

2 Oxfordshire's People & Places

Chapter at a Glance

This chapter includes a contextual review and consideration of the places people live across the County. Through the application of this contextual information, the latter sections of this Chapter introduce the OxIS spatial framework and place-based approach, which provide a coherent framework to the subsequent chapters of this OxIS Stage 1 Report.

2.1 The Current Context

2.1.1 Population

According to 2019 mid-year population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), approximately 691,700 people currently live in Oxfordshire. This is the lowest population density of any county in the Southeast of England equating to approximately 260 people per square kilometre, compared to the Southeast regional equivalent of approximately 480 (ONS, 2021). The number of people living in Oxfordshire alongside the relative population density broken down by district is (ONS, 2021) as follows:

- **Cherwell:** 150,500 people (density ratio of 2.6 people per hectare)
- **Oxford City:** 152,500 people (density ratio of 33.4 people per hectare)
- **South Oxfordshire:** 142,100 people (density ratio of 2.1 people per hectare)
- **Vale of White Horse:** 136,000 people (density ratio of 2.4 people per hectare)
- **West Oxfordshire:** 110,600 people (density ratio of 1.5 people per hectare).

Around 60% of people within Oxfordshire live in either Oxford City (22%) or in urban towns of over 10,000 people (38%). The urban centres with the highest population density include Banbury, Bicester, and Kidlington in Cherwell; Oxford City; Didcot, Henley-on-Thames and Thame in South Oxfordshire; Abingdon and Wantage & Grove in Vale of White Horse and Carterton and Witney in West Oxfordshire.

Aside from Oxford City, there are ten towns which have a population greater than 10,000 people (shown in Figure 2-1). Of these, the five most populous are Banbury, Abingdon, Bicester, Didcot, and Witney.



Figure 2-1: Number of People Living within Oxfordshire's Towns (Greater than 10,000 People) by Local Authority, excluding Oxford City

The remaining 40% of people live in more rural communities which generally have much lower rates of population density. In some areas out with towns and villages, particularly in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire, the population density ratio ranges from between 0.3 and 1.7 people per

hectare. In both Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire, over half of all people live in places with a population of less than 10,000 people.

Oxfordshire's median age of 40.1 is consistent with the national equivalent, however, there is notable variation across the county between urban areas and rural communities. For example, the median age for people living in Oxford City is around 29 years-old, which contrasts with the equivalent figure for other Districts like West Oxfordshire where it is around 45. Rural communities also generally have a far higher proportion of people aged over the age of 65 where in some places they can make up over a quarter of the total population. This has an implication on key infrastructure need, particularly education and healthcare services (see Chapter 5).

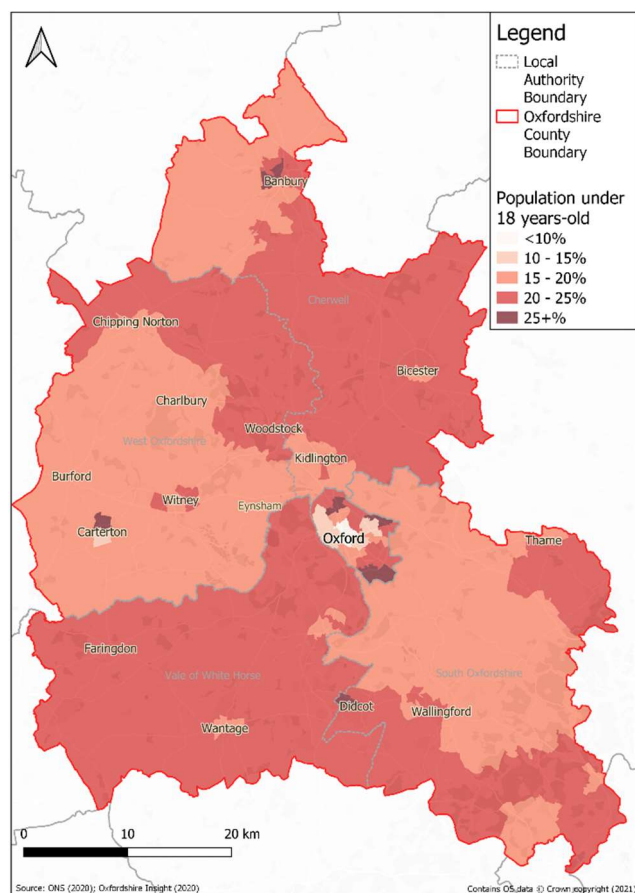


Figure 2-2: Percentage of population under 18 years-old, 2021

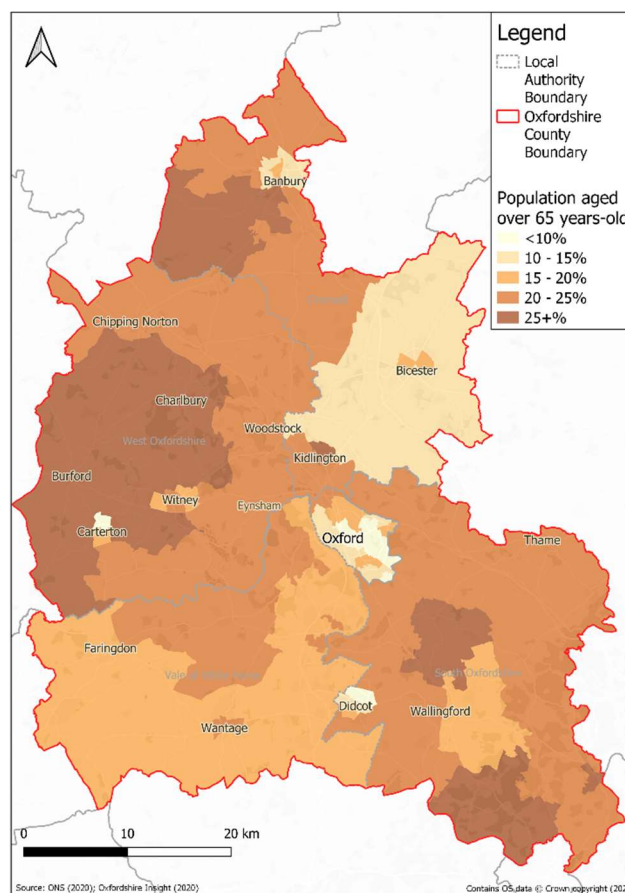


Figure 2-3: Percentage of population over 65 years-old, 2021

2.1.2 Employment

Oxfordshire continues to have one of the highest employment rates in the UK with approximately 83% of those of an economically active age (16 to 64 years) in October 2020 in employment, comparing favourably to the national average for the same period of 76% (ONS, 2021). According to the most recent 2020 ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (ONS, 2019), which pre-dates the COVID-19 crisis, there are approximately 450,000 total jobs in Oxfordshire; of which 375,000 are employee jobs. Across the five Oxfordshire Districts, Oxford City has the highest number of employee jobs (approximately 33%) which indicates the scale of inward commuting transport flow to Oxford City. West Oxfordshire the lowest number (approximately 12%) (see Figure 2-4).

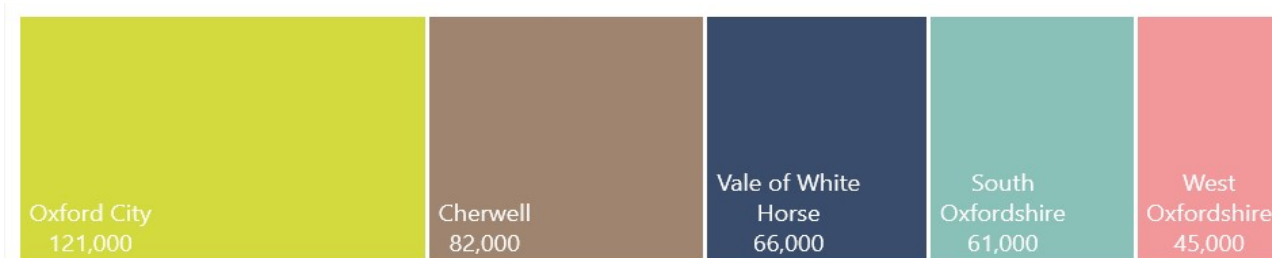


Figure 2-4: Number of Employee Jobs by District in Oxfordshire (ONS, 2019)

As indicated in Figure 2-5, most people within Oxfordshire are employed in industries such as education, professional, scientific, and technical activities, retail and human health and social work. In particular, the proportion of people employed in Oxfordshire in both education and professional, scientific and technical activities is notably higher than the national average. This is reflective of the local context of the county with its concentration of universities and its concentration of innovation assets, such as science parks and research labs, in the world.

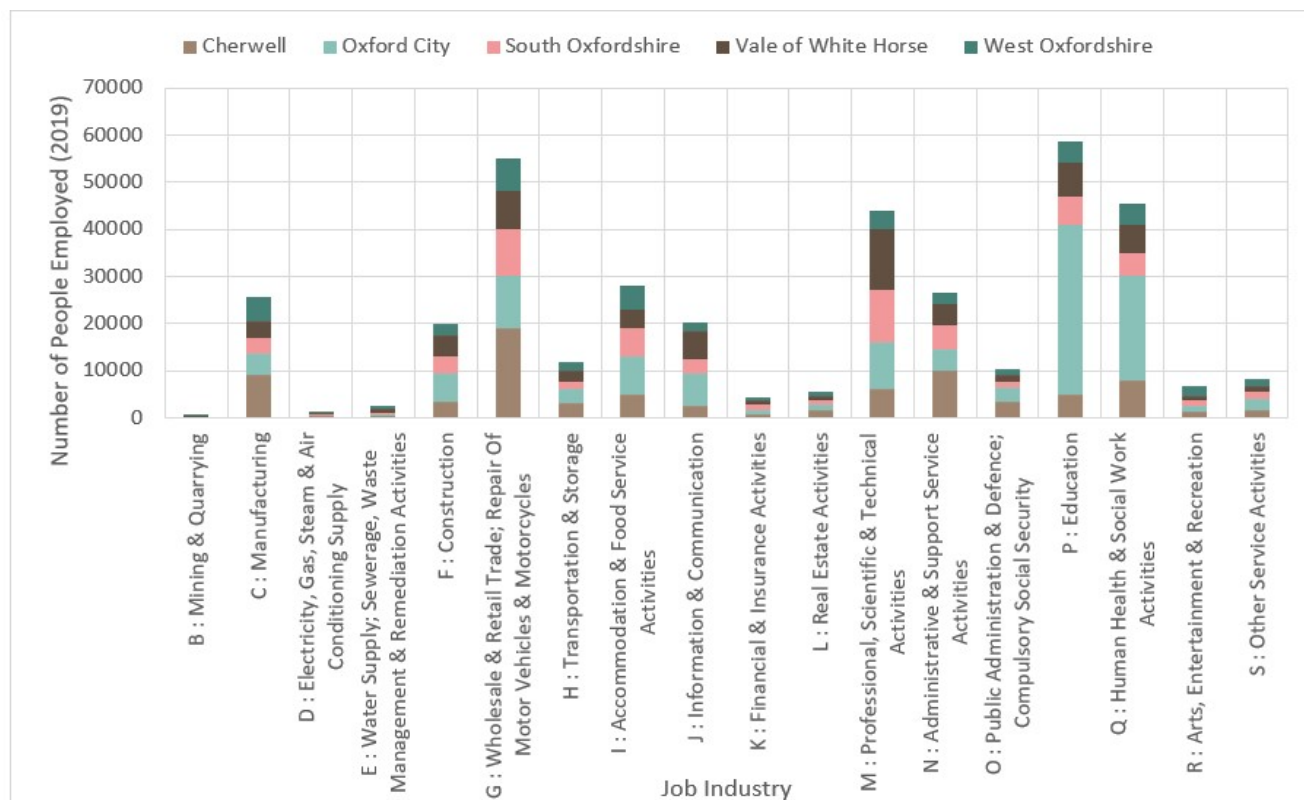


Figure 2-5: Summary of Jobs by Industry Sector in 2019 (ONS, 2019)

As indicated by the high number of people employed in providing professional, scientific and technical activities, Oxfordshire is a major contributor to the global innovation ecosystem. It has world leading capability in sectors and technologies across a dynamic economy and plays a leadership role in the UK economy in driving national prosperity and opportunities in other parts of the country (OxLEP, 2019).

Most of these jobs are concentrated in Oxfordshire's 'Knowledge Spine' which extends from Bicester through Kidlington and Oxford towards the Science Vale in the south of the county. This includes several key science parks such as Culham Science Centre, Milton Park Innovation Centre (Didcot), Begbroke Science Park and the Harwell Space Cluster campus to the west of Didcot. This is an important context for Oxfordshire's transport infrastructure given the impact this the concentration of these sites can have on commuting demand flow.

2.2 The Future Context: A Place-Based Approach to OxIS

2.2.1 OxIS Spatial Framework Overview

OxIS-17 was underpinned by a spatial framework which reflected Regional, Countywide and Local Infrastructure. Local infrastructure was categorised into nine groups, with Oxford City being at the hub and the remaining eight groups forming corridor-based spokes to the edge of Oxfordshire. This approach has been reviewed as part of OxIS Stage 1 through discussions held as part of the OxIS Working Group, as well as with key stakeholders.

As with the OxIS-17, it is recognised that Oxfordshire's future needs and the infrastructure schemes' impact vary according to the county's various spatial levels. OxIS complements the more detailed work at a District level and as such this work is not aimed to duplicate this but to collaboratively draw together the view across Oxfordshire.

As indicated in Figure 2-6 and Table 2-1, the three spatial groupings have thus broadly been retained, however, the local level has been adapted away from a corridor- to a place-based approach. The regional framework is intended to capture the connectivity between these places (e.g. in relation to transport and habitat connectivity).

The use of this spatial framework forms a coherent thread throughout OxIS in relation to the identification of existing infrastructure, future needs, scheme identification, and scheme appraisal.

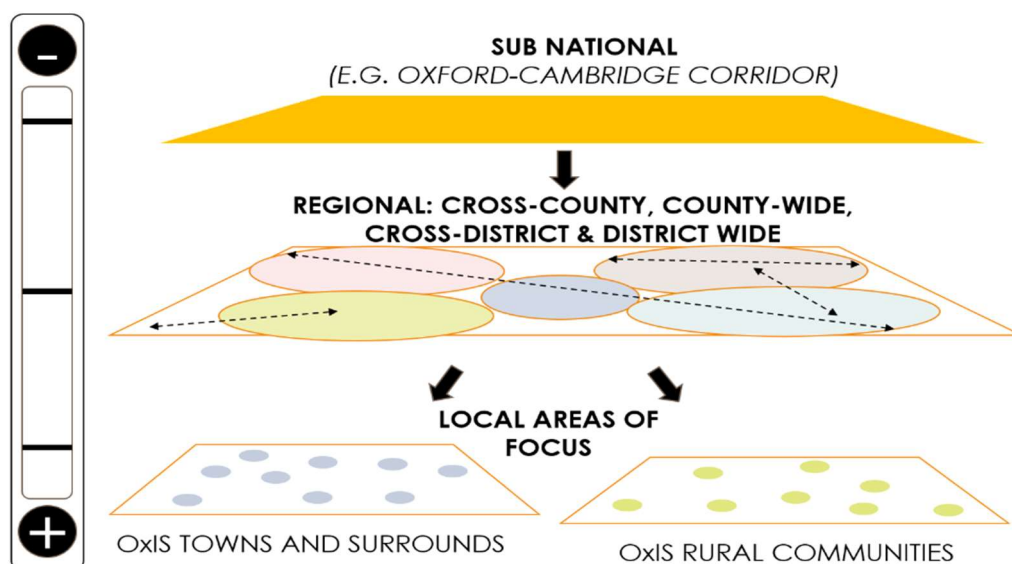


Figure 2-6: OxIS Spatial Framework

Spatial Level	Sub-Level	Description
Sub-National	Sub-National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxfordshire's needs and infrastructure schemes in the context of the wider area, including the South East and Oxford-Cambridge Arc.
	Cross-County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes with a cross-county boundary importance or spatial impact
	County-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes with a county-wide importance or spatial impact
	Cross-District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes with a cross-district boundary importance or spatial impact
Regional	District-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes with a district-wide importance or spatial impact
	OxIS Towns & Surrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes directly relevant to towns in Oxfordshire with notable projected future housing and employment allocations identified in current Local and Neighbourhood Plans to 2040 (2040 to 2050 will be covered in Stage 2)
	OxIS Rural Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs and schemes directly relevant to rural communities, including villages and those in the rural-urban fringe, with notable projected future housing and employment allocations identified in current Local and Neighbourhood Plans to 2040

Table 2-1: OxIS Spatial Framework Description Summary

2.2.2 OxIS Local Areas of Focus

2.2.2.1 Purpose

Place based local areas of focus have been introduced to replace the corridor-based approach of OxIS-17. This enables a greater consideration of schemes which may be lower in cost but remain strategically important to the creation of successful places. It is important that these schemes and needs are grouped by place so that they can be included and assessed in an objective way, alongside projects of regional importance.

Benefits & Practicalities of a Local Place-Based Approach

- **Direct Relationship with Allocated Housing & Employment Sites in Local & Neighbourhood Plans:** Many of the identified OxIS schemes, particularly those sourced from IDPs, have a direct relationship and a clear link to supporting allocated housing and employment sites. Defining local areas of focus allows the agreed future housing and employment alignment score to be applied objectively and consistently in the Multi-Criteria Appraisal (see Section 7.1.2)
- **Integration with District Local Plans:** The place-based approach is consistent with the spatial frameworks identified with the various District Local Plans and IDPs
- **Correlates with Place & People Approach:** It aligns with the reorientated priorities of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to manage housing and economic development in an inclusive way and which maximises social and environmental benefits to the county
- **Relationship to Decarbonisation:** Research for the the Royal Town Planning Institute, with input from City Science, identifies that place-based solutions are critical to achieving net zero carbon emissions, particularly from transport (RTPI, 2021)
- **Links to Potential Funding Opportunities:** Place-based schemes have a clearer link to potential funding opportunities; particularly in relation to their interaction with supporting housing and employment allocation sites
- **Community Integration by Active Travel:** The extents of the place based local areas of focus has been informed by an evidence base of cycling distance between places to highlight the importance of strategies promoting walking and cycling as well as community integration

The five District Council Local Plans take a sustainable approach to allocate housing and employment land to Oxford and other Market towns and larger villages across the county. Consideration of this spatial distribution of allocations has also highlighted a need to consider the different characteristics of these places given there are different requirements and priorities for infrastructure need when future housing and employment allocations are built within an existing town compared to a village in a more rural setting. The place based local area of focus recognises this context and have therefore been split into:

- **OxIS Towns & Surrounds:** Established urban areas comprising of Oxford City and key towns where notable housing and employment land for development is allocated to 2040
(2040 to 2050 will be covered in Stage 2)
- **OxIS Rural Communities:** Rural communities across Oxfordshire constituting both villages and urban-rural fringes where notable housing and employment land for development is allocated to 2040
(2040 to 2050 will be covered in Stage 2)

Flexibility of the Local Place-Based Approach

The OxIS Towns & Surrounds and Rural Communities are a specific output of Stage 1 which considers a future 2040 horizon. These designations are flexible to adapt to emerging policies and the spatial allocations in the upcoming Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as part of the forthcoming OxIS Stage 2 Report.

2.2.2.2 Identification of OxIS Towns & Surrounds and OxIS Rural Communities

The process of identifying local areas of focus has followed an objective process identified in Table 2-2.

Step	Purpose	Summary
Step 1	To identify future local areas of change across Oxfordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of District Local Plan Spatial Strategies • Consolidate to reflect community interaction at a county-wide level through consideration of 20-30 minute cycling journey time

Step	Purpose	Summary
Step 2A	To identify OxIS Towns & Surrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply population filter of 25,000 people Apply future change filter threshold of 1,000 homes
Step 2B	To identify OxIS Rural Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply future change filter threshold of 1,000 homes

Table 2-2: Summary of Method to Identify OxIS Towns & Surrounds and Rural Communities

Local areas of focus have been initially identified by:

- Reflecting on the spatial strategies from District Council Local Plans and Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (OxLEP, 2019) to identify area groupings including key towns and villages
- Identifying key areas of change and key sites (over 500 homes) identified within the District Council Local Plans

The initial identified local places collated from District Local Plans and the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy within Table 2-3 have been consolidated and grouped to provide a strategic Oxfordshire perspective appropriate to OxIS.

This has focused on reflecting the potential for community interaction between nearby places both within districts as well as across district boundaries. This has been informed by an evidence-led approach through consideration of an approximate 20- to 30-minute cycling journey time catchment analysis from each of the identified places (see Figure 2-7).

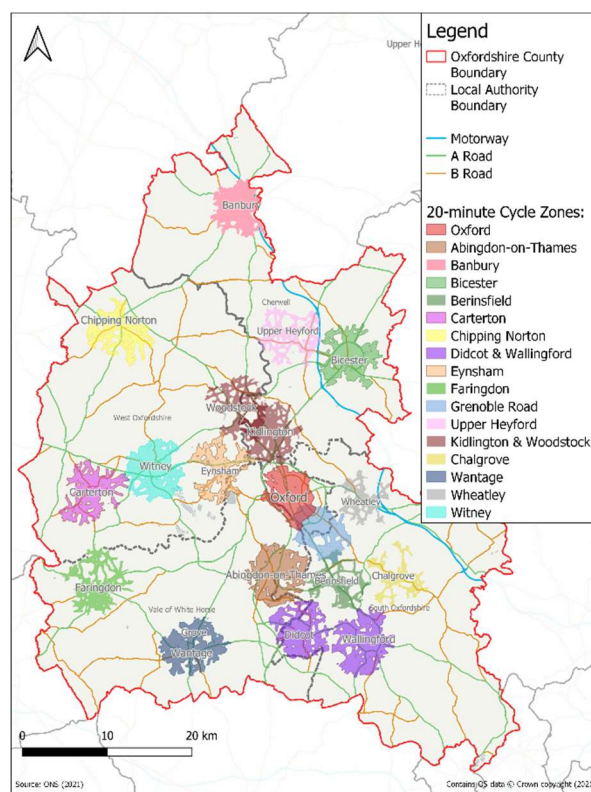


Figure 2-7: Cycle catchments of OxIS Local Areas of Focus OxIS Towns & Surrounds and OxIS Rural Communities

Source	Area Groupings	Key sites
Oxford Local Plan 2011 – 2036 (Oxford City Council, 2020)	Various District Centres (e.g. Barton, City Centre)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barton Northern Gateway / Oxford North
Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and Partial Review (Cherwell District Council, 2015) (Cherwell District Council, 2020)	Bicester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North west, south west and south east of Bicester Graven Hill
	Banbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bankside Phase 2 North of Hanwell Fields
	Heyford Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former RAF Base
	North Oxford, Kidlington, Begbroke & Yarnton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land east of Oxford Road Land west of Oxford Road Land south east of Kidlington Land east of A44 Land west of Yarnton Begbroke Science Park Longford Lane / Oxford Technology Park / London-Oxford Airport
South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (South Oxfordshire District Council, 2020)	Didcot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great Western Park Northeast Didcot
	Henley-on-Thames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various smaller sites
	Thame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various smaller sites
	Wallingford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various smaller sites

Source	Area Groupings	Key sites
	Culham	• Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre
	Berinsfield	• Berinsfield Garden Village
	Chalgrove	• Land at Chalgrove Airfield
	Grenoble Road	• Land south of Grenoble Road
	Northfield	• Land at Northfield
	North of Bayswater Brook	• Land north of Bayswater Brook
	Wheatley	• Land at Wheatley Campus
Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011-2031 (Vale of White Horse District Council, 2016) (Vale of White Horse District Council, 2019)	Abingdon-on-Thames & Oxford Fringe: including Kingston Bagpuize, Shippon & East Hanney	• Dalton Barracks • North and north west of Abingdon-on-Thames • East Kingston Bagpuize
	South East Vale Sub-Area (e.g. Wantage, Grove)	• North west of Grove • Crab Hill, Wantage • Land at Grove Airfield • Valley Park • North West of Valley Park • Milton Heights
	Western Vale Sub-Area: (e.g. Faringdon & Shrivenham)	• North of Shrivenham • Various smaller sites in Faringdon and Stanford-in-the-Vale
West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (West Oxfordshire District Council, 2018)	Witney	• West, north and east Witney
	Carterton	• REEMA • Land east of Carterton, Brize Norton
	Chipping Norton	• Land east of Chipping Norton
	Burford – Charlbury	• Various smaller sites
	Eynsham – Woodstock (e.g. Long Hanborough)	• Cotswold Garden Village • West Eynsham Strategic Area • Land north and east of Woodstock
Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (OxLEP, 2019)	Knowledge spine corridor stretching from Bicester through Oxford City to Harwell, Abingdon & Didcot.	• Oxford City Science Area • Culham Science Centre • Milton Park / Didcot Garden Town • Harwell Campus • Begbroke Science Park
Notes: The emerging District Local Plan review will identify current Local Plan gaps and potentially lead to the inclusion of more Local Plan sites		

Table 2-3: Spatial strategy from the local plan for each district

This consolidation has resulted in the identification of Oxford City and 16 other local areas of focus (see Figure 2-8). Similar to OxIS-17, Oxford City has been retained as a single place, however:

- In South Oxfordshire, allocated housing and employment sites in Thame and Henley-on-Thames have largely already been delivered or planned through Neighbourhood Plans and has therefore not been explicitly considered and instead is considered at the regional context
- Abingdon (Vale of White Horse) and Culham (South Oxfordshire), have been grouped together as part of the Abingdon and Surrounds local area of focus.
- Didcot (Vale of White Horse) and Wallingford (South Oxfordshire) have been grouped together
- In West Oxfordshire, housing and employment allocations in the Burford to Charlbury area is not sufficient to warrant explicit identification as a local area of focus and instead is considered at the regional context
- Woodstock has been grouped with the South Cherwell Area given it is situated on the Woodstock to Oxford Cycle Way and is 20 minutes cycle to Kidlington, compared to 40 to Eynsham

Considering their existing population, settlement hierarchy (identified in the District Council Local Plans) and through engagement with the District Councils, each of these identified places have been assigned as either an OxIS Town & Surround or an OxIS Rural Community (see Figure 2-8).

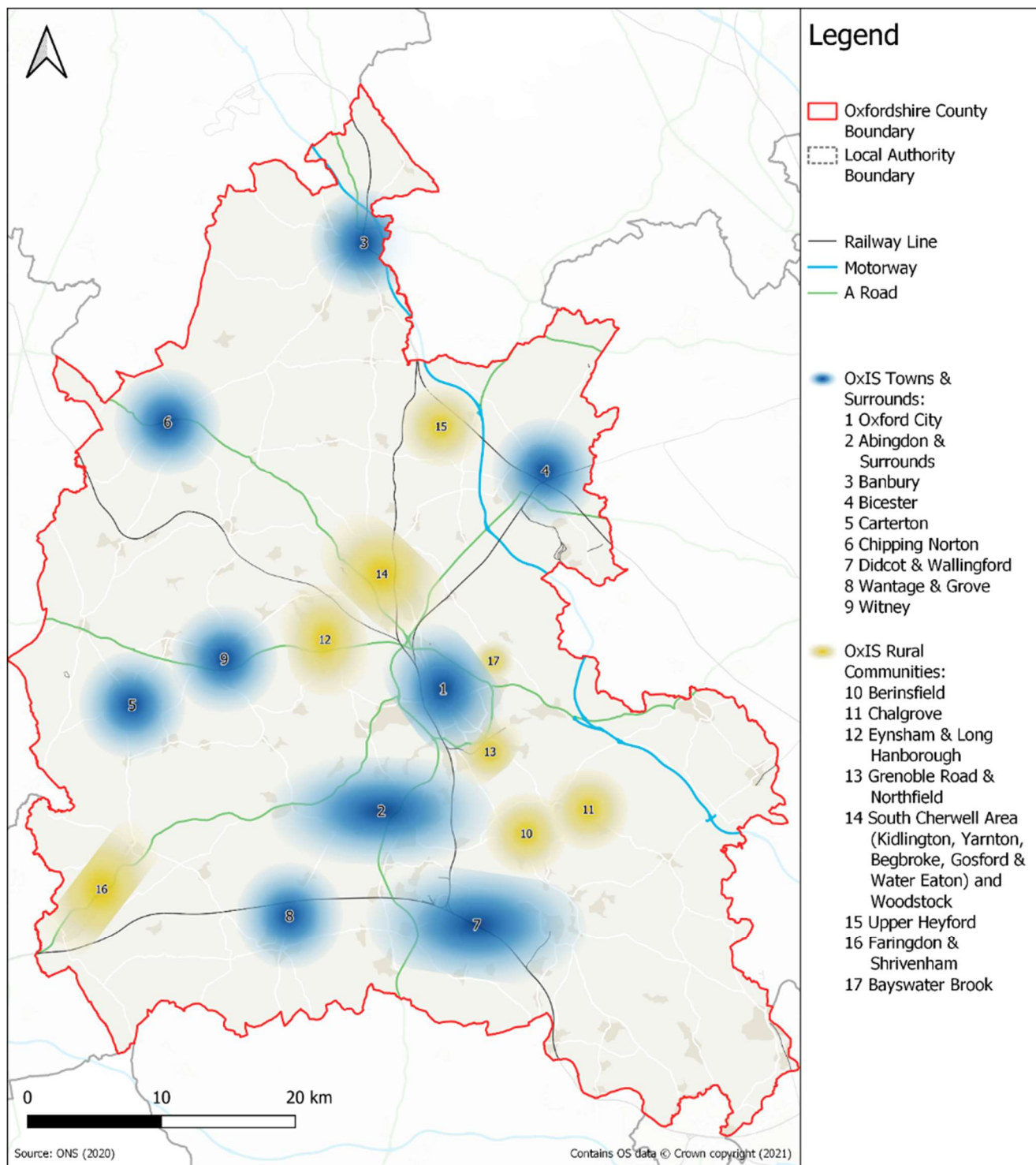


Figure 2-8: OxIS Local Areas of Focus