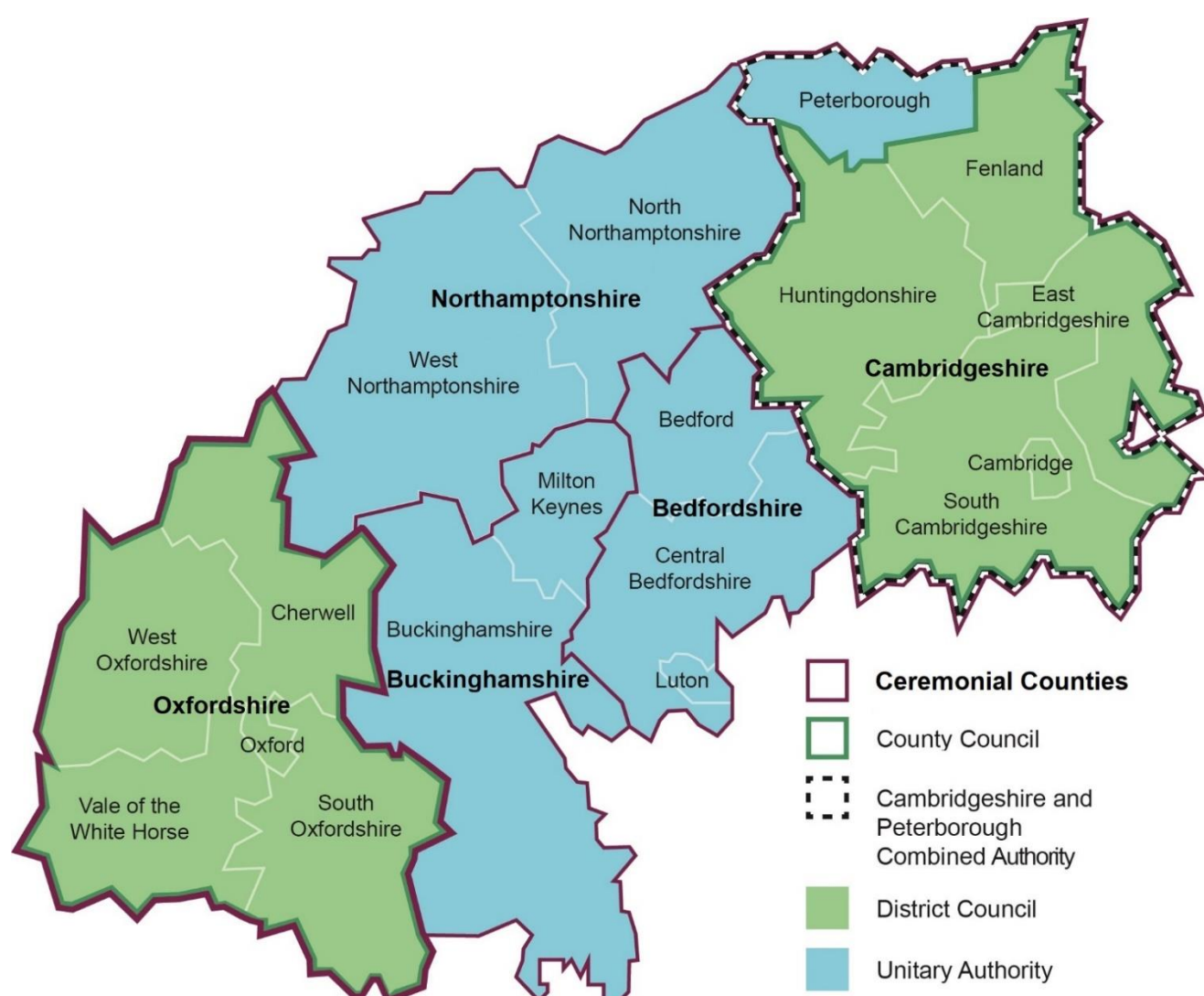


Figure 1.1 – The Oxford-Cambridge Arc

³ See the policy paper on the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, published from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in February 2021, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-cambridge-arc/oxford-cambridge-arc>

The government is developing a Spatial Framework to help deliver on that ambition

1.2 The government wants to support sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, so we are developing a Spatial Framework to plan for that growth – to 2050 and beyond³. The Spatial Framework will set national planning policy and national transport policy for the area set out in Figure 1.1, which covers the ceremonial counties of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. At a strategic scale, this will coordinate and focus investment in the area and shape future local planning decisions on:

- how land is used;
- how the environment is protected and enhanced;
- where and what type of new development happens; and
- what infrastructure is provided.

1.3 We are developing a long-term Spatial Framework for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc so that we can plan for growth in a more sustainable and strategic way. We believe that the Spatial Framework will allow us to plan for growth in a way that:

- makes the area a better place to live and work for all;
- leaves a long-term legacy by protecting and enhancing the Arc's built and natural environment and beautiful places; and
- helps combat and build resilience to climate change.

1.4 The government will lead the development of the Spatial Framework, and we will work closely with communities and local stakeholders at each step. We want to hear anyone interested in the local area, including people and organisations in all parts of the Arc as we start to set priorities and gather evidence. This will help identify how we can best meet our ambition for the area. This consultation is the first of three that we will undertake as we develop the Spatial Framework over the next two years.

What is the Spatial Framework, and what could it do?

1.5 We think a joined-up, long-term approach to planning for growth is the best way to realise our ambitions for economy and sustainability in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

1.6 The Spatial Framework will be a long-term strategic plan for the area, developed by the government, and informed by engagement with local communities and

stakeholders. It will have sustainability at its core and guide planning decisions and investment under four policy ‘pillars’:

- the environment;
- the economy;
- connectivity and infrastructure; and
- place-making.

1.7 The Spatial Framework will provide a national planning policy framework for the area of the Arc. This will help to better coordinate and provide a strategic direction for:

- **Development Plans including Local Plans, produced by local planning authorities – such as district councils.** Local Plans set the policies that guide the development and use of land in its area. For example, Local Plans designate land uses, and set an overall strategy to deliver enough housing (including affordable housing), infrastructure, community facilities (such as schools and health centres) and to protect, enhance and recover the natural, built and historic environment. There are 18 local planning authorities in the Arc (including new authorities that have replaced joint planning areas in Northamptonshire);
- **Local Transport Plans, which are produced by strategic authorities such as county councils.** These plans set out objectives for transport and identify priority projects and funding requirements for them. In the Arc, there are eight transport planning authorities; and
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships,** who have developed Local Industrial Strategies to identify local economic strengths, challenges and opportunities, the action needed to boost productivity, earning powers and competitiveness in the area for example by identifying investment opportunities to unlock economic potential.

1.8 We believe that this approach will allow us to better plan for economic growth supported by new homes and infrastructure and more sustainable results. The Spatial Framework will form national planning and transport policy for the Arc, and inform Development Plans including Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans; Local Transport Plans; and Local Industrial Strategies within the area and local decision-making. Local planning authorities must have regard to such national policies when preparing local plans, and take them into account, where relevant, when making decisions on planning applications. Decisions on planning applications need, as a matter of law, to be made in accordance with such local plans unless material considerations (including national policy) indicate otherwise. National transport policy (and/ or guidance) is intended to guide the content of local transport plans in the Arc, as local transport

authorities must have regard to it and/ or take it into account under current legal framework.



Figure 1.2 – Status of the OxCam Arc Spatial Framework within the planning system

- 1.9 We will also make sure that sustainability is at the heart of the Spatial Framework by undertaking a fully integrated Sustainability Appraisal.** This will be a rigorous process that will ensure full consideration is given to environmental, economic and social sustainability in the policy development and decision-making process, and across each of the four ‘pillars’ of our approach.

Why we are consulting you now

- 1.10 We believe that for the Spatial Framework to work best as a national planning policy for the Arc, it should be shaped by those who live, work and have an interest in the area.** We want you to help us create a vision for the area to 2050 and help set the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal. Whether you live, work, learn, invest, visit or just have an interest in the Arc, all views matter to us. We are particularly keen to hear from those people who normally do not engage in planning consultations and decisions. This is part of our commitment⁴ to developing the Spatial Framework in a way that is open, collaborative, inclusive, digital, and evidence-based.

⁴ You can find more information on our commitment here: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-spatial-framework/planning-for-sustainable-growth-in-the-oxford-cambridge-arc-an-introduction-to-the-spatial-framework#what-the-spatial-framework-will-do>

- 1.11 The purpose of the Spatial Framework is to support the delivery of government's ambitions for the OxCam Arc in the most sustainable way⁵.** The aim of this consultation is to seek your views on the Spatial Framework's vision for the Arc and the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal, and set the direction of travel for future policies and growth.
- 1.12 Creating a vision is an important first step in the preparation of the Spatial Framework and development of its policies.** The vision will form the core of the Spatial Framework. Its aim is to clearly and simply bring to life and illustrate the kind of place that the OxCam Arc will be in the future, as a result of the policies working together.
- 1.13 We think the vision for the Spatial Framework should be ambitious and aspirational, unique to the Arc and reflect its people and places.** We think it is important to also look at potential opportunities for transformation. The world will be a very different place by 2050, and we want to ensure that the vision helps make the area an even better place to live, work, travel in and enjoy for existing and future communities alike. The vision will need to be realistic too, reflecting the strategic planning role and remit of the Spatial Framework. And above all, we want to create a shared vision, one that has been developed through working with as wide and representative audience as possible.
- 1.14** There are lots of ways you can develop a vision. You can ask people to picture the kind of place it will be in the future. Some like to think about it in the current context, by considering what currently works well and what could be improved. Others like to approach it by thinking about what the vision will do and seek to achieve. Asking people what their priorities are for the future can cut across all three of these methods. We tested these approaches with different audiences earlier this year and through their feedback concluded that the best way to engage our diverse audience was to use a mix of all of these approaches. The design of this consultation, including our questions, reflects this.

What you have told us so far

- 1.15** We want to take an open, collaborative and inclusive approach to developing the Spatial Framework.
- 1.16** When we launched the Spatial Framework in February 2021¹, we committed to carrying out some initial engagement with people in the Arc so that we could get the most out of this consultation – by starting to understand key priorities, helping to identify what questions we could ask in this consultation, and testing how we could engage with different people across the area.
- 1.17** Then, in March 2021, we held a short series of initial workshops and conversations with a small sample of local residents, young people, academic experts, businesses, charities, campaign groups and local councils that allowed us to test our approach to engagement in advance of this consultation. We hope to publish a summary of the feedback from this

⁵ See paragraphs 1.1 to 1.9 in 'Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford- Cambridge Arc: An introduction to the Oxford-Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework', published from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in February 2021, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/962455/Spatial_framework_policy_paper.pdf

early engagement in the near future for your information. All feedback received will be further considered in combination with this public consultation.

1.18 On how we should engage different people, we heard that:

- people across the Arc really care about their local areas, and want to have an opportunity at the beginning of this process to tell us what they like, and what could be better;
- people want to see the data and evidence we have on the Arc, where available; and
- people really want to be engaged in this process, although not necessarily in the same way.

1.19 We also learned how we can communicate best with a wide audience. People told us how much they care about the area and want to influence how it develops for the better through this planning process. However, many found the language and terminology used, such as planning policy, a barrier. We have taken this feedback on board and reflected it in the approach and design of this consultation. We have kept the language and content as simple and short as possible. The aim is to reach as wide and diverse an audience as possible through this consultation, in particular those people who do not normally engage in planning.

1.20 We heard a lot of different views on what our focus and priorities for the future of the Arc and the Spatial Framework should be, but there were some common themes. You can see more about what people told us in the sections that follow on each pillar or policy theme. In summary:

- the four policy ‘pillars’ or themes – the environment, the economy, connectivity and infrastructure, and place-making – reflected much of what the people we spoke to value and what they are worried about in their area;
- people strongly supported environmental sustainability and connectivity as priorities – for example, people told us they want to see environmental improvement and more space for nature, and would like to see local transport options improved;
- younger people in particular saw an opportunity to support more education and job opportunities, but they also wanted growth to be environmentally sustainable; and
- there was a lot of worry about rising house prices and the cost of living, as well as acceptance that new homes were needed, but focus upon the character of places, health, well-being, the environment, climate change and improving local infrastructure, such as walking and cycling paths, green space, and healthcare facilities.

1.21 We have used this to help:

- inform the types of questions we are asking in this consultation;
- guide the data and evidence we have provided alongside it, and how we have presented this; and
- shape how we are engaging, including through this digital platform.

1.22 For this consultation and for our future work on the Spatial Framework, we will continue to develop our approach based on feedback we receive and the evidence base that we are preparing.

1.23 You can find out more about how we are planning to engage in Chapter 6.

Next steps

1.24 This consultation will run for 12 weeks, closing on 12 October 2021. We hope this will give anyone interested an opportunity to have their say.

1.25 We will consider all comments received to this consultation which, alongside other considerations, will help create the Spatial Framework's vision for the Arc to 2050 and inform the development of the Sustainability Appraisal. In spring 2022, we expect to publish the vision as well as a public consultation on options for the policies in the Spatial Framework. We will also publish a summary of comments received and our response as part of this consultation, so you can see how views have been taken into account.

1.26 The development of the Spatial Framework will be supported by two further public consultations:

- **Towards a Spatial Framework** – using the vision as a foundation, we will develop options for delivering its objectives. The options will be based on feedback from engagement, initial evidence gathering and analysis. We hope to publish this, including a Sustainable Appraisal 'Issues and Options' Report, for public consultation in spring 2022 to give everyone a chance to have their say; and
- **Draft Spatial Framework** – to finalise the Spatial Framework, we will consider responses to the previous consultation, and undertake further spatial analysis, option testing, impact assessments and engagement. We hope to publish the draft Spatial Framework with its Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report, for consultation in autumn 2022, with implementation of the final framework shortly after.

What do you think?

What is your positive vision for the Arc in the future?

1. What place could it be? What words come to mind?

- Sustainable
- Sense of community
- Equal/ inclusive
- Progressive
- Collaborates for better outcomes
- More life opportunities
- Better environment
- Eco-friendly
- Connected
- Better transport
- Better infrastructure
- Thriving economy
- Better place
- Better homes
- More available homes
- More affordable homes
- Other – please specify

2. If you can, we would love you to tell us more about your vision for the Arc to 2050.

3. How do you feel overall about the future of the Arc? What are your hopes and fears?

We are preparing the OxCam Arc Spatial Framework to make the most of the area's unique potential for economic growth to 2050 and beyond.

4. What do you think are the most important things that it needs to do, as a strategic plan, to achieve this? Work at an Arc-wide level to tackle shared issues/ opportunities on:

- Environment
- Economy
- Connectivity and growth
- Place-making
- Supporting monitoring and delivery

5. If there is anything you would like to add, we would love you to tell us.

2. The Environment

Our ambition for the Arc's environment

- 2.1** The government wants to support growth in the Arc in a way that is sustainable – by improving the natural environment and making sure it is protected, and can recover from harm. This will help us to meet our commitment to combat and build resilience to climate change. We think there is an opportunity for the Arc to become a world-leader for environmental sustainability over the coming decades.

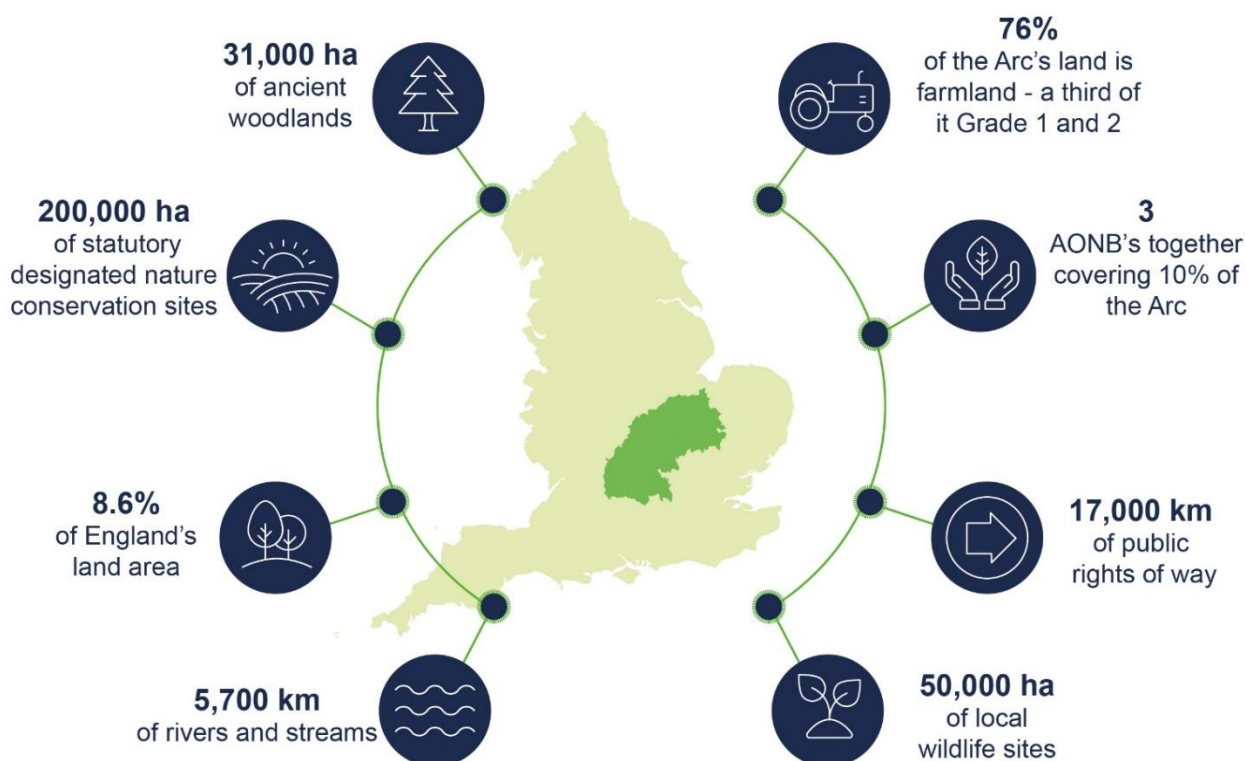
The Arc's environment today

- 2.2** The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to precious habitats and biodiversity, green spaces which are highly valued and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). For example⁶:

- the landscapes of its Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Chilterns, the North Wessex and Downs and the Cotswolds;
- biodiverse woodlands and grasslands, with over 200,000 ha of statutory designated nature conservation sites;
- the areas of wildflower-rich meadows and species-rich fenland in Cambridgeshire;
- around 31,000 ha of ancient woodlands, from Wychwood in Oxfordshire to the Whittlewood Forest in Northamptonshire;
- there are over 5,700 km of rivers and streams across the Arc; and
- the 6,000 acres⁷ of green public space in Milton Keynes.

⁶ You can find more information in the Scoping Report for the Spatial Framework's Sustainability Appraisal, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/creating-a-vision-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc>

⁷ Taken from the 'Facts and Figures' webpage of the Milton Keynes Parks Trust. Available at: <https://www.theparkstrust.com/our-work/about-us/facts-and-figures/>



Source: [OxCam Local Natural Capital Plan](#), SA Scoping Report

Figure 2.1 – Key facts on the Arc's environment today

2.3 However, there are real challenges⁶. Air quality is poor in many parts of the Arc, caused in part by high rates of car use, and this is harming the environment and the health of local residents. Flood risk is high and growing, particularly around the floodplains of the Arc's major rivers. The Arc's natural environment has declined in quality, and become less connected over the last 40 years, and we know that people's access to open areas of nature rich countryside can be limited. The Arc is also one of the most water stressed areas of the country; which means that sustainable abstraction and water resilience is key to future planning. Finally, the impact of COVID-19 has shown the importance of natural green space to healthy lifestyles – but many existing sites of value for nature are already heavily used for a range of recreational activities, which is having a negative impact.

2.4 If you would like to know more about the Arc's environment and the social and economic context of the area today, you can read more in the Scoping Report for the Spatial Framework's Sustainability Appraisal⁶, which is part of this consultation, including questions related the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal in Chapter 8.

How the Spatial Framework could help us to realise our ambition

2.5 The Spatial Framework offers a unique opportunity to preserve and enhance a green Arc and support nature recovery, improve air quality, reduce flood risk and improve access to nature and green space across the area. We have committed to support this, including by:

- developing policy to take a more coordinated approach to the environment, by:
 - making sure that the environment is at the centre of economic, transport and housing and planning decisions;
 - taking an integrated approach to water management and flood risk, cleaner air, sustainable land management, nature recovery, climate change mitigation and adaptation, in line with the government's 25 Year Environment Plan⁸, Net Zero ambitions⁹ and Clean Growth Strategy¹⁰;
 - making sure natural capital forms a key part of planning and decision-making, understanding what nature provides us and the value that brings so that we can invest and improve it (including by using the environmental baseline identified in the government led Local Natural Capital Plan¹¹ that has been developed for the Arc);
 - using Local Nature Recovery Strategies¹² to inform priorities.
- setting policy to:
 - support retention of, and investment in, key existing and potential new habitats;
 - improve access to nature and green space for all whilst ensuring nature conservation;
 - set high standards for new development, including on carbon emissions, active travel, water management, green space, different types of green infrastructure, and biodiversity;
 - support an integrated approach to water management, taking into account sustainable water abstraction and drought resilience, water quality, reducing risk and building resilience to flooding and how and where new infrastructure should be developed;
 - support clean air outcomes, with clear links to housing and transport policies;
 - improve natural capital across the Arc.

⁸ You can find more information on the government's 25 Year Environment Plan here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

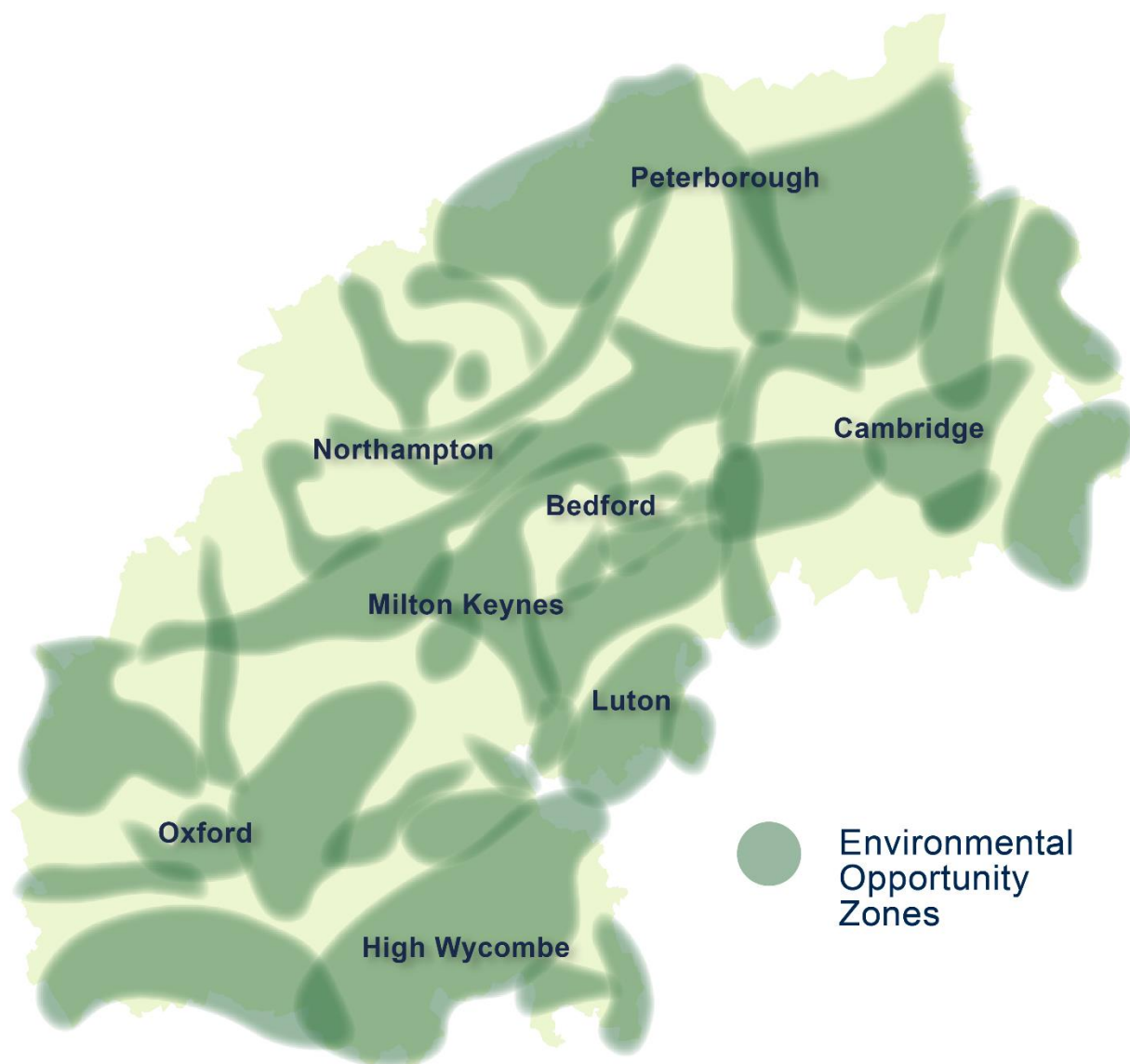
⁹ See the Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended). You can find more information on some of the government's proposals for Net Zero here: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future/energy-white-paper-powering-our-net-zero-future-accessible-html-version>

¹⁰ You can find more information on the government's Clean Growth Strategy here: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

¹¹ See Local Natural Capital Plan for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, developed by the Environment Agency. Available at: <https://www.oxcamlncp.org/>

¹² You can find more information on Local Nature Recovery Strategies here: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/environment-bill-2020/10-march-2020-nature-and-conservation-covenants-parts-6-and-7>

- 2.6** We have also committed to identifying environmental Opportunity Areas, including for water infrastructure, which use nature-based solutions, supporting nature recovery, biodiversity net gain and carbon sinks, where these can bring the most benefits for environmental sustainability.



Source: [Local Nature Partnerships' Strategic-Scale Environmental Opportunity Mapping: Doubling Nature in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)

Figure 2.2 – Strategic-scale environmental opportunity zones¹³

- 2.7** To ensure sustainability is embedded in the Spatial Framework we are producing a **Sustainability Appraisal**. The aim is to address environmental issues alongside social and economic issues as the Spatial Framework and its policies develop. This will inform decision-making and help achieve improved sustainability outcomes. A Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report⁶ has been prepared as part of this consultation. This provides

¹³ For more information about each of these zones, please refer to the Local Nature Partnerships' Strategic-Scale Environmental Opportunity Mapping: Doubling Nature in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, available at: <https://bucks.mknep.co.uk/download/2469/>

more information on our approach and more detailed information on the Arc's environmental assets; social and economic context and changing climate.

- 2.8** We will also build on the evidence baseline identified in the government led Local Natural Capital Plan¹¹ that has been developed for the Arc. The government has invested in this project with local partners to understand the Arc's environment, its unique features, pressures and identifying opportunities to develop and invest in nature.

What you have told us so far

- 2.9** We want to understand different views about the Arc's environment to help us form our vision. The first part of this was initial conversations in March - including with some local residents, community and campaign groups, local authorities, and businesses. What we were told helped us to develop our approach to engagement and understand some of the key issues and questions for this consultation. The following summarises some of the themes that came from these discussions.

- 2.10** People seem to agree on some of the good things about the Arc's environment:

- accessible green space is highly valued by communities across the Arc and is seen as key to well-being and quality of life; and
- environmental sustainability is a priority for all groups we have spoken to so far.

- 2.11** And there are some common concerns:

- the risk of flooding is a major worry for many people; and
- there are concerns about the impact of development on the environment, particularly the loss of green space.

- 2.12** Meanwhile, some are unsure about the future, but have views about what the Spatial Framework could do to support prosperity for everyone and in all parts of the Arc:

- many people told us that the Spatial Framework could be an opportunity to make future development much more sustainable; and
- there is some doubt about whether high environmental ambitions can be delivered.

- 2.13** This has given us a sense of some of the issues and questions we should cover in this consultation. Now we want to hear from you to help us create a vision for the Arc's environment.

What do you think?

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Green spaces, nature, and biodiversity

1. Making sure the natural environment is protected, restored, and improved. For example, improving new and existing green spaces.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

2. Making sure the most is made of the natural environment and that all people can have access to it. For example, making improvements to woodlands, wetland, green space and water and making sure people can visit them if they want to.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

3. Making sure new growth leaves the environment in a better state than before. For example, keeping land in its natural state, and making it more wild, where appropriate.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

4. Anything else to add about your vision for green spaces, nature, and biodiversity?

Climate change resilience and net zero

5. Making sure new development helps to achieve net zero carbon at an Arc level towards national net zero targets. For example, through good design, sustainable travel choices, renewable energy and trapping carbon.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

6. Making sure that new development can respond to the current and future effects of climate change. For example, through new carbon emissions, water use, waste disposal and renewable energy targets.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

7. Anything else to add about your vision for climate change and/ or the contribution to net zero?

Air quality and waste

8. Making sure new development helps to improve air quality within the Arc. For example, through high quality design, low emission zones and sustainable transport.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

9. Taking a combined approach to air quality across the Arc. For example, through being careful about where each land uses should go, supporting journeys via public transport and active travel and enhancing green spaces and routes across the area.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

10. Making better use of resources and managing waste. For example, promoting the re-use of materials, and protecting and improving soil quality and minerals.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

11. Anything else to add about your vision for air quality and waste?

Water

12. Promoting a combined approach to managing water across the Arc, through protecting water resources, improving water quality and reducing the risk of flooding. For example, treating wastewater, improving water storage, and reusing surface runoff.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

13. Making sure new development reduces existing flood risk and is resilient to future flooding. For example, through tree planting and multifunctional sustainable drainage.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

14. Improving water availability and cutting the risk of drought. For example, through new sustainable water resources and infrastructure, and measures which reduce water use.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

15. Anything else to add about your vision for water?

3. The Economy

Our ambition for the Arc's economy

3.1 The government's priority for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc is sustainable economic growth. We are putting sustainable economic growth first because we think that the Arc can be one of the most productive places in the world by creating new jobs, improving the standard of living and the quality of life for local communities. We want to support economic growth that is sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally. Taking this step will also help national prosperity as we build back better from the impacts of COVID-19.

The Arc's economy today

3.2 The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to a booming and varied economy that contributes to national prosperity. Over the last 20 years, it has grown faster than any region outside London, and employment and wages are above the national average. It is home to some strong and innovative sectors, world-leading companies, internationally recognised research and development centres and research universities – for example:

- **the life sciences cluster in Cambridge**, which is the most productive in Europe – with 400 companies based there and contributing £2.9 billion to the UK economy, while also playing a critical role in developing a vaccine for COVID-19¹⁴;
- **the largest space cluster in Europe** is located in an area spanning Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire;
- **the nationally leading energy cluster is in Oxfordshire, focusing on activities to decarbonise energy production, distribution and consumption;**
- **the digital innovation boom in Milton Keynes**, with new cutting-edge developments in Artificial Intelligence and machine learning;
- **Cambridge is a leading UK and global hub of innovation**, its rate of patent applications, a key indicator of innovation, is the highest in the UK outside of London and over 12 times the national average; and
- **the Arc's 11 major higher education institutions**, including the world-leading centres of learning in Oxford and Cambridge; Cranfield University, a leader in automotive and aerospace engineering; and the Open University.

¹⁴ Taken from The Oxford-Cambridge Arc Economic Prospectus, published by the Arc Leadership in October 2020 - available at: https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxford-CambridgeArcProspectus_Approved_1.pdf



Source: Internal analysis using ONS data

Figure 3.1 – The Arc's economy (based on 2018 prices) compared to other areas in England

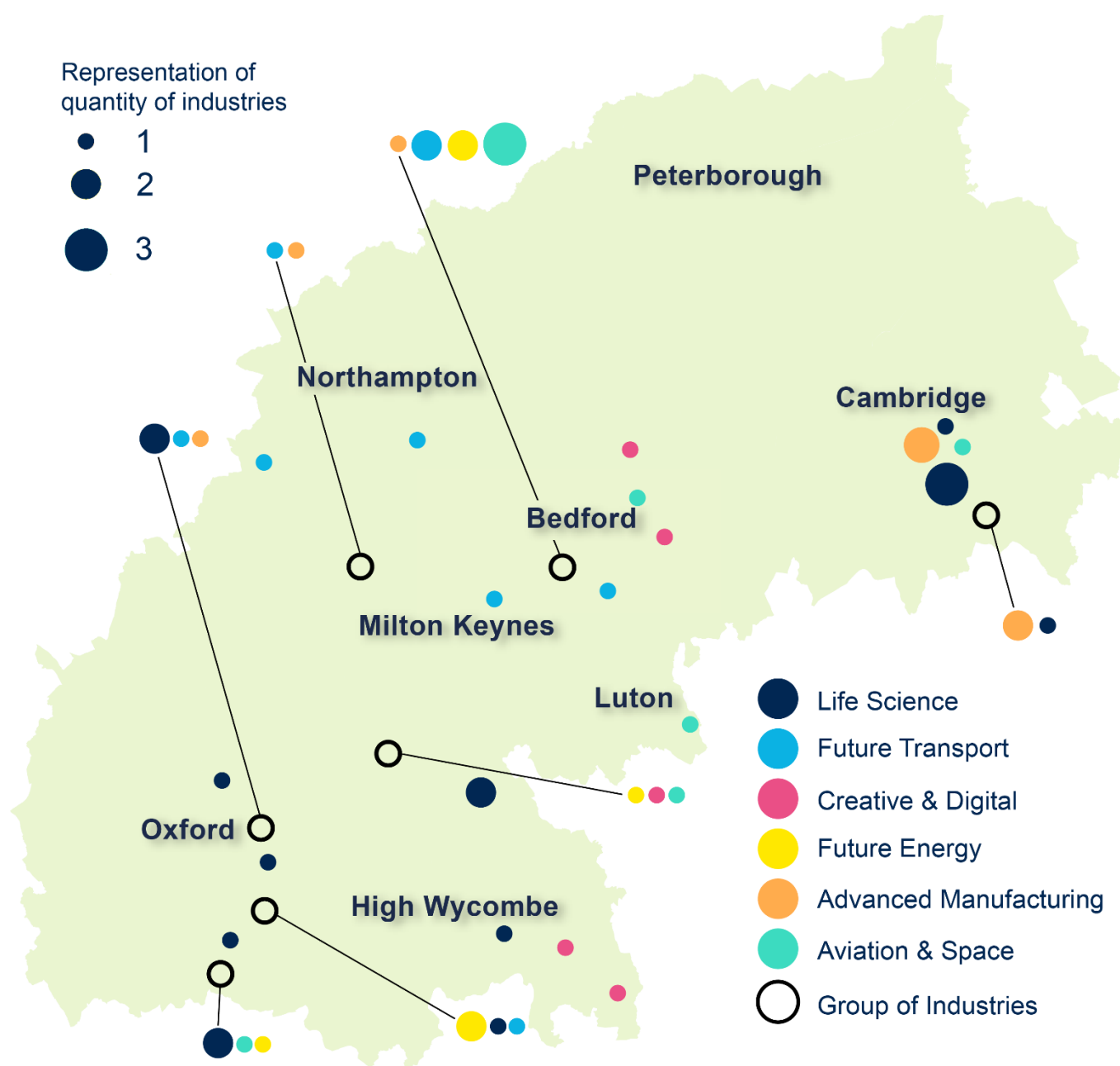
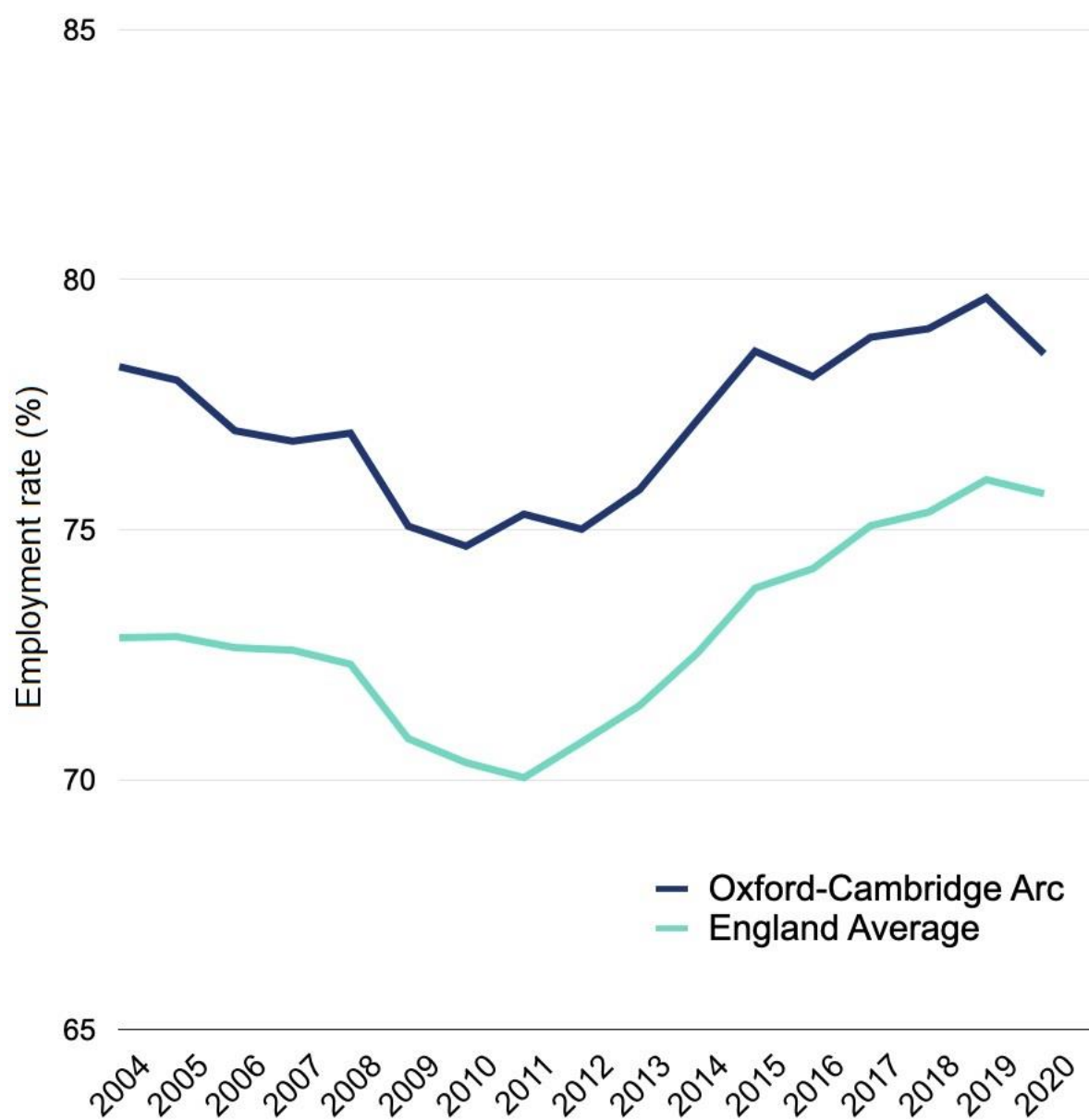


Figure 3.2 – Economic clusters in the Arc

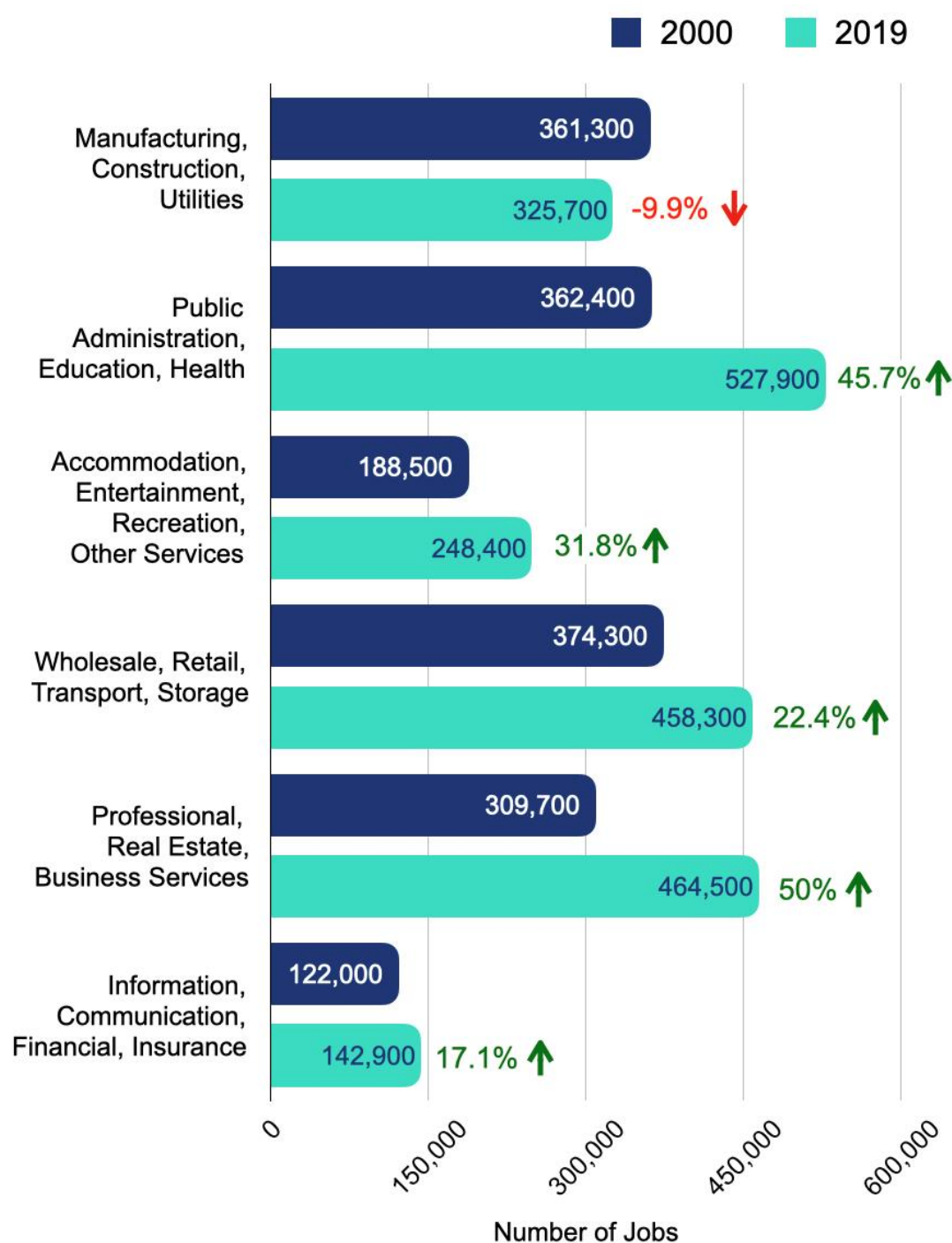
3.3 This growth has brought benefits to places and communities across the area, but we know these have not been felt by all, and communities are worried for the future. For example, places like Oxford, Cambridge and Milton Keynes have seen significant economic and wage growth¹⁵; however, this has not been spread evenly across these centres or in other towns and rural areas. The cost of homes has grown a lot over the years, particularly in these areas. Local communities are worried that people and businesses do not have access to the right infrastructure that they need such as better transport connections and digital services.

¹⁵ Internal analysis using ONS data.



Source: Internal analysis using ONS data

Figure 3.3 – Employment growth in the Arc



Source: Internal analysis using ONS data

Figure 3.4 – Employment by sector in the Arc¹⁶

¹⁶ Culture and tourism services are included in the 'Accommodation, entertainment, recreation and other services' class

How the Spatial Framework could help us to deliver our ambition

3.4 We want to use the Spatial Framework to help tackle these problems. We want to make the most of the economic potential of the Arc by planning for sustainable growth and making the Arc an even more attractive place for all to live, work and do business. We have committed to doing this by:

- developing an Economic Strategy, supported by strong economic evidence, to identify the policies, locations and investment needed to deliver the Arc's potential for sustainable and green economic growth;
- setting policies to make sure growth is felt by all communities and the Arc becomes a better place to live and work for all, such as by providing more housing in the right places, making sure people can move around by public transport and other infrastructure, and enhancing the Arc's natural capital¹⁷;
- setting policies which help local planning authorities to plan for new business and employment space, support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and places for global companies; and
- setting policies to meet the needs of different sectors and businesses – from large firms to start-ups and promoting the green economy, industry, innovation and technology.

3.5 Together, these will help businesses find the space they need for new jobs and help local communities. The government is also considering setting up a new Arc Growth Body¹⁷ that would be a clear economic leadership voice to help businesses and innovation within the Arc. It would also help boost the area's potential as a global innovation powerhouse by promoting the Arc internationally.

What you have told us so far

3.6 We want to understand different views about the Arc's economy to help us form our vision. The first part of this was initial conversations in March - including with some local residents, community and campaign groups, local authorities, and businesses. What we were told helped us to develop our approach to engagement and understand some of the key issues and questions for this consultation. The following summarises some of the themes that came from these discussions.

3.7 People seem to agree on some of the good things about the Arc's economy:

¹⁷ See press release from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the intention to establish the Arc Growth Body, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/Government/news/Government-plan-to-transform-oxford-cambridge-arc-into-uk-s-fastest-growing-economic-region>

- residents and businesses were excited by the potential for jobs growth and innovation in the Arc;
- younger people really value employment and education in many parts of the Arc; and
- people want to see their local high streets and local retail and leisure businesses grow.

3.8 And there are some common concerns:

- some residents are worried about the loss of retail that they have seen on some high streets;
- that the benefits of economic growth, such as greater investment and more jobs, may not be felt in all places, leading to greater inequality; and
- there is also doubt about whether growth could be sustained for the long-term.

3.9 Meanwhile, some are unsure about the future, but have views about what the Spatial Framework could do to help all parts of the Arc:

- some wonder who will be the winners and losers of growth;
- we need to understand the needs of different sectors, industries and types of job in the Arc; and
- the Spatial Framework should be ambitious and should focus on the strategic national importance of the region.

3.10 This has given us a sense of some of the issues and questions we should cover in this consultation. Now we want to hear from you to help us create a vision for economy in the Arc.

What do you think?

Thinking about your vision for the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Education and training

1. Making sure the Arc keeps growing as a place of educational excellence, partnership and research. For example, through growth which helps existing universities and colleges.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

2. Making sure the economic benefits of growth are felt by all communities within the Arc. For example, through putting new education and training facilities in places where more people can easily get to go to them.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

3. Anything else to add about your vision for education and training?

Jobs and businesses

4. Making sure that the Arc keeps growing as a place for business, science and technology, and innovation. For example, through putting these types of new workspaces in places where they can make the most of cross-sector collaboration.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

5. Making sure that existing industries keep growing within the Arc. For example, through putting industries in the best places to suit their needs.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

6. Making sure the Arc builds upon and grows its skills, expertise and capabilities. For example, through making sure people can get around easily to bring the right people to the right job locations.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

7. Making sure that the right types of buildings are provided in the Arc so that businesses can keep growing as well as supporting the green economy. For example, through building new flexible and adaptable workspaces meeting the needs of a range of different businesses of different sizes.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

8. Anything else to add about your vision for jobs and businesses?

4. Connectivity and Infrastructure

Our ambition for connectivity and infrastructure in the Arc

- 4.1 We want the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to be a great place to live and work – now and in the future.** That means it will need to be better connected – by making it easier for walking, cycling, and public transport to become first choice for everyone in the Arc. It will also mean making places that reduce the need to travel in the first place. And it means improving communities' access to the services they need – like a good quality, sustainable water supply and broadband, schools, cycle lanes and healthcare, as part of a great approach to place-making.

Connectivity and infrastructure in the Arc today

- 4.2 The government is already investing in a major new rail link to connect Oxford to Cambridge via Milton Keynes and Bedford – the East West Rail project¹⁸.** This would create a new east-west connection¹⁹ across the Arc to link some of its major towns and cities – making it easier, more accessible and more sustainable to travel across the area and better connect with the Arc's businesses and research institutions.
- 4.3** The Arc is also home to businesses and universities that are leading the way in developing new technology which will shape the way we live in the future, including for vehicles that will make travel more sustainable – such as electric cars and robotic delivery vehicles.

¹⁸ You can find more information about the East West Rail project at: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>

¹⁹ This was a major theme of the National Infrastructure Commission's analysis of the Arc. See the NIC's final report, Partnering for Prosperity (2017), available at: <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf>

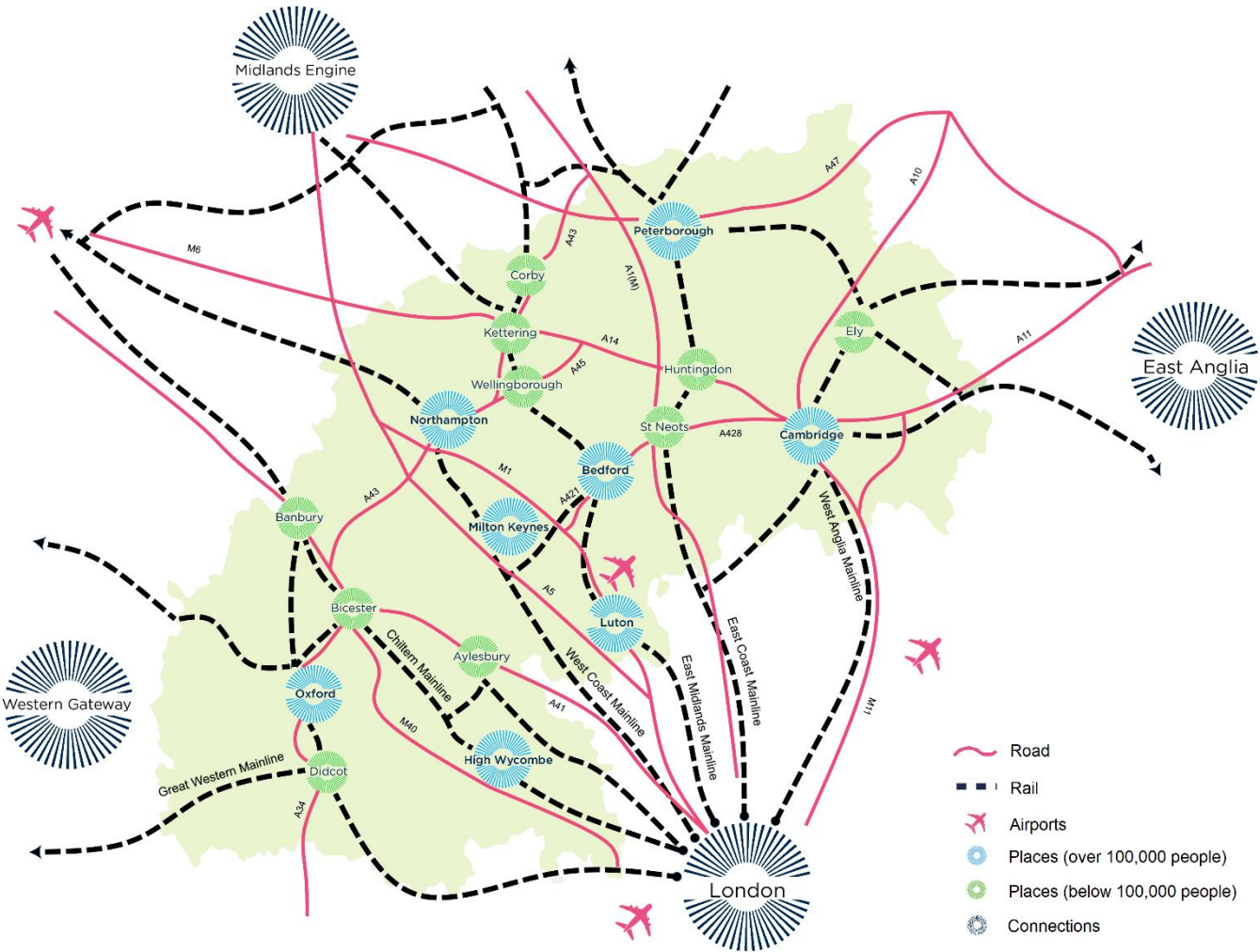
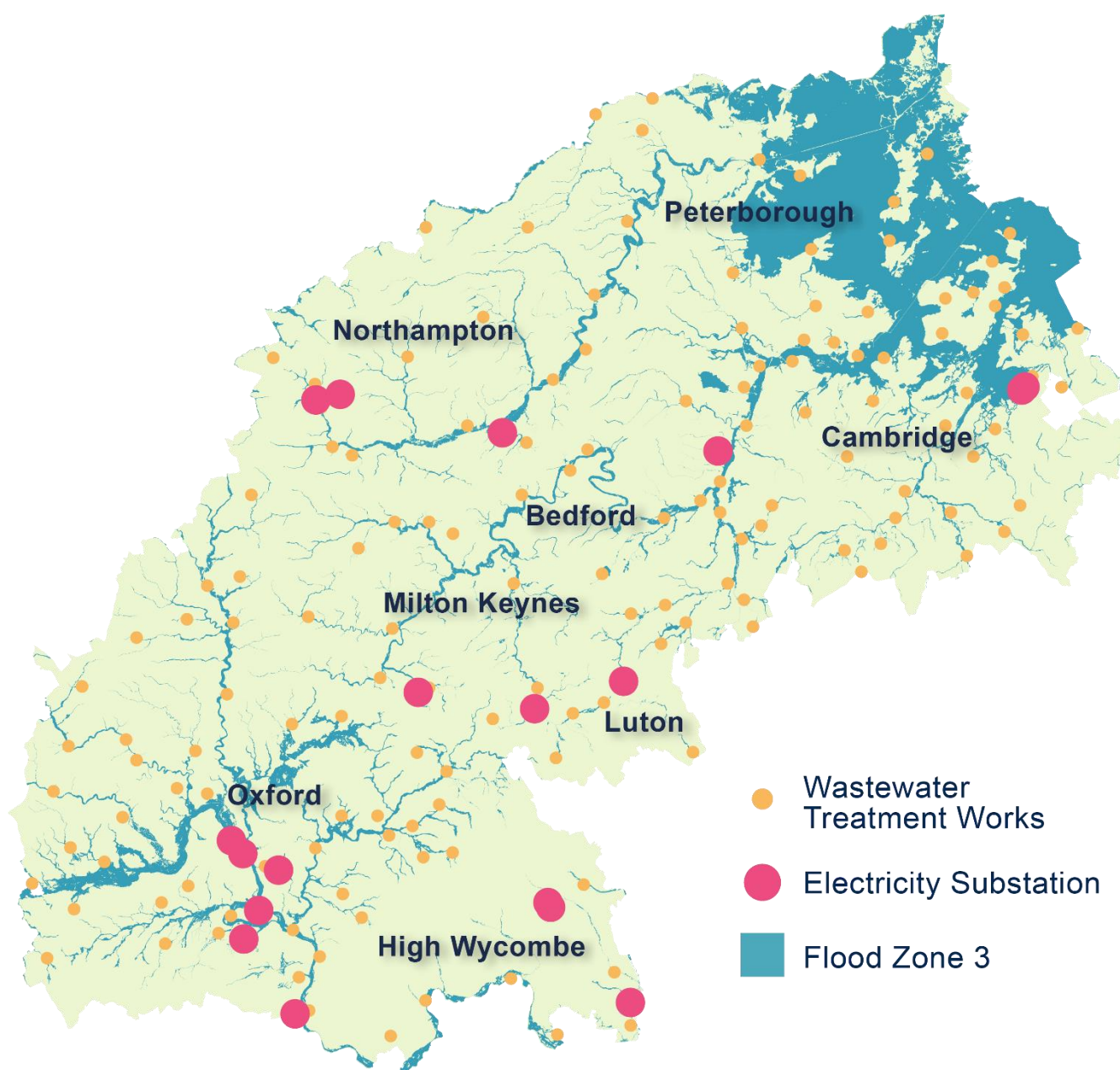


Figure 4.1 – Major transport links in the Arc today



Source: [Flood map for planning](#), data summarised from published Water Cycle Studies and Water Quality Assessments for Local Planning Authorities across the Arc, National Grid

Figure 4.2 – Flooding and selected utilities infrastructure in the Arc today

4.4 We know we need to do more. Studies tell us that a lack of transport and utilities infrastructure in different towns and cities in the Arc can hold back the area's growth and sustainability:

- **we know that many people rely on private cars, and that to tackle climate change and improve air quality we will need to encourage them to travel by bike, foot or public transport instead.** 67% of people travelling to work – pre-COVID-19 – go by car, compared with 60% nationally. Carbon emissions from transport are higher in the area at 47%– compared with 37% nationally²⁰;
- **there are long-standing concerns about utility supplies** – including water, flooding, digital, clean energy and waste recycling – to meet the growing needs of the Arc's communities and businesses, and the challenges of climate change; and
- **the Arc's population is likely to grow, age and become more diverse over the coming decades²¹,** which will bring new demands for social infrastructure such as healthcare, but also risks of increasing existing inequalities – including health inequality – that we know exist today.

How the Spatial Framework could help to deliver our ambition

4.5 We have a unique opportunity to address these challenges by planning for sustainable infrastructure in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc through the Spatial Framework. We will be able to set national planning and transport policy for the area, and prioritise projects that should be considered for investment. We have committed to:

²⁰ These figures are for the area including Hertfordshire and Swindon. See England's Economic Heartland (2020) Transport Strategy, available at: https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Connecting_People_Transforming_Journeys_av.pdf

²¹ Internal analysis based on ONS population data, available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2018based>

- identifying and mapping the existing transport, health, education, accessible natural green spaces, utilities, green (land) and blue (water) infrastructure and other infrastructure at an Arc-wide scale;
- identifying the long-term need for new infrastructure and the investment across the Arc to 2050, taking into account climate change, and gaps in existing provision;
- using this work to create an infrastructure plan to support future growth and place-making, such as:
 - delivering sustainable and public transport;
 - protecting and enhancing the environment;
 - giving communities access to the public services they need – including education and health;
 - making sure our waste is minimised, recycled or disposed of sustainably where this is the only option;
 - providing the water, digital and utilities infrastructure needed to support growth;
- setting strategic policies for local transport authorities and local planning authorities, building on the England's Economic Heartland transport strategy²² and evidence base, including the four key principles for transport connectivity in the area:
 - aiming for net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2040, but no later than 2050;
 - improving quality of life and wellbeing through a safe and inclusive transport system for all;
 - connecting people and businesses to markets and opportunities;
 - making sure people and goods can move more efficiently through the area and to/from international gateways, in a way which reduces the environmental impact;
- setting strategic climate resilience and air quality policies based on air quality modelling; and
- setting strategic policies to support investment in new water, digital, utilities, green and blue infrastructure alongside new development.

²² See England's Economic Heartland (2020) Transport Strategy, available at: https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Connecting_People_Transforming_Journeys_av.pdf

What you have told us so far

4.6 We want to understand different views about the Arc's economy to help us form our vision. The first part of this was initial conversations in March - including with some local residents, community and campaign groups, local authorities, and businesses. What we were told helped us to develop our approach to engagement and understand some of the key issues and questions for this consultation. The following summarises some of the themes that came from these discussions.

4.7 People seem to agree on some of the priorities for the future:

- transport should be more environmentally sustainable; and
- it should be easier to walk and cycle within towns and cities.

4.8 And there are some common concerns:

- that growth will put pressure on existing infrastructure, such as roads and transport capacity; and
- about transport options in rural communities in particular, but also across the Arc.

4.9 We also heard a range of views about what how the Spatial Framework can help connectivity and infrastructure in all parts of the Arc, including that:

- it should create specific plans for new transport and infrastructure;
- it should support a shift away from cars towards walking, cycling, rail and bus travel;
- it should support more investment in homes and infrastructure in towns and villages across the area; and
- it should ensure that new developments are better designed to support walking and cycling.

4.10 This has given us a sense of some of the issues and questions we should cover in this consultation. Now we want to hear from you to help us create a vision for infrastructure and connectivity in the Arc.

What do you think?

Thinking about the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Infrastructure

1. Making sure planning takes a combined approach to new development by providing the infrastructure and services required at the right time to support growth. For example, by planning for the need for utilities (e.g. water, energy, waste) and community infrastructure (e.g. schools, hospitals, GP surgeries).

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

2. Making sure new development makes the most of existing resources. For example, through making sure that materials are reused, renewable energy supplies are used, and waste is properly planned for.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

3. Making sure that digital infrastructure is put in at the same time as other development takes place. For example, speeding up the fitting of high-speed broadband to support home-based work and help new ways of learning.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

4. Anything else to add about your vision for infrastructure?

New development

5. Making sure growth within the Arc is placed around areas with better transport links. For example, through having more development around stations and bus routes, supported by cycling and walking tracks.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

6. Making sure new development cuts down the need to travel around the local area. For example, through providing safe and easy walking and cycling routes to town centres, shops and schools.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

7. Making sure new developments reduce existing and future infrastructure demand and resources used. For example, making sure that designs leave enough space for existing and future measures which reduce energy and water use, and cut down on waste.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

8. Making sure sustainable transport principles are included in the design of new developments. For example, by designing new developments in a way that enables people to walk or cycle all or part of their journeys.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

9. Anything else to add about new developments in the context of connectivity and infrastructure?

Getting around

10. Creating better transport connections across the Arc and making sure they are provided in a way which supports sustainable new growth. For example, by planning for public transport and physical transport infrastructure requirements.
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

11. Making sure there are more opportunities for active travel such as walking and cycling across the Arc. For example, wider pavements, segregated cycle lanes, improved network of cycle lanes, and better pedestrian crossings.
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

12. Making sure that there is the right form of public transport in the right areas across the Arc and can be used by all travellers, including people with any particular needs.
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

13. Cutting down on the impact of cars and other private vehicles within the Arc. For example, by supporting more sustainable forms of private travel like cycling.
[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

14. Anything else to add about your vision of getting around?

5. Place-making

Our ambition for place-making in the Arc

- 5.1 Place-making is the process of designing and creating great places to live, work, play and learn in. We think there is an opportunity for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to be a world-leader in sustainable place-making and community living.**
- 5.2** We know that, as the Arc grows, new homes and places will be needed. Our ambition is to help ensure those new homes and places are great places to live by being more sustainable, beautiful and green, and have better access to the services and infrastructure they need. And we want to improve existing places and learn from those that are most valued by local communities as we think about the places of the future.

Place-making in the Arc today

- 5.3 The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is already home to great places – old and new. For example:**

- the medieval centres of Oxford and Cambridge;
- historic market towns such as Bedford, Aylesbury and Wellingborough;
- Milton Keynes, a leading example of a post-war ‘new town’, with 6,000 acres⁷ of protected green space for public use;
- the beautiful villages and rural areas that characterise many parts of the Arc;
- the new self-build development at Graven Hill in Bicester, Oxfordshire, a great example of how new development can create opportunities for more people to design and build their own homes; and
- the new University-led Eddington development in North West Cambridge, which demonstrates best practice and award-winning design.

- 5.4** We want to make the most of opportunities to enhance existing places and learn from those that are most valued by local communities as we think about the places of the future. We know that the Arc has the potential for more sustainable growth and places to meet current and further needs.
- 5.5 We are concerned about the affordability and availability of housing in the Arc, and what this will mean for the Arc’s communities, economy and environment.** Development of new homes is already happening in the Arc, but in the main centres this has not kept up with need. We also know people are being priced out of the area, increasing the need to make more polluting journeys for work and leisure, and making

home ownership less likely for many. And we have heard concerns about the quality and sustainability of new development.

How the Spatial Framework could help us to deliver our ambition

5.6 We want to use the Spatial Framework to make sure that we build places that the Arc needs to support sustainable growth, and that communities will enjoy for decades and centuries to come. We know that local authorities and local communities through Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans are already working to plan for a better future for their areas, and we want to work closely with them in this process. We have committed to doing this by using the Spatial Framework, supported by the Sustainability Appraisal, to identify:

- the most sustainable locations for new homes, including identifying Opportunity Areas, to support local planning authorities to plan for this growth;
- the infrastructure – such as transport, health and education facilities, utilities and digital – needed to support sustainable growth in those locations, and the key locations for strategic infrastructure; and
- locations to protect and improve the environmental as part of sustainable growth and development.

5.7 We will also seek to set policies to enable:

- new development to come forward at the scale and speed needed, in sustainable locations, with a focus on brownfield redevelopment;
- new development to support the recovery of nature, new green space that can be accessed by all, resilience to climate change, and protection of highly valued existing green space; and
- housing needs to be met in full, including much-needed affordable housing.

5.8 In parallel to the development of the Spatial Framework, the government is also exploring options to speed up new housing and infrastructure development in the Arc to help meet its ambitions, where evidence supports it. This includes examining (and where appropriate, developing) the case for new and/or expanded settlements in the Arc, including options informed by possible East West Rail stations between Bedford and Cambridge and growth options at Cambridge itself. The government will undertake additional Arc consultations on any specific proposals for such options as appropriate. The Spatial Framework will guide the future growth of the Arc to 2050, including on the question of new housing and infrastructure and will, as part of its development, take into

consideration any significant new housing and infrastructure coming forward to meet the Arc's ambition.

What have you told us so far

5.9 We want to understand different views about place-making in the Arc to help us form our vision. The first part of this was initial conversations in March, including with some local residents, community and campaign groups, local authorities, and businesses. What we were told helped us to develop our approach to engagement and understand some of the key issues and questions for this consultation. The following summarises some of the themes that came from these discussions.

5.10 People seem to agree on some of the good things about the Arc's places today:

- green space, and play and sports facilities are highly valued;
- historic and beautiful buildings are highly valued by local residents; and
- some people welcome new homes and investment in their towns and villages.

5.11 And there are some common concerns:

- there are worries about a lack of affordable housing and rising house prices;
- some residents are concerned about pressures from housing developments on existing infrastructure, particularly in rural areas;
- there is some concern about how new development would connect with existing places; and
- some expressed concerns that towns and cities would receive most of the development focus with rural areas being left behind.

5.12 Meanwhile, we heard a range of views about what the Spatial Framework could do to support place-making in all parts of the Arc, including that:

- well-being, health and quality of life should be addressed in the Spatial Framework;
- sustainability and community living are highly valued; and
- we should take a joined-up approach to place-making and planning.

- 5.13** This has given us a sense of some of the issues and questions we should cover in this consultation. Now we want to hear from you to help us create a vision for place-making in the Arc.

What do you think?

Thinking about the future of the area, how important is it that the Spatial Framework focuses on:

Location of growth

1. Making sure new developments are built in the most sustainable locations, for the environment, the economy and communities. For example, by developing brownfield redevelopment and making sure they have good access to town centres, shops and schools.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

2. Anything else to add about your vision for location of growth?

Homes in your area

3. Ensuring the right types of housing are delivered in the right locations to meet the needs of both renters and buyers. For example, family houses, first-time buyers, specialist housing, student accommodation and opportunities for people to build their own homes.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

4. Increasing the amount and availability of affordable homes within the Arc.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

5. Anything else to add about your vision for homes in your area?

Design of new developments and streets

6. Making sure a coordinated approach is taken to the design and delivery of new developments to ensure they are supported by new and existing infrastructure.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

7. Making sure the environment and sustainability is at the heart of new developments. For example, by improving the built and natural environment, making sure development complements surrounding areas, and is supported by the right level of infrastructure.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

8. Making sure there is the right mix of uses in new developments to help make high quality and thriving new places.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

9. Making sure new developments help support healthy lifestyles for existing and future communities. For example, through walking and cycling, high quality green spaces, and accessible streets.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

10. Making sure new developments promote resilience to climate change. For example, through green roofs, managing surface water, tree planting, storing rainwater and new green spaces.

[Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important]

11. Anything else to add about your vision for the design of new developments and streets?

6. Our commitment to engaging communities

Why do we want to engage?

- 6.1 We want to ensure the Spatial Framework is built on a vision shared with communities it will serve.** We intend to undertake effective, innovative and people-focused consultation with those that live and work in the Arc, so that everyone – particularly those who are normally under-represented in consultations of this kind – has a chance to have their say about the Spatial Framework.
- 6.2 We aim to conduct wide and meaningful engagement throughout this process to give as many people as possible the opportunity to influence how the Spatial Framework develops.** To achieve this, we will need to work closely with stakeholders including local authorities, businesses, social enterprises, Local Enterprise Partnerships, sub-national transport bodies and academia to reach and capture the widest possible range of views possible.

Our commitment to you

- 6.3 We want to deliver an exemplary programme of engagement throughout this two-year process.** We are committed to doing this in a way that is:

- **collaborative** – we will work with stakeholders, including local councils, businesses and universities to build on local relationships and foster meaningful engagement;
- **adaptable** – we will adopt an engagement strategy which is clear and consistent yet retains sufficient flexibility to meet our delivery milestones;
- **integrated** – we will adopt a multi-method engagement approach so that we can reach the right people in the right way throughout the process;
- **inclusive** – our engagement approach will prioritise inclusivity. We strive to go beyond traditional channels of engagement and take individual needs into account; and
- **digital-first** – we will make better use of digital tools to support better, more accessible policy engagement.

What have we done so far?

6.4 At each stage of our work so far, we have been informed by local partners:

- **in 2019, we published a joint declaration²³ between government and local partners²⁴**, where we agreed to work collaboratively in realising the Arc's potential and exploring options for long-term planning in the Arc. These relationships mean that we are not starting from scratch and have an opportunity to build on existing knowledge and evidence. Continued engagement with this now evolved original group of local partners, many of whom are represented on the Arc Leaders Group, is important to ensuring the Spatial Framework supports long-term sustainable growth for the Arc, and is as effective as possible;
- **in February 2021, we formally launched the process to develop the Spatial Framework¹**. We made a commitment to consulting and engaging three times during that process, and to do so in a way that is open, collaborative, digital and inclusive; and
- **in early 2021, to prepare for this consultation, we held some initial conversations** with around 120 residents and representatives of businesses, local authorities, charities and campaign groups. We used these sessions to test our approach to consultation, including by hearing initial views on priorities for the future, and gathering views on effective ways to engage with different groups. We hope to publish a summary of the feedback from this early engagement in the near future for your information. All the feedback received will be further considered in combination with this public consultation.

6.5 The government has also invested in the development of a Local Natural Capital Plan¹¹ for the Arc. Over the last 18 months, we have worked with local partners to understand the area's environment, which has identified the unique features, pressures and opportunities to develop and invest in nature.

²³ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners, March 2019. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

²⁴ This joint declaration has been agreed between the Government, local authorities across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the Arc's four Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and England's Economic Heartland.

How will our engagement be structured?

6.6 This consultation is the first phase of formal public consultation taking place in summer 2021. Two further phases of consultation will follow on the Spatial Framework, that will be supported by ongoing engagement with local partners. The precise timing of phases on the Spatial Framework will be subject to the outcome of the Sustainability Appraisal process, but are intended to be as per the following indicative phasing:

- **Vision: 12-week public consultation to develop a vision for the Arc.**
- **Towards a Spatial Framework: publication of an interim document setting out options for policy and launch of second public consultation.** Using the vision as a foundation, we will develop options for delivering its objectives. The options will be based on feedback from engagement, initial evidence gathering and analysis. It is highly likely that these options will consider strategic growth locations and distribution of growth. We hope to publish this, including a Sustainable Appraisal 'Issues and Options' Report, for public consultation in spring 2022 to give everyone a chance to have their say.
- **Draft Spatial Framework: publication of the draft Spatial Framework alongside third public consultation.** To finalise the Spatial Framework, we will consider responses to the previous consultation, and undertake further spatial analysis, option testing, impact assessments and engagement. We hope to publish the draft Spatial Framework with its Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report, for consultation in autumn 2022, with implementation of the final framework shortly after.

Engagement roadmap

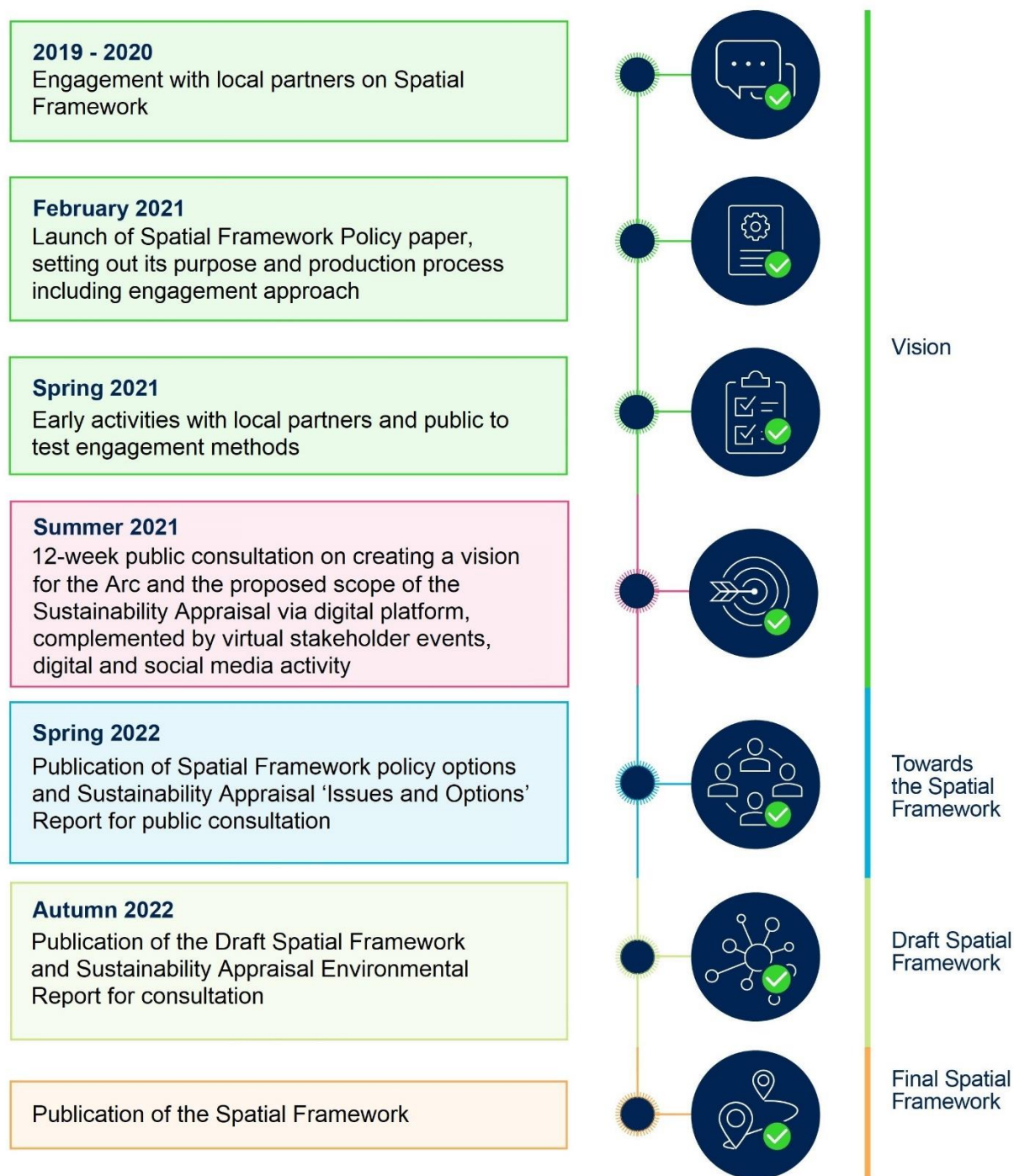


Figure 6.1 – Indicative timeline for developing the Spatial Framework

Have your say

- 6.7** The development of the Spatial Framework will be informed through, and will benefit from, consultation with who live, work and have an interest in the Arc. In this consultation we are inviting the public to help us create a vision for the area to 2050 and help set the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal. This consultation is open to everyone and all views are important to us. There will be further opportunities for people to have their say. This is the first of three planned consultations on the Spatial Framework. If you would like to be kept updated on the progress of the Spatial Framework and other government-led Arc proposals, you can sign up to the mailing list at the [GOV.UK policy webpage](#).

What do you think?

1. How can government engage the public better?

[Communication materials/ Social listening/ Focus groups/ 1-1 interviews and experiments/ Ethnography/ Citizen assemblies and citizen juries/ Other types of engagement]

2. Before this consultation, I was familiar with the area known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

[Yes/ No]

3. Do you have anything else to add on engaging communities?

7. Our commitment to data, evidence and digital tools

Introduction

- 7.1 We are building an evidence base so that the Spatial Framework can be based on the latest and most reliable data and analysis available.** This will help us to support sustainable growth, as it will allow us to fully understand and assess the possible environmental, economic and social impact of different policies and spatial options. This will not happen overnight – we will need to work to develop our evidence base over the course of creating the Spatial Framework. We also want to leave a positive legacy of data and evidence for future planning and policy-making in the Arc.
- 7.2 We want everyone to have access to our evidence base, and we will use the latest digital technology to make this possible.** We believe that this will give us an opportunity to create a lasting resource for communities, local authorities and businesses in the Arc, so that everyone has greater access to better data and evidence. There are 18 local planning authorities, eight transport planning authorities, four Local Enterprise Partnerships and one sub-national transport body in the Arc – this is a rare opportunity to improve the way data and evidence is collected and used within and between public and private sector organisations over a wide area.
- 7.3 We want your views on our approach to using evidence and data to support the development of the Spatial Framework,** so that we can create digital tools that can genuinely support better access and use of data and evidence across the Arc and government's Arc-related work, as we set out in the [‘Planning for the Future’](#) consultation.

Our commitment

- 7.4** We are committed to creating a robust evidence base that is easily accessible because:

- **the planning system could make better use of interactive digital services and tools.** We need to go further to realise our ambition for use of data and digital tools in the Arc. By making processes more reliant on data rather than documents, engagement with planning could become easier;
- **at the moment, evidence can vary and be difficult to access, limiting its use and the impact that it can have;** and
- **the best way to build good services is to understand the needs of everyone that will have access to them.** We will start small with samples and improve them over the course of developing the Spatial Framework, so that we can leave a positive legacy for communities and stakeholders in the Arc.

7.5 Our approach will be based on the following principles:

- **open access** - we will promote open data, open standards and open source models, while remaining consistent with the principles of data security;
- **quality** - we will underpin evidence with high-quality, verifiable and reliable data, use the best analytical methods and ensure high quality of presentation of outputs;
- **transparency** - we will use transparent approaches to handling data and evidence to make the options, benefits and impacts of the Framework more clear;
- **accessibility** - we will ensure access to evidence and data that supports the Framework and promote user-friendly data visualisations available to all;
- **collaboration** - we will work across central government departments, local government and organisations to break down barriers and align work in the Arc; and
- **add value** - we will start with end-users' needs by making sure that data can be easily found, interpreted, and reused.

7.6 Our commitment is to:

- **develop a reliable and complete evidence base** to support the Framework and provide the basis for strategic cross-boundary planning in the Arc;
- **use the latest digital technology and data analytics to develop the evidence base** for the Spatial Framework. We will undertake reliable spatial analysis, option testing and assessment of impacts to inform policy set by the Framework;
- **support development of an open source, digital platform for data and evidence to support collaboration between government, businesses, local councils and communities in decision-making.** We will work with local partners to create an accessible digital platform for data used to support the Spatial Framework, and easy-to-use tools so that people – including the public and businesses – can engage meaningfully in the process; and
- **create a visual, interactive and map-based Spatial Framework for public engagement.** The Framework will be carefully designed with the user in mind and to ensure that it is available in different formats, on different devices, and can be accessed and understood by all.

Evidence base

- 7.7** The Framework will be based on a reliable, consistent and complete evidence base, which we will make publicly available through a digital platform that we intend to create. This will include a summary of responses (anonymised where appropriate as to individuals) to at least the three planned consultations, including this one. This is going to be a process that develops over the course of the Spatial Framework to ensure that our evidence base is appropriate to inform policy-making.
- 7.8** We recognise and appreciate the significant work that has already been undertaken by our local partners in the Arc to develop an evidence base to support planning. In order to avoid duplication, we will review the evidence base that has been developed to date and seek to build on and use the most relevant, appropriate, up-to-date and reliable existing analysis, which could be used to inform how the Spatial Framework is developed and delivered.

What do you think?

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on data and evidence?

[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

2. Do you have anything else to add on data, evidence and digital tools?

8. How we will monitor and deliver the Framework

Delivery and funding

Introduction

- 8.1 The Spatial Framework will set the direction for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc to 2050.**
- 8.2 This is why we will work across government and with local partners to create plans to deliver the identified investment needs set out in the Spatial Framework. To do this we will develop:**

- **a Spatial Framework delivery plan** that will identify priority investments needed for sustainable economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc;
- **an infrastructure delivery plan** that will set out the Arc's long-term infrastructure needs, phasing and costs; and
- **strategies and action plans across the Spatial Framework's thematic pillars**, which will focus on practical measures government, local authorities and partners can take to improve delivery in the Arc.

- 8.3 We want your views on how the Spatial Framework can be delivered.** In this section, we set out:

- our approach to delivery and funding; and
- questions on how you think we should deliver the Spatial Framework.

Our approach to delivery and funding

- 8.4 The Spatial Framework will be supported by evidence across our four thematic pillars to achieve sustainable long-term growth for the Arc. The Spatial Framework will enable a coordinated cross-boundary approach to support its delivery and investment across the Arc.**

8.5 Therefore, we intend to:

- assess the viability of any proposed policies in the Spatial Framework, to make sure that these costs do not risk its deliverability;
- identify when and where the demand for infrastructure arises within the Arc, based on future options for sustainable growth;
- identify priority schemes at a strategic level across transport, utilities, social infrastructure, environment and housing in the Arc beyond those already committed to, which are required to support the Arc's long-term ambition for economic growth;
- propose potential investment opportunities, with indicative timescales and an understanding of how these will interact with already committed schemes and phasing;
- identify potential delivery mechanisms for the investment priorities within the Spatial Framework. For example, the government is considering setting up a new Arc Growth Body¹⁷. This provides an opportunity to also consider the role the body could potentially play in driving forward the Arc's investment priorities identified in the Spatial Framework; and
- work with stakeholders to understand how the existing regulatory framework can accommodate the Spatial Framework's ambition for energy and water infrastructure, which currently sits outside the remit of government spending.

What do you think?

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on delivery and funding?

[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

2. Do you have anything else to add on delivery and funding?

Monitoring and evaluation

Introduction

8.6 We want the Spatial Framework to support lasting improvements to places across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

8.7 We will develop a strong evidence base, and assess the cumulative effects of policies, to help deliver better outcomes for communities and places across the Arc. We know we will see significant economic, environmental and social change in the

area over the coming years and decades. As those changes take place, they will have different impacts on different communities and places. We also know that policies may not have the impact we had originally intended.

8.8 As we try to drive more sustainable outcomes and support economic growth in the Arc, it is vital that we know what impact our policies are having.

8.9 We will make sure that policies in the Spatial Framework are fit for purpose by monitoring and evaluating their impacts. We will make sure we make better use of data and digital tools to do this, and to do it in an open and transparent way so that communities, local authorities and employers can see what is happening. We also want this approach to help local planning authorities to deliver their Local Plans, and to support investment and growth. In this section, we want your views on how we can do this most effectively.

Our commitment to monitoring and evaluation

8.10 We believe that:

- setting up a robust monitoring and evaluation framework is important for assessing the effectiveness of the Spatial Framework and its policies, and the significant effects identified through the Sustainability Appraisal;
- monitoring and evaluation are crucial to keeping the Spatial Framework under review, identifying areas where objectives aren't being met, unforeseen adverse effects and enabling changes to policy, development management and/or other appropriate action where required; and
- the monitoring and evaluation process should be an effective way to gather evidence for future policy related to the Spatial Framework, support development management decisions and help stakeholders understand the purpose of planning in the area.

8.11 Our commitment is to ensure arrangements are in place to:

- publish regular monitoring and evaluation reports to provide a clear picture of the Spatial Framework's effectiveness. We will look to:
 - set up a performance framework to monitor and evaluate progress towards the delivery of the Spatial Framework's policies;
 - monitor and evaluate the environmental, social and economic impacts of the Spatial Framework's policies such as significant effects and unforeseen adverse effects identified through the Sustainability Appraisal, planning performance, and infrastructure delivery; and
 - create an interactive and accessible dashboard on the digital platform to monitor policy effectiveness against the Framework's objectives.

What do you think?

1. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach on monitoring and evaluation?

[Strongly disagree/ Disagree/ Neutral/ Agree/ Strongly agree]

2. Do you have anything else to add on monitoring and evaluation?

