

Consultation on proposed changes to household waste recycling centres in Oxfordshire

Overview

Oxfordshire County Council would like your views on its proposals for the future provision of household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) in Oxfordshire to save £350,000 from the budget by 2017/18.

Our proposal is to reduce the number of HWRCs from seven to three or four, and to change the opening hours of the remaining sites. Once agreed, changes to the HWRCs will be made over several years with plenty of notice given to local residents.

The proposals in this consultation affect all Oxfordshire residents. Please read the consultation document and complete the online feedback form to register your views.

Part 1: Background

We are all getting used to sorting out our rubbish before we dispose of it to maximise the amount that can be reused or recycled. The city and district councils are responsible for your kerbside collection. Since 2009 the city and district councils have collected food waste and garden waste alongside a wider range of recyclables, and we are proud that Oxfordshire has one of the best recycling rates in the country.

The county council currently operates seven household waste recycling centres across Oxfordshire at a cost of £4.1m a year. The sites (see map 1) are at:

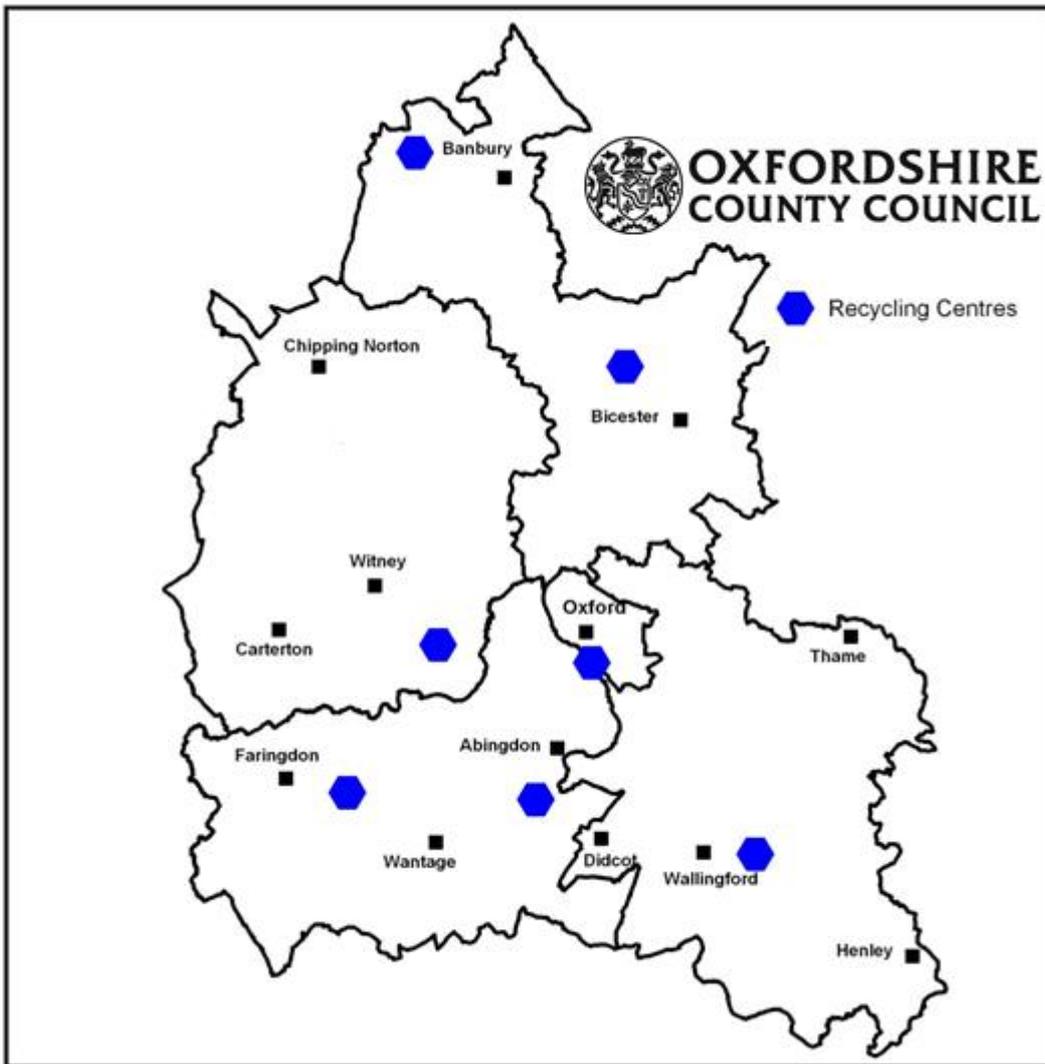
- Alkerton (near Banbury)
- Ardley (near Bicester)
- Dix Pit (near Stanton Harcourt)
- Drayton (between Abingdon/Didcot)
- Oakley Wood (near Wallingford)
- Redbridge (in Oxford)
- Stanford in the Vale (between Faringdon and Wantage)

There were 1.4 million visits to sites in 2008/9 and 1.1 million in 2014/15, with the reduction in visits probably related to the increase in kerbside recycling.

All the current sites are nearing capacity and will need to be expanded or replaced. In addition, two sites have limited planning permission and another will be closed by the landowners in 2017. All this provides an opportunity for the council to take stock and reconsider how HWRCs can be delivered in the future.

Oxfordshire needs a network of household waste recycling centres that meet future needs and enable the council to meet its agreed savings target of £350,000 by 2017/18.

Map 1: Current HWRCs



Why is the council making savings?

Reductions in central government funding mean Oxfordshire County Council has to make savings. We are currently in the process of making approximately £290 million of savings by 2018. On top of those savings, we may need to save a further £60 million. These calculations are based upon the government's broad savings targets across the public sector.

We will learn more specifics about how much Oxfordshire County Council, in particular, will need to save following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and the Local Government Budget Settlement in late 2015.

Household waste recycling centres savings

As part of our budget setting process in February 2014, the council reduced the overall household waste recycling centres budget by £350,000 from 2017/18. The current overall budget for HWRCs is £4.1million. This is broken down into £2.9 million which is spent on transporting, treating and disposing of the waste that is brought into centres by the public, and £1.2 million spent on running the sites. The waste produced will still need to be dealt with, which means that the £350,000 will need to be saved from the £1.2 m operating budget, a reduction of almost 30%.

Achieving savings through the proposals set out in this document will take some time and will require us to plan and deliver new sites, and implement changes at existing sites. While the council will be able to afford to continue with the current arrangements while new facilities are put in place, the long lead in times for new facilities requires us to make decisions now.

Part 2: Proposals

Number of sites

Oxfordshire needs a financially sustainable network of household waste recycling centres that can be delivered within the agreed county council budget. All the county's existing HWRCs are nearing capacity and need to be either expanded or replaced.

Our proposals for a future HRWC network in Oxfordshire are to:

- Reduce the overall number of sites from seven to either three or four
- Locate sites as close as possible to centres of population
- Limit as much as possible the drive times for residents
- Maximise reuse and recycling levels on site

We propose that there should be a minimum of three HWRCs in Oxfordshire and that these should be located near to population centres whilst taking into account areas of planned growth in the county.

Changes to opening hours

With the proposed overall reduction in the number of HWRCs, we also need to review opening hours so that they are better aligned to how people want to use them.

Locations

Based on population levels and the likely travel time for residents we have identified areas where we think three HWRCs should be located in the future.

- Central North Oxfordshire: This would mean that Ardley and Alkerton will close and be replaced with a new site
- Central Oxfordshire: This would mean that Redbridge will be expanded or replaced
- Central South Oxfordshire: This would mean that Drayton will be expanded or replaced

Reducing the opening hours of all household waste recycling centres by around 18 hours per week would bring down costs and may enable the council to offer a second option of a fourth site. This would mean either retaining Dix Pit, Oakley Wood or Stanford in the Vale or developing a new site at a location to be determined. Decisions on expanding or replacing sites will be dependent upon suitable land being available and planning permission and environmental permits being granted.

We would like your views on these site proposals.

Supporting measures

To mitigate the effects of reducing the numbers of HWRCs to either three or four, we will:

- Ensure all sites can accept both commercial and household waste
- Provide a dedicated area at all sites where people can donate goods for reuse
- Build new sites and/or improve existing facilities
- Encourage residents to separate their waste before they visit a site, in order to reduce the amount of recyclables thrown away

Fly-tipping

Reducing the number of household waste recycling centres in the county may raise concerns about fly-tipping. The county council will continue to work closely with the city and district councils to manage any increase in fly-tipping.

To support the proposed reduction in HWRCs, we propose to:

- Increase security at all sites for the short-term (including any sites that are closed) to prevent illegal dumping of materials
- Increase communications so that residents are aware of when and where they can take their waste, including their closest HWRC and its opening hours

Alternative options

In developing our proposals we have considered a number of other alternative options including:

- Partnering with other authorities – no practical arrangements were found
- Partnering with the private sector – research shows this has been unsuccessful elsewhere
- Charging residents for use of the HWRC – legislation now prevents this
- Income generation through reuse of materials – does not provide sufficient money

Legislation prevents the county council from charging for public access to HWRCs. However, charging companies to deposit waste is an important part of the new strategy but the income generated is not guaranteed to be sufficient to fund more than the three or four sites proposed.

More information on the alternatives we explored is set out in Annex 1 and is available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste or in hard copy at libraries.

Timeline for proposed changes

A timeline for the proposed changes is set out below, however this is not fixed and is dependent upon the decision made by the council's Cabinet. These time estimates are linked to site closure and planning permission expiry dates over a number of years and also to allow time to build or expand existing sites.

Short term (1 – 2 years)	Medium term (3-5 years)	Long term (5+ years)
Site searches for North Oxfordshire, Oxford and South Oxfordshire carried out	Depending on outcome of site searches develop new sites at the same time, or expand existing sites one after the other (so that not all sites will be shut for redevelopment at the same time)	Shut existing sites once new sites open and operating
		Development work for the fourth site begins if required

Part 4: Have your say

Understanding your views, opinions and preferences is key to our decision making process. Read the consultation document and supporting information and **please, if you are able, complete the online form at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste**.

If you need support take to part in this consultation contact the council on 01865 816043 or email waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk. You can also review hard copies of the consultation materials at all libraries.

Printed consultation forms should be sent to:

HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES CONSULTATION
FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
(No further address details required).

The deadline for your response is 5 October 2015.

Part 6: Supporting information

We have produced some more detailed background information to accompany this consultation. This includes:

- Alternatives table
- Service and Community Impact Assessment

We have undertaken a draft Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA) to understand how the changes we have proposed will affect different groups of people in the community. The SCIA will be reviewed following the proposed consultation. Supporting information and the draft SCIA is available on the county council's website www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste

Part 7: What happens next?

All consultation responses received by the closing date will be collated and analysed. The results of the consultation will be reported to the council's decision-making Cabinet following the end of this consultation period.

Councillors will weigh the views expressed in the consultation against a wide number of other factors when making decisions, including statutory requirements, government guidance, cost, risk, demography and other issues captured as part of the council's service and community impact assessment process. In light of all the evidence presented to them, Cabinet will decide whether or not to take the proposed changes forward.