

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal is the first of its kind and has secured Oxfordshire £215 million in funding, this is the initial down payment of investment to support new infrastructure, housing and jobs within Oxfordshire, we already have two further Housing Infrastructure Fund bids that would help to bring total funding to £500 million.

We very much see it as the first step in our longer-term programme for the county and hope that by delivering successfully on the deal it will open up more opportunities for even more significant investment in the future and pave the way to a reputation for Oxfordshire built on delivering results and lasting change.

With recognising the level of our ambition, it became clear very quickly that we will not be able to deliver on those ambitions through a business as usual approach – The Deal has required a radical step change in how we work in Oxfordshire.

For me the Deal is underpinned by 5 key principles...

Better Transport and Social Infrastructure

We have £30 million a year for five years to help accelerate transport infrastructure, last year we published details of the first round of infrastructure projects to receive funding in year one of the five year deal, these range from the A40 western strategic corridor improvements which would build on work underway for the proposed Eynsham Park and Ride to be introduced by 2020, to work on the Botley Road Rail Bridge, where widening the bridge will support the Oxford rail station development, enabling more rail lines to be provided to increase capacity through Oxford, whilst widening the road underneath the bridge will provide more space for cycle lanes and wider pavements – both projects demonstrate our commitment to sustainability in transport.

Properly Planned Development

The spatial plan that we are producing will set out the county's future for the next 30 years and provide a framework for future housing and infrastructure needs– The Oxfordshire plan 2050 will ensure access to good schools, GP surgeries, community facilities and locally-based employment with our residents at the heart of that conversation. In December we held a range of stakeholder events, where questions such as – “what is it the makes Oxfordshire great today and what are our greatest threats/opportunities for the future” were posed – the responses have all been used to shape the Oxfordshire Plan 2050

New Homes Where they are Needed

Improving infrastructure in specific locations where it is most needed will help to ensure that new homes are delivered in a planned and sustainable way.

We know that Oxfordshire needs 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 to address the county's housing shortage and expected economic growth.

More Affordable Housing

Oxfordshire is among the least affordable places to live in the UK. The Deal provides £60 million to support over 1,300 additional affordable homes in the next three years – this will include new social-rented housing.

A Strong Economy

The Local Industrial Strategy will help to drive productivity and innovation, attracting inward investment into our area – providing a long-term vision to 2040 and positioning Oxfordshire as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems and will help us in Investing in skills which will help to provide local people with more opportunities and expand the workforce for employers.

Our task is to deliver homes in a predictable and managed way, facilitated by the delivery of key bits of infrastructure

As I have mentioned we have identified a need a for 100, 000 new homes to 2031 but we want those homes to be high quality, with diverse and distinctive designs and a range of tenures.

It is important that the housing mix meets both the requirements of the present and those of the future. Adaptability should, therefore, be built in, with properties that are built for change

Each Oxfordshire district is committed to submitting a local plan for examination by April 2019 – we are all at different stages, these will cover the period to 2031 or 2036 – the Oxfordshire plan 2050 will look further ahead and help to provide a longer term framework that will help to form future local plans in the districts - Local plans will be backed by the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. This will ensure that a planned approach, which will balance both local and strategic needs, is taken. This will help to prevent unplanned speculative development and focus on the importance of good growth

We cannot deliver all of this without challenges, this is beyond anything we've done before and as it's the first deal of its kind and eyes are on us, we do feel the weight of expectation to succeed.

It requires a real adjustment in how the councils work together, we have come together as partners and are demonstrating excellence in partnership working in delivering the deal

The Oxford – Cambridge arc will have a significant impact on our county, and we are working hard to engage as much as we can on this

Timescales – we all know how long it takes for things to work through the planning system! We have so many moving parts that it hasn't always been possible to align all timetables, but what we have ensured is that the narrative running through all of those moving parts is strong and builds on a common and clear vision for our County.

But working through all of those challenges we keep our eyes focussed on the future:

Successful delivery of the Growth Deal would position Oxfordshire as a key partner for Government.

The Growth Deal has already helped to create a new relationship with central Government that we want to build on

We want this to help generate further interest from Government in Oxfordshire as a place to do business and to develop a long-term strategic approach to investment

We hope to establish a pipeline of investment in infrastructure – two further Housing Infrastructure Fund bids would help to bring total funding to £500 million

We hope to be recognised as one of the top-three global innovation ecosystems underpinned by the trailblazer local industrial strategy

Finally, success for me is, Oxfordshire to lead the way in high quality, long-term sustainable growth that meets aspirations of investors, Government and our residents.