

Two Unitary Councils. One better future.

A proposal for two new unitary councils covering all of **Oxfordshire and West Berkshire**



A once-in-a-generation opportunity

The government has invited proposals for new unitary councils in areas like Oxfordshire, where there are currently two tiers of local government: district and county councils. A unitary council is a single-tier local authority that handles **all** local government functions (including education, housing, planning, waste, social care, etc.) without the split between county and district councils. The government has also indicated that smaller existing unitary councils, such as West Berkshire, should reorganise to cover areas with approximately 500,000 residents.

This is not an optional change. Change is coming to the way councils operate across the country and we are taking the opportunity to ensure it is implemented in a manner that genuinely benefits our communities and our businesses.

We propose to address the government’s request by creating two new unitary councils that cover the following areas:

- **Oxford & Shires** created from the existing district councils of Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.
- **Ridgeway Council** created from the existing district councils of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse and the unitary council of West Berkshire.

These are working titles and might change.

The majority of the authorities in Oxfordshire have joined forces with West Berkshire to work positively and constructively on the two-unitary proposal. At the council meetings for those councils, 142 out of 158 councillors voted to submit this proposal to government, showing overwhelming support across the various political parties.

Why do we need to change?

Some services are delivered really well in Oxfordshire, such as tackling climate change and recycling our waste. In both these areas we come top in the country. We also have services that are performing well, such as Adult Social Care which is rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted.

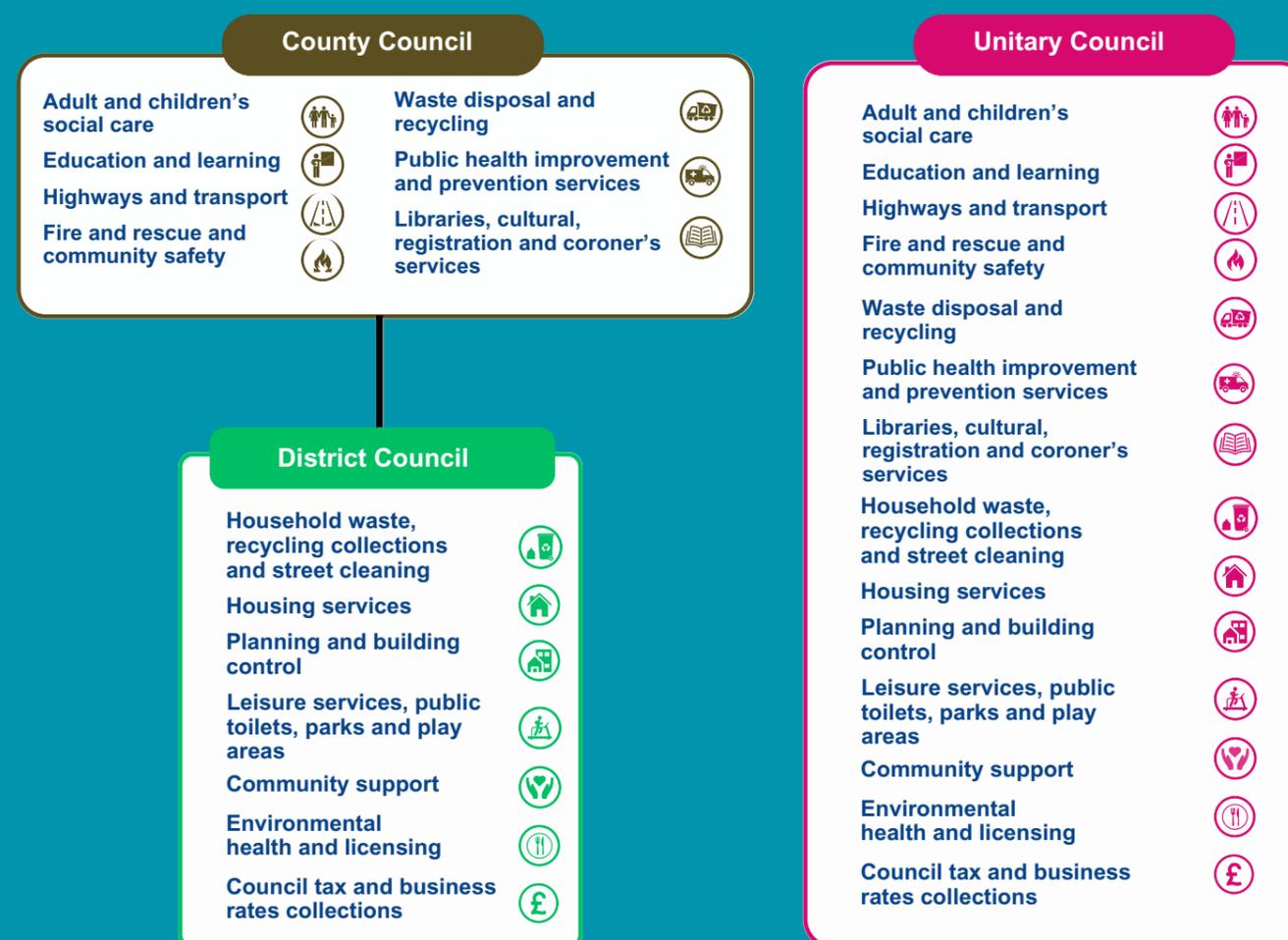
However, some of our services need to be improved. Some examples include:

- The cost per person of adult social care is 19% to 23% above the national average and the cost per person of children look after is 34% above average. This means while the service is good we are paying above the average.
- We have the most expensive waste disposal contract in the country. Other county-wide contracts like highways maintenance are often criticised.
- The Gross Value Added of Oxfordshire is below that of our close partners in Berkshire. We should be doing more to boost our economy, especially considering our internationally renowned university and existing businesses.
- We are not currently delivering the homes, infrastructure and business growth we need, showing the county-wide approach is unsuccessful.

What is the difference between the current councils and unitary councils?

What is the benefit?

The difference between two-tier local government comprising district and county councils and unitary councils can be confusing. In a two-tier structure, services are divided between county and district councils, whereas a unitary council encompasses all services. The diagram below outlines the responsibilities of each type of council.



New unitary councils will create efficiencies and improvements that will be the same in any proposal for the area. This includes:

- One place to go for access to all councils’ services.
- Joining up services that are currently split between organisations.
- Reducing management and back-office costs.
- Making better use of buildings and other assets.

Two unitary councils - a proposal built around the needs of our communities and businesses

The government has been clear that existing councils needed to develop these proposals based on our communities' wants and needs as well as the criteria they set out.

With this in mind, the five councils developing the two unitary proposal conducted extensive engagement through surveys, events, meetings and conversations. We have listened to what people told us and shaped this proposal based on that feedback.

Our residents, businesses and organisations told us they want:

- Better services - not just more of the same.
- Better value for money and cost-efficiency.
- Councils that are locally focused and responsive.
- Local accountability, identity and voice.
- Growth enabled in a way that protects the unique identities of our communities.

This proposal has been developed based on what local residents, communities, public sector partners and other stakeholders told us needed improving. This model has been developed to propose a better version of local government, balancing the efficiency of scale with a modern, responsive and engaging organisation.

"A new council needs to be bold and visionary in how the area is to retain and improve its standing as an excellent place to call home, to work and to play."

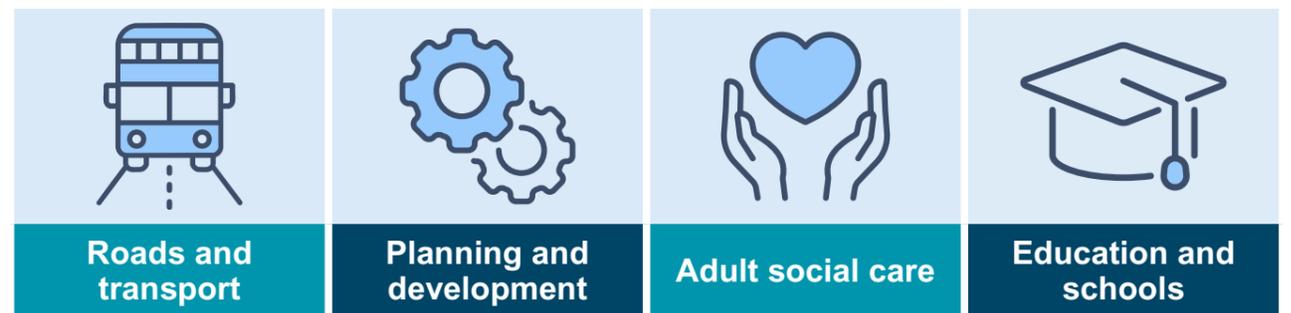


Results of our engagement

Your top 3 most important council services



Top services that need improving



Most important economic priorities



Should decisions be made locally to help support economic growth and encourage new investment?	Yes 85%
It is important that the council represents my local community's needs	Yes 75%
It is important for the council to be based around an area that has a shared history and culture	Agree and strongly agree 75%
It is important my council provides good quality services and value for money	Strongly agree 83%

Why two new councils?

Creating two new unitary councils balances the criteria set by government and ensures the councils represent their local areas and can best support local communities. It is about striking the right balance between being large enough to deliver services well but remaining focused on local needs. Both of the two proposed councils will have their own unique strengths. The main benefits of a two-unitary proposal for the whole of Oxfordshire and West Berkshire are:

- The new unitary councils won't just be more of the same – it will be a chance for something new and better. The councils will be **forward-looking, innovative and modern**, providing better services to residents at a lower cost. They will offer better value, quality services.
- The two councils will be better placed to **take advantage of the unique opportunities** in each part of the county. Each area will have its own council to drive local ambitions forward, grow the local economies and build a better future for each area, **recognising that each area has different priorities**.
- The councils will be local enough to be **responsive to the needs of individual communities**. They will also be well placed to support the rural areas as well as the urban ones and not so big that places get forgotten.
- There will be **good community representation** by councillors, with each council having the appropriate number of elected representatives to better reflect the areas the councils serve.
- The two-council model will provide a suitable platform to better respond to local priorities such as developing more **affordable housing, protecting our environment and bringing more jobs across the whole area**.
- It meets the government's requirements to have a large enough population that the councils are **financially secure while protecting and improving local services**.
- It will be able to build on the nationally recognised Oxford brand in a way that encourages economic growth across the wider area, as well as improving Oxford itself. It will meet the needs of its residents and support its institutions and reputation.
- While the councils will be new, we will use existing service structures in the County Council area and West Berkshire, such as adult social care, children's services and highways, to **avoid the costly disaggregation of services**. This will save taxpayers money when transitioning to the new councils.
- The councils will focus on how the new model can **bring real economic benefit** to communities, strengthening existing business links in partnership and forging new ones. This includes growing the valuable rural economy, which is a large proportion of the area.
- The councils will be well placed to **tailor vital services** such as adult social care and children's services to the needs of their individual communities. This proposal will provide more focus and local accountability.

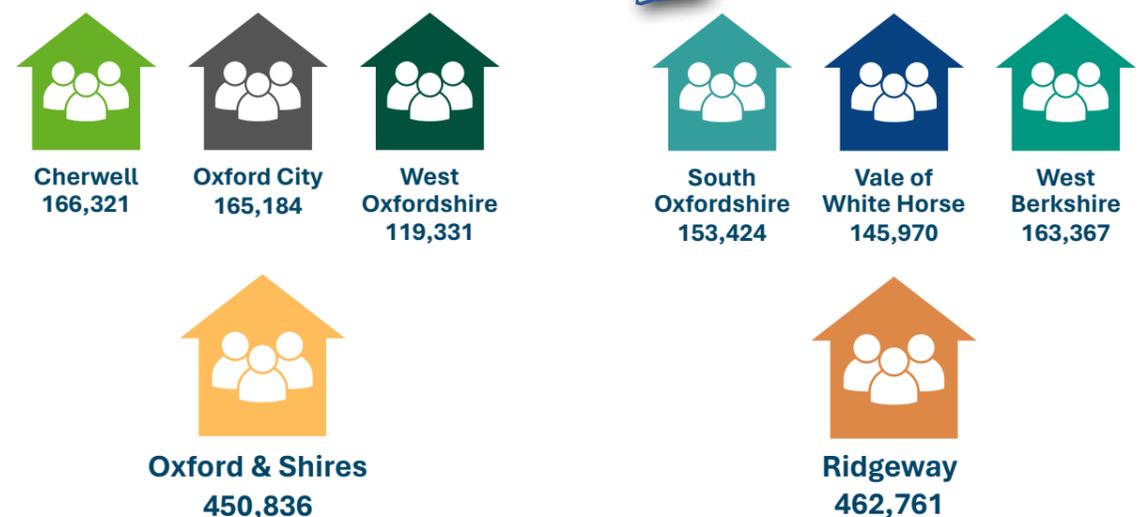
What is the geography of the two councils?

The 'Oxford & Shires' council would be made up of the existing districts of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire along with the City of Oxford.

The 'Ridgeway' council would be made up of the existing district councils of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire Council, which is already a unitary council.



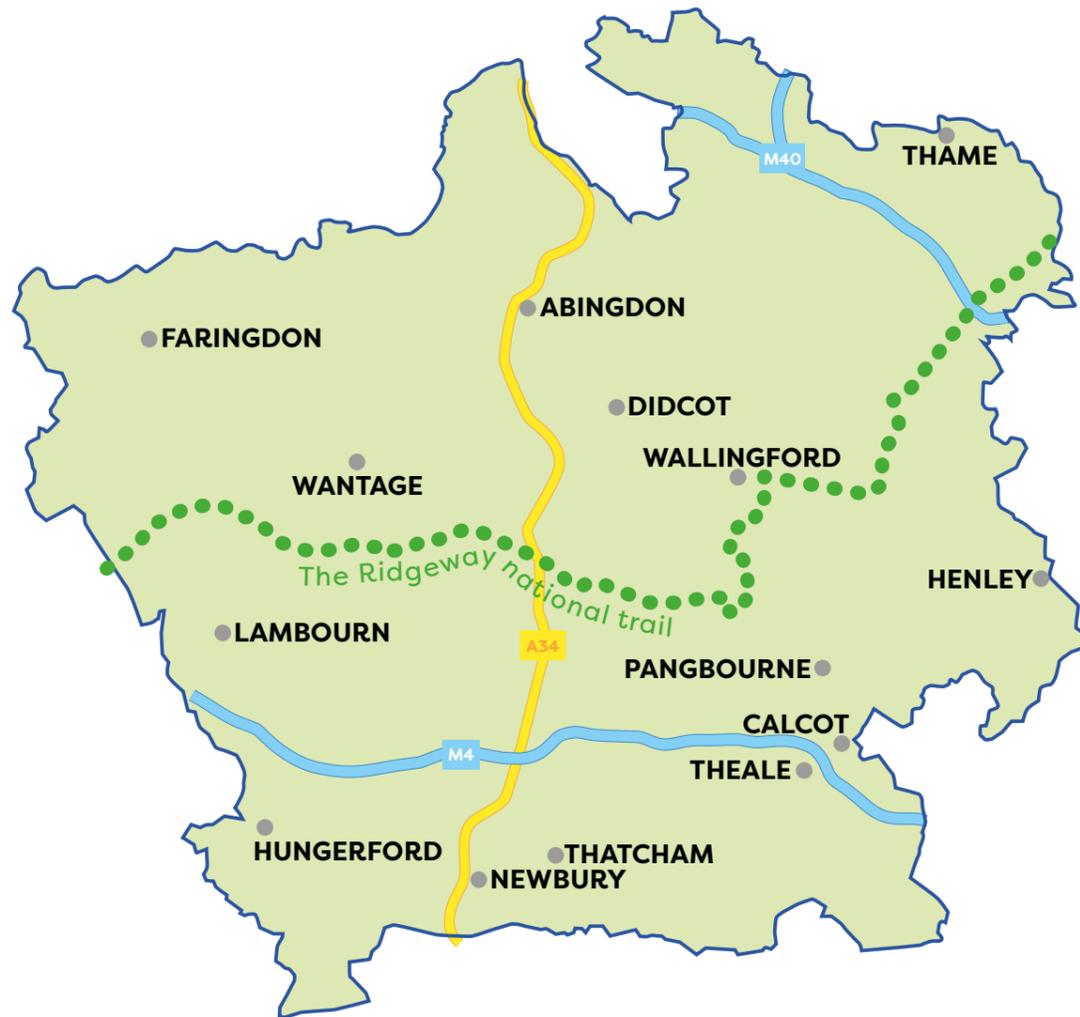
Population changes:



Ridgeway Council

If our proposal is chosen by government the 'Ridgeway Council' would cover the current council areas of West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse.

West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse already share deep historical, economic and geographic ties, symbolised by the working title of our proposed new council, named after the famous 5,000-year-old footpath that travels through the heart of our council areas.



A Ridgeway Council provides the opportunity to maintain a sense of local identity and deliver good local services that protect our most vulnerable residents and provide value for money. The new council will be well-placed to maintain and enhance the unique character of our market towns and rural areas.

By building on these shared connections, 'Ridgeway Council' will provide a strong and effective foundation for the future.

Growing our economy and communities

The areas are already linked by innovative businesses and ambitions for thriving towns and villages. The new Ridgeway Council has the potential to bring real economic growth to the area, enhance financial sustainability, provide value for money services and lay a strong and effective foundation for the future.

The new council will be well-placed to do all this while maintaining and enhancing the unique character of our market towns and rural areas - a key driver for our local economy. The council will also retain a good number of elected representatives, meaning the new council will keep enough local councillors to represent the views of their areas.

South Oxfordshire is home to one of the world's leading fusion energy research projects at Culham Science Centre. Vale of White Horse is home to Harwell Campus - where the world-famous Rutherford Appleton Laboratory sits alongside the particle accelerator at Diamond Light Source, the European Space Agency and other cutting-edge science and technology businesses. Vale of White Horse is also home to Milton Park, a vibrant science, business and technology park, where over 270 companies operate. West Berkshire has a very strong economy - together these areas and businesses, with their supply chain and support organisations, will benefit the economy across the Ridgeway Council area and will work in partnership with and complement the economy in Oxford and Shires through the unique historic links between our two council areas.



Oxford & Shires

Our proposed two-unitary model would see Cherwell, Oxford City and West Oxfordshire coming together to form one unitary council in the north of the county, complementing the proposed southern unitary Ridgeway Council.



Benefits of our geography

The new council will be well-placed to build on the international brand of Oxford and drive economic growth across key towns while also protecting, supporting and growing the rural communities in the area.

It will be able to ensure that growth, affordable housing and infrastructure can be proactively planned and delivered in a way that best uses the skills, businesses and communities in ambitious towns like Banbury, Bicester, Carterton and Witney.

It can also consider how those towns and the wider rural areas support and complement Oxford's growth. It will build on the links we already share while respecting the culture and heritage of our communities.

Tourism is also a major strength, with many of the key visitor attractions across the area and the Cotswolds contained in the new boundary. The council will be able to build on this strength, enhancing the visitor economy and managing tourism.

Growing our economy and communities

The new council has the potential to bring real economic growth to Oxford and the wider area, providing further rewarding opportunities for residents and businesses in Oxford and all our towns, including the likes of Banbury, Bicester, Carterton and Witney. This could bring significant benefits to Oxford and all the surrounding geography with more jobs, better growth and better infrastructure.

The council will represent the whole area at the national level, building on the Oxford brand and taking advantage of our many other unique assets, including the largest active military base in the UK, destinations such as Blenheim Palace and Bicester Village, an innovative and growing knowledge and technology corridor and long-standing strengths in motoring and logistics.

New Local Neighbourhood Areas will be put in place in Oxford and key towns to focus on the individual needs of those urban areas and help support their growth. They will enable the council to ensure communities have the support they need in both urban and rural areas. Villages and agricultural areas would be well represented by a council of this size, making sure their needs are heard and the rural economy is supported to grow and flourish.

How two unitaries will improve the services our residents and businesses receive

We know that people want better public services that are responsive and locally focused. Our proposal responds to the government's priorities and the priorities of those we have engaged with as we have developed this proposal.

On the first day of the new councils, known as 'Vesting Day', services will be designed to transform and improve over time.

The councils will make the most of the cost-savings and service improvements from a more sustainable geography. They will maximise the benefits of existing high-performing service and transform services that aren't currently performing well or are costing too much at a county scale.

Some of the main service improvements in the proposal are:

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and SEND

Social care transformation will focus on helping people stay independent. Local teams will provide better services as they will work across more manageable areas.

Children's Services and SEND will also benefit from more early intervention, better commissioning and shared best practice. This could save £20 million a year and provide a better service for users.

Homelessness

The proposal aims to integrate housing, health and care services to prevent homelessness earlier and reduce reliance on costly emergency accommodation. Working across a larger, unified geography offers a more strategic approach to temporary accommodation, move-on pathways and long-term housing solutions. Oxford & Shires and the Ridgeway Councils will enable a tailored approach to the different communities across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

Public Safety and Public Health

Public safety improvements centre on more coordinated emergency planning, fire and rescue harmonisation and stronger community safety partnerships.

Public health will benefit from unified strategy, shared data and more consistent prevention work aligned closely with social care and locality-based teams.

Planning and Development

A single planning system within each new unitary will provide clearer strategic oversight, better alignment with growth priorities and stronger capacity for long-term place-making for each area. Each council will be big enough to deliver the growth and infrastructure we need but small enough to tailor plans to local needs. By streamlining policies and decision-making the councils could achieve greater consistency, speed and effectiveness.

Housing Delivery

The proposal will deliver more of the right homes in the right places. It will combine capacity and build stronger relationships with housing providers. It will utilise council owned land and assets proactively to build homes, especially social and affordable homes. Larger authorities can leverage scale to secure more affordable housing, accelerate regeneration and better align housing with social care and economic needs. Being the right size allows the ability to plan for community needs.

Transport and Highways

The new structure aims to address long-standing concerns about road conditions by unifying strategy, standards and delivery capacity. It will include a change in approach to road maintenance delivering a much better maintenance programme. The councils will be forward thinking to ensure new developments have the right infrastructure and better coordination with public rights of way and countryside access.

Waste and Environmental Services

Having two councils creates opportunities to standardise waste collection models, consolidate contracts and improve recycling rates through a more consistent service offer. It would include investment and aligned environmental policies aiming to build more sustainable waste systems and improve resident experience.

Parks and Grounds Maintenance

Each new unitary will move to a single, streamlined approach, using the strengths of existing in-house teams to improve quality and efficiency. This enables consistent maintenance standards, better performance management and more cohesive support for nature recovery strategies while focussing on the needs of each area.



Leisure

Aligning currently fragmented leisure contracts into single-footprint models will widen access, increase investment and support carbon-reduction and health goals. A unified approach creates more consistent service offers, greater participation opportunities and improved financial sustainability.

Cultural, Arts and Communities

The proposal integrates cultural services with local community teams to create a richer, more cohesive cultural offer across rural and urban areas. Investment, community participation and stronger links to education and health will help sustain libraries, museums, heritage assets and community programmes.



How the new councils will work with local communities

Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway will be designed as brand-new unitary councils, designed for their communities from day one. They will be small enough to remain responsive and have good local representation while still being big enough to take advantage of efficiencies.

The councils will adopt an approach to locality working and community empowerment so they can manage the risk including being too remote from their communities.

Good levels of elected representation

National guidance states no council should have more than 100 councillors. Two unitaries provides 90-100 councillors per council. This would mean local people, community groups and parish councils get good representation.

Services built around community need

The new councils would transform their services to be designed on community need. This would provide better outcomes for local people and reduce duplication.

Working in partnership with other organisations

The councils would break down barriers with partners such as the NHS, the Police and voluntary and community sectors. The councils would be a valued and proactive partner that works across the area to tackle key issues to benefit all organisations and those we serve.

Introducing Local Neighbourhood Areas

Each new council would be split into neighbourhood areas with each area getting a focus and providing them with a voice. Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway Council are a manageable size to make sure local neighbourhood areas can have meaningful impact and be well resourced. This would give parish councils and wider communities the ability to shape their areas and feed into wider council work, making sure the councils stay close to their communities.





Why Oxfordshire and West Berkshire?

Including West Berkshire in the two-unitary model with Oxfordshire creates a more coherent, financially resilient and strategically powerful geography than an Oxfordshire-only reorganisation could. West Berkshire complements Oxfordshire economically, demographically and structurally — and leaving it out will weaken regional growth, financial sustainability and the future Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Creating a financially sustainable geography with lower risk

An assessment of the risks around future financial resilience based on the current financial baseline against the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial Resilience Index, concludes that the two unitary model represents the lowest risk option to secure financial resilience when considering the full geographical area covered by this proposal.

Forming a stronger, more coherent economic area

West Berkshire and Oxfordshire together create a natural, functional economic geography connected by key transport corridors (rail routes and the A34, M4, A40, A420, M40) and shared industry clusters such as science, engineering, logistics, research and rural enterprise. Rather than splitting these interdependent economies, the proposal brings them into a single system that supports innovation, housing, skills and investment at scale.

Strengthening the region's case for devolution

Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway councils create strong building blocks for the Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority with multiple authorities all at the governments target population size. They are the right size to deliver meaningful change while remaining locally responsive. Excluding West Berkshire would leave the region fragmented; including it creates a solid, balanced platform for securing investment, transport upgrades, skills funding and strategic housing deals.

Bringing complementary service strengths together

West Berkshire's strong GVA performance, rural economy and health indicators complement Oxfordshire's innovation, education and research base. The combined approach enables shared expertise, better service resilience and improved outcomes in adult and children's services, whereas smaller councils can struggle without scale.

Increasing the likelihood of long-term transformation

The single Oxfordshire model risks maintaining the status quo where as including West Berkshire in the two unitary proposal enables improvement. The two new councils will be large enough to modernise the services but remain close to their communities. Transformation in care services, prevention, locality models and digital delivery becomes more achievable with balanced, similarly sized councils.



A positive and sustainable future for Oxford

The two-unitary proposal provides Oxford with a clearer, more empowered role within a balanced new council structure. Instead of being absorbed into a very large Oxfordshire-wide authority or carved into a “Greater Oxford” model, this approach preserves the city’s strengths, protects its identity and ensures that Oxford’s needs are represented within a well-resourced, sustainable unitary footprint.

Oxford’s economic and global role is formally built into the new council’s design

Oxford’s global reputation, innovation assets, visitor economy and research strength would become a foundation for the new Oxford & Shires council. This means the city’s unique economic engine would be used to drive prosperity across the wider geography.

Housing delivery in Oxford gets stronger, not weaker

Oxford City Council’s Housing Revenue Account and Ox-Place would be used as anchors for a bigger, more capable housing function. This accelerates delivery of affordable homes and expands access to land, funding and development mechanisms. Local identity and community voice in Oxford would be protected and strengthened.

Oxford city is currently largely unparished but creating its own Local Neighbourhood Areas would enable more direct neighbourhood governance. This would give Oxford’s communities a meaningful voice. The civic functions of Oxford would also be protected.

Oxford avoids both extremes: not swallowed by a mega-council, not fragmented into a too-small unitary

A single Oxfordshire unitary would be too large and too remote, while a “Greater Oxford” mini-unitary would be too small and financially weaker. The two-unitary model avoids both pitfalls, keeping Oxford at the right scale to shape regional decisions.

Better alignment of planning, growth and infrastructure around the city

Oxford & Shires footprint sits along the key economic corridors (rail routes and the A34, A40, A44, M40). This allows planning, transport and industrial strategy to be designed around a wider economic geography while keeping a focus for the city. It protects Oxford’s culture and character while allowing mutually beneficial growth across the wider area.

Stronger voice in devolution and major investment decisions

Oxford becomes one of two equal partners feeding into the Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority — not an overlooked part of one large authority or one of three fragmented mini-councils. This positions Oxford’s innovation ecosystem as a strategic anchor for regional growth deals. Oxford retains a central place in corridors, growth zones and strategic planning frameworks.

More responsive public services built around Oxford’s real needs

A locality-based model allows Oxford’s urban issues — homelessness, deprivation, high demand for supported housing — to be tackled with dedicated teams and targeted policies.

Stronger financial stability for Oxford’s services

The two-unitary model has been independently assessed as the lowest-risk and highest-benefit choice, generating recurring savings that support Oxford’s high-demand services such as homelessness, social care and infrastructure.





Delivering growth and prosperity

The proposal directly links the growth plan to Oxford's science, research, technology and innovation clusters, using them as engines for wider regional prosperity. This includes world-class universities, research & development hubs, engineering centres and advanced manufacturing assets.

Benefit to residents and businesses include:

- More investment flowing into local jobs, research and high-value industries.
- Stronger partnerships between councils and business clusters as the councils will be the right size to leverage influence and remain focused.
- A wider economic impact beyond Oxford City into market towns and rural areas.

Coherent economic geographies that accelerate growth

The new unitaries are built around real economic corridors: all rail routes and the A34, M4, A40, A44, A420, M40, forming a functional geography that businesses use. This would lead to better-targeted investment in transport links and infrastructure, planning and housing decisions aligned with job locations and less fragmentation, faster decisions and clearer strategic leadership.

Two balanced councils create the right building blocks for the Mayoral Strategic Authority, unlocking powers and funding that districts and counties can't access alone. This would deliver faster delivery of new transport schemes, including rail, bus and road upgrades. More control over skills, education and apprenticeship programmes and greater ability to secure government investment packages.

Accelerated housing and regeneration to support economic growth

The proposal aims to increase the supply of affordable and market housing through unified planning, combined land assets and Oxford City Council's housing delivery tools (HRA and Ox-Place). This would mean more affordable homes close to jobs, reduced homelessness pressures, better housing options for key workers and more attractive locations for employers.

A joined-up approach to planning, infrastructure and transport

Spatial planning, transport policy and development control would become integrated within each new unitary, coordinated with the Mayoral Strategic Authority. The councils would deliver faster planning decisions, better infrastructure delivery (roads, utilities, digital connectivity), more certainty for developers and investors and reduced bottlenecks that currently slow down business expansion.

Strong local leadership and more responsive place-based economic planning

The two councils are designed around localities, giving market towns, villages and the city meaningful input into economic priorities while operating at a scale large enough to deliver. Local economic challenges (e.g., rural connectivity, town centre decline) can be tackled with tailored solutions and there will be a strong local identity built into growth planning.

How will this work with a new strategic authority?

As well as local government reorganisation the government has asked areas to propose larger areas to become regional M, S and A. These authorities will cover populations of at least **1.5 million** and will be overseen by an elected mayor. Mayoral Strategic Authorities already exist in places like the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Greater London.

These M, S and A's will provide services like planning policy, strategic housing, health, nature recovery and economic development. They will focus on the wider region and strategic issues while unitary councils will provide the local services for their area.

The new unitary councils will play a key role in the new strategic authorities and the council leaders will be members of the Mayoral Strategic Authorities board. The two unitary councils in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire will provide a stronger voice in the strategic authority, tailored to the communities they represent. They will build on the distinct opportunities in each area to boost regional growth.

The exact geography of the Mayoral Strategic Authority for our area is undecided and subject to ongoing discussion. Currently Oxfordshire and Berkshire are working together while other areas are being considered. This will complement the two-unitary proposal. While the strategic authority plans are taking place at the same time as our proposal, they do not affect it.

The financial case for two councils

The financial modelling and independent analysis make a strong and unambiguous case that the two-unitary model delivers robust savings, long-term resilience and is the right scale to withstand future financial pressures. This is achieved whilst avoiding the risks and inefficiencies associated with the one unitary proposal and three unitary proposal.

It delivers the highest recurring savings of all options

Assessment by PwC shows the two-unitary model produces the largest financial benefits annually including:

- **£59.8 million recurring annual savings**
- **£21.9m transition benefits and £37.9m transformation benefits**
- **It repays its transition costs in just over three years**

It is the lowest-risk option for long-term resilience in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire

The CIPFA Financial Resilience Index analysis shows the two-unitary solution has the lowest total risk score which means it has better resilience to financial shocks and has a greater ability to avoid the financial failures seen elsewhere in local government.

It strengthens West Berkshire's financial position – removing existing structural risk

West Berkshire currently requires Exceptional Financial Support. The two-unitary model resolves this by combining it with a larger, sustainable footprint. This prevents the region from inheriting a financially unstable authority under any future devolution deal.

The modelling shows West Berkshire's financial position will not have an overall negative impact on Oxfordshire

It delivers efficiency through optimal scale – not too big, not too small

Two councils of roughly equal size (around 470,000 residents each by 2028) are large enough to deliver efficiencies and share specialist services and small enough to stay connected to communities. They are at the ideal scale recommended in government guidance. This "Goldilocks" scale is key to long-term financial health.



How we think the two unitary council proposal compares to the others being put to government

Alongside this proposal, two other proposals are being put forward:

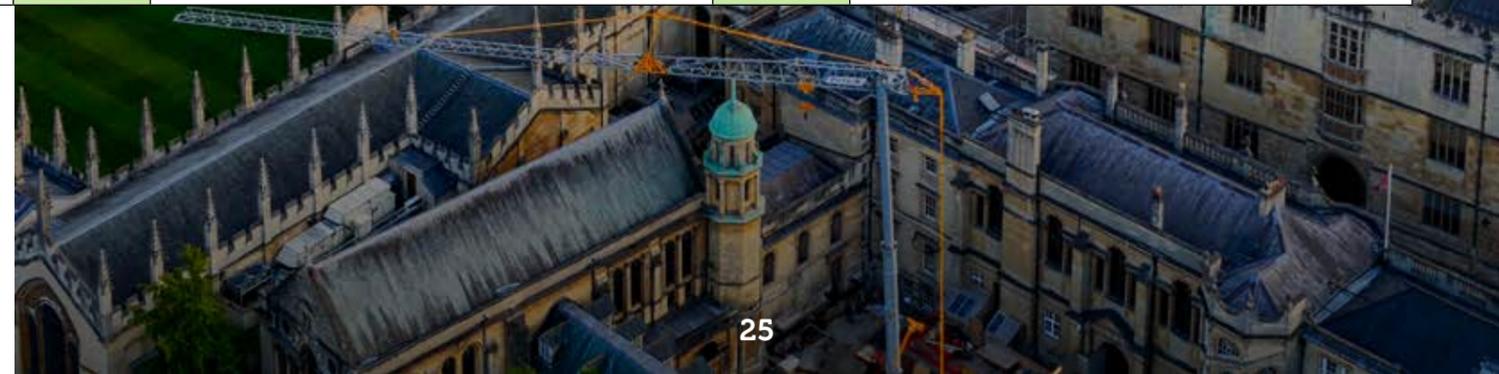
- A single unitary council for Oxfordshire - being developed by Oxfordshire County Council.
- A three-unitary option – with a unitary city on expanded boundaries and northern and southern unitaries, potentially including West Berkshire. This is being developed by Oxford City Council.

The government has requested existing councils to conduct an analysis of how our proposal compares to the others based on the criteria they set. This has been conducted on a like-for-like basis considering the whole area covered by Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.



MHCLG Headline Criteria	Option 1 – Oxfordshire UA & West Berkshire UA		Option 2 – Oxford & Shires and Ridgeway UAs		Option 3 – Greater Oxford UA & two other UAs	
1. A single tier and sensible geography to improve housing supply and outcomes avoiding creating (dis/advantaged areas	R	Positive for housing supply and outcomes in Oxfordshire. West Berkshire remains disadvantaged in terms of financial sustainability	G	Enables housing supply and outcomes over across whole area and does not create material (dis)advantaged areas	R	Challenges around nature and deliverability of housing supply. Creates (dis)advantaged areas based on financial analysis
2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	R	Creates one of the larger unitary councils in England and leaves one which is significantly below the guidance level	G	Creates two unitary councils at the optimal scale to achieve efficiencies, create capacity and avoid the risks of being too large	R	Creates two unitary councils that are materially smaller than the guidance level limiting scope to achieve efficiencies
3. Prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens	A	Avoids disruption to key services but also risks little improvement through keeping too much of the status quo	A	Some short term alignment will need to be managed but scale and existing services offer the chance to really tailor and improve outcomes	R	Wholesale disaggregation of county & district services (with boundary change) will be required delaying improvements & increasing costs
4. Councils work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views	R	Concerns over engagement of West Berkshire and in rural areas in Oxfordshire	A	Clear support for considering West Berkshire along with Oxfordshire in shaping the future of local government in the area	R	Concerns over the extent of engagement beyond city and issues over protecting the greenbelt
5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	A	Risk of distinct economic strengths being lost in a large Oxfordshire and leaves an imbalance of UAs in the Combined Authority context	G	Coherent economic geographies to support effective growth and devolution aims – with optimal sized unitary authorities	A	Could be seen to provide a strong growth hub around city but would leave small authorities in relation to Combined Authority
6. Enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood	A	Risk that scale and lack of effective community engagement at that level could result in poor community engagement	G	Strong localities model building on proven track record of effective community engagement and growth	G	Likely to resolve issues in terms of community engagement within the city

R Does not meet the criterion	A Partially meets the criterion	G Meets the criterion
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More Information

This document offers an overview of the comprehensive and detailed proposal that has been sent to government. The proposal submitted to government is much more detailed and includes a full options appraisal, detailed financial assessments, implementation plans and public engagement results.

This proposal and supporting documents are available at www.twocouncils.org

How will the decision be taken

All three proposals for Oxfordshire were submitted to the government on 27 November, ahead of the deadline of 28 November 2025.

The government will review all the proposals and will run a consultation in early 2026. Following this, the government make the final decision on which proposal will be implemented in Oxfordshire. It is anticipated that the decision will be made before parliament's summer recess in 2026.

Following the government's decision, we will then work with all the other councils to implement the structure chosen by government and minimise any impact upon services.



