

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Enhancing Oxford's heritage and creating high quality new development**



*Oxford is a world-renowned historic city with a rich and diverse built heritage. It is highly recognisable by its iconic skyline and its architecture. Oxford is also a dynamic city that must adapt and change. High quality design is key to managing this change positively, for the continued success of the city. Successful new design and the conservation and enhancement of the heritage of Oxford should not be separated. Managing change in a way that respects and draws from Oxford's heritage is vital for the continued success of the city.*

*The value and benefits of good design and improvements to quality of life are so significant that good design is not a nice extra, it is essential. A successfully designed scheme will be a positive addition to its surroundings. It may blend in or stand out, but it should not detract from existing significant positive characteristics in the area, and it may add interest and variety. A well designed scheme will meet the needs of all users and will stand the test of time.*

## **6.1 High Quality Design and Placemaking**

### *Responding to site character and context*

A rigorous design process and design-led solutions are crucial to achieving new developments of high quality. Design should have a clear rationale and be informed by the unique characteristics of the site and its setting. To enable decision makers to properly understand and assess the final design, the design process must be clearly explained and justified. The design evolution should follow a logical order of morphological layers, as set out below.

### *Contextual analysis of the site and its setting*

All new development should be informed and inspired by the unique characteristics of the site and its setting, and these considerations should go beyond the red line of the application site to adopt a truly placemaking approach. This contextual analysis must be the starting point for designing new development and this information should be set out in support of any pre-application enquiry or planning application. The contextual analysis should consider the history and development of the site and surrounding area, landscape structure, biodiversity, the pattern, character and appearance of streets, buildings and spaces. The level of detail in the analysis should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development proposals. As part of the contextual analysis, a constraints and opportunities plan should be created which will help visually draw out these crucial elements of the design development. Unique site features identified will present an opportunity to shape design and offer the opportunity for reinforcing existing character or creating an individual character drawing on the context. Constraints identified will help provide clarity about potential issues and open up the opportunity to explore imaginative solutions to them. Appendix 6.1 contains more information about what should be included in as part of the contextual analysis and constraints and opportunities plan. Existing site features can include, the topography, views in and out and across, points of connection, existing natural features and established character, but this list is not exhaustive.

Regardless of the scale of development, it is likely that the site and its setting will contain biodiversity or at least it should present the opportunity for enhancement of this resource. The site will also be located within an established landscape framework and may well contain natural features such as trees, interesting topography and water courses, for example. It is essential to identify these features first to ensure that they can be integrated as early as possible into the site layout. At the earliest stage the site's natural resources should be understood so that the placement of buildings later makes the most of these opportunities. These will include the amount of daylight and sunlight it receives as well as climatic conditions like wind. Where possible, existing trees and planting should be retained, as this will help to establish character and provide interest more quickly. This design approach can also help to integrate new development with the surrounding area.

### *Site layout informed by contextual analysis and movement needs*

The streets and paths we use are some of the most enduring features of our built environment and Oxford has many excellent examples of highly permeable street networks such as those found in the historic core, East Oxford and Jericho. New development should seek to provide a clear hierarchy and choice of routes as well as direct and convenient access and must be designed for different modes of transport and different users, particularly encouraging walking and cycling. The quality of all routes in terms of how different people will experience them must be a key consideration,

avoiding inactive edges and narrow pavements for example. Routes must be designed with all users in mind so that they are truly accessible.

Depending on the street hierarchy, different streets will have different functions and require different designs and treatment, from a tree lined, formal, primary street to a calmer, narrower, tertiary street. Focal points and landmark buildings help aid people's understanding of a place and can create memorable routes as well as variety and interest.

### *Design of external areas*

Investing in the quality of the public realm and the space between buildings is as important as investing in the quality of new buildings, all of which together, create the places in which we live, work, visit and enjoy. Design should always be inclusive and the design of the public realm and outdoor spaces should cater for all potential users. Moreover, the design of external spaces should seek to create opportunities for people to engage with a place through their senses.

Good quality landscaping is a fundamental part of successful outdoor spaces. It is essential that landscape schemes/designs are evolved alongside architectural designs to ensure that there is a strong relationship between buildings and spaces. Trees and plants are important elements of any landscape scheme as they provide visual interest, adding colours, shapes and textures that provide a foil to buildings, helping to frame outside spaces and make them more attractive. The careful choice of hard surface materials can have a big impact on the success and overall quality of outdoor spaces. In selecting materials for hard surfacing, thought should be given to their durability, compatibility with the local context, and relationship with the overall design vision. It is also important to consider practical issues of any landscape scheme, such as lifespan (it is important that the benefits are long term) and how maintenance requirements will be managed over time.

### *The built form*

Oxford has a rich legacy of buildings from iconic architectural set pieces to smaller domestic, medieval houses in the historic core and locally distinctive buildings within the many villages that now form part of the city. There is therefore a wealth of inspiration in terms of building form and character and great opportunity for creative, high quality complementary character to enhance the existing built form.

New buildings and alterations to existing buildings should be of high quality design. They should provide an appropriate respond appropriately to the existing form, materials and architectural detailing and should not have adverse impacts on existing and neighbouring buildings. Placement, style and proportions of doors and windows will be important, as will the choice of materials.

### *Public art*

Public art is an excellent way to add interest, create a sense of place and provide a focal point. The public art could contribute to creating local distinctiveness, by saying something about the place it is in. It might reflect a historic use or event of the area, or the purpose of the new development. It can inject fun, quirkiness and a sense of personality. Public art should not be seen as an embellishment of a scheme or appear as an add-on or afterthought. Rather, it should be part of design considerations from the start and integrated into the overall design concept. A developer will be expected to show how public art has been designed in at an early stage. A temporary piece, an event or a curated space might be accepted if they offer something worthwhile. Creating multi-functional

public art might help to achieve a well-loved design, for example public art that can be used as seating. Details of the public art should be submitted with a planning application.

### *Secure by design*

High quality design means creating places that are safe, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. New developments should be designed to meet Secure by Design principles, which provide a well-established approach for designing developments to minimise opportunities for criminal and anti-social behaviour, and for creating spaces that reduce the fear of crime.

### *Design review and the pre-application process*

Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and allowing for the opportunity for creative ideas and problem solving to add value.

The City Council will ensure that they have appropriate tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include internal design advice and review arrangements, which should be used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes. The Council has established a Design Review Panel which operates under the nationally accepted Design Review Principles and Practice guidance document. It is encouraged that all major development proposals are assessed by the Council's in-house design team and then by the Panel as part of the pre-application process, in order that designs can be reviewed and improved at the informative stage prior to the formal determination of the application.

In assessing applications, the Council will have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by Design Review Panel. However, the design review panel will always remain as an advice panel and the Council will not fetter its discretion in the determination of a planning application.

### **Policy DH1: High quality design and placemaking**

Planning permission will only be granted for development of high quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness.

All developments other than changes of use without external alterations and householder applications will be expected to be supported by a constraints and opportunities plan and supporting text and/or visuals to explain their design rationale in a design statement proportionate to the proposal (which could be part of a Design and Access Statement or a Planning Statement), which should cover the relevant checklist points set out in Appendix 6.1.

Planning permission will only be granted where proposals are designed to meet the key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development as set out in Appendix 6.1.

### **6.2 Views and building heights**

Land is scarce in Oxford and there is an imperative to use land efficiently. Taller buildings can positively contribute to increasing density, enabling a more efficient use of land, and may also be an appropriate built response to the existing context.

In Oxford, particular care should be taken to consider whether a new development might be in the setting of the buildings that create the iconic 'dreaming spires'. These buildings are a collection of nationally and internationally important buildings of historic and architectural significance. They sit in a compact area in the core of Oxford, which is raised slightly on a gravel terrace, giving more prominence to these historic buildings and meaning that Oxford's unique skyline can be viewed as a single entity whose composition varies according to the direction of viewing. Oxford's iconic historic skyline means that particular care needs to be taken over the design and placement of taller buildings. Taller buildings should not negatively impact on views of the iconic skyline. The impact on views from the historic core to the green hills surrounding Oxford is also important to consider.

The skyline is characterised by its many pinnacles and the 'spikiness' of its silhouette. The fragility and small height and volume of the spires means the character of the skyline is particularly vulnerable to change and could easily be eroded by any bulky element in the skyline.

### *Building heights and views*

It is important that design choices about building heights are informed by an understanding of the site context and the impacts on the significance of the setting of Oxford's historic skyline, including views in to it, and views within it and out of it. Taller buildings will be possible in many locations, but they must be designed to ensure they contribute to the existing character, and do not detract from the amenity of their surroundings.

Guidance is contained in the Oxford High Buildings Study about the design of high buildings. The aim will be to ensure that variability and interest in the skyline is maintained.

### *The historic core area*

Although from certain points of view the towers and spires that make up the historic skyline seem to be spaced very widely, the area from which the silhouette emerges is, in fact, very compact and does not extend far beyond the old city wall within the central core. The area within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax tower (defined on the Policies Map as the Historic Core Area) contains all the buildings that comprise the historic skyline. New buildings within the Historic Core Area have high potential to interfere with the character of the skyline, especially if their height is above that of Carfax Tower. These will be developments that exceed 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260ft) (whichever is the lower).

### *View cones*

View cones are drawn as triangles from important viewing points to encompass the width of the area containing buildings that constitute Oxford's historic skyline. The 10 identified view cones do not represent an exhaustive list of viewing points that provide an important view of Oxford's skyline. There may be glimpses of the famous skyline in other locations, and tall buildings in particular that are proposed outside of the view cones might still have an impact on the historic skyline.

Within view cones, proposed new buildings must not detract from the skyline and composition and even where they will not intrude directly on to it, their effect as a frame to it must be considered. However, it is not just a bulky intrusion into the skyline that might be damaging; the foreground is also an important element of a view. Development of a low and uniform height that does not recognise the importance of rooftop detailing and modulation can detract from the view of the skyline in the whole, as well as having a negative effect on townscape.

A View Cones Assessment (date) has been endorsed by the City Council and is published on the City Council's website. It examines the significance of views, identifying their special qualities. The View Cones Assessment sets out a methodology for heritage assessment of the Oxford views and applies this to each of the 10 view cones. It describes and analyses the important features of the view cones. The Study enables a greater understanding of the significance of all parts of the view, not just the skyline. It is designed to aid understanding of the impact of proposals on views, and should be referred to, understood and reflected in designs within the View Cones and the setting of View Cones that might impact on the experience and heritage significance of the view. The contribution of elements of each view is described. A simplified render has been developed for each view and key characteristics are picked out with labels. This analysis should be used to help judge and explain the impact of any proposed development within view cones on the overall view. It should be remembered that, while some protected views are partly obscured by tree cover (especially in the summer) trees may become managed in the views in the future, so protection of the views is still important.

Some views are from points outside the City Council's administrative boundaries. The City Council will work with Vale of White Horse to ensure these view are protected.

### *Roofscape and views*

Even where buildings do not intrude directly into the skyline they may form a frame to it and have to be designed accordingly. To create more visual diversity that enhances the experience of the skyline, articulation of roofscape, and relatively short units of building are encouraged, with features to create a break in the line.

A maximum ridge or parapet length of 25 metres without either a substantial vertical or horizontal break or interrupting features is the guideline that will be followed for Oxford's skyline. The City Council will resist the loss of any features, such as chimneys, if the loss would result in a simplification of the skyline.

### *Quality design of high buildings*

Certain aspects of the design of high buildings require particular and specific consideration. The High Buildings Guidance Technical Advice Note (TAN) should be referred to. This includes guidance on differing heights across the city where the impacts from those heights will be minimal. Higher buildings may still be appropriate. The TAN also sets out design considerations for exceeding those heights. Higher buildings will often be appropriate in district centres and on arterial roads. The massing, orientation, roofline, materials (including colour) and the relation of the building to the street will also be important. Taller buildings will need to be designed to avoid potential negative impacts of overshadowing, reduced internal natural light and wind-tunnel effects.

#### **Policy DH2: Views and building heights**

The City Council will seek to retain significant views both within Oxford and from outside, in particular to and from the historic skyline. Planning permission will not be granted for any building or structure that would harm the special significance of Oxford's historic skyline.

Planning permission will be granted for developments of appropriate height or massing, as demonstrated by the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a. design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts

will be positive; and

- b. any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and the guidance on design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN should be followed. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and
- c. it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both in to the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting.

The area within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax tower (the Historic Core Area) contains all the buildings that comprise the historic skyline, so new developments that exceed 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260 ft) (whichever is the lower) are likely to intrude into the skyline. Development above this height should be limited in bulk and must be of the highest design quality. Applications for proposed development that exceeds that height will be required to provide extensive information so that the full impacts of any proposals can be understood and assessed, including:

- i) a Visual Impact Assessment, which includes the use of photos and verified views produced and used in a technically appropriate way, which are appropriate in size and resolution to match the perspective and detail as far as possible to that seen in the field, representing the landscape and proposed development as accurately as possible
- ii) use of 3D modelling so that the impact of the development from different locations can be understood, including any view cone views that are affected; and
- iii) an explanation of what the impacts will be in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character; and
- iv) reference to how the guidance in the High Buildings Study Technical Advice Note has been followed.

Any proposals within the Historic Core Area or View Cones that may impact on roofscape and the foreground part of views (including proposals where they are below the Carfax datum point, for example plant) should be designed carefully, and should meet all the following criteria:

- they are based on a clear understanding of characteristic positive aspects of roofscape in the area; and
- they contribute positively to the roofscape, to enhance any significant long views the development may be part of and also the experience at street level;

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposed within a View Cone or the setting of a View Cone if it would harm the special significance of the view.

The View Cones and the Historic Core Area (1,200m radius of Carfax tower) are defined on the Proposals Map.

### **6.3 Designated heritage assets**

National heritage lists are administered by Historic England. Assets on the lists are of clear national significance and include listed buildings, scheduled monuments and registered parks and gardens. Oxford's historic core has a distinctive pattern of streets of Saxon origin and world-class buildings of interest from every major period of British architectural history from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Oxford has around 1,200 listed buildings, of which almost a quarter are grade I and II\* listed. Oxford has 15 registered parks and gardens. These Historic Parks and Gardens are protected at a national

level. Several of these parks and gardens have been assessed as being part of the Green Infrastructure network. Conservation areas are also designated heritage assets. They are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance’. Oxford has 18 conservation areas which are listed in Appendix 6.2 and defined on the Proposals Map. They include a diverse range of qualities, reflecting the story of Oxford, from the medieval walled city to surrounding agricultural settlements, the open green space found in the Headington Hill Conservation Area to the meadows of the river valleys such as Wolvercote and Godstow. However, they all have the common element of containing features that link us to our past. The protection of these features needs to be properly managed, ensuring future generations will value and enjoy their special qualities.

Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, so it is vital that they are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Heritage significance can be represented in an asset’s form, scale, materials and architectural detail and, where relevant, the historic relationships between heritage assets. Development that affects the setting of a heritage asset should respond positively to the assets’ significance, local context and character to protect the contribution that the setting makes to the asset’s significance. In particular, consideration will need to be given to impacts from development that is not sympathetic in terms of scale, materials, details and form.

Where development is proposed which affects a designated Heritage Asset a heritage assessment will be required that is appropriate to the level of significance of the asset. The assessment needs to explain its significance and the impacts of the proposals. Substantial harm or loss of significance should be wholly exceptional and could only be justified if it is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, taking into account the significance and benefits of conserving the asset. Conservation area appraisals (where they exist) are the starting point for understanding significance and significant features and assets of conservation areas. Use of the Oxford Character Appraisal Toolkit can aid in developing an understanding of local context and significance, and is particularly encouraged in conservation areas in order to inform design and aid understanding of its impacts.

### **Policy DH3: Designated heritage assets**

Planning permission will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford’s unique historic environment (above and below ground), responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality.

In all planning decisions affecting the significance of designated heritage assets, great weight will be given to the conservation of that asset (including its setting where it contributes to significance).

A planning application for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset (including, where appropriate, its setting) should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the asset and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset’s significance. As part of this process full regard should be given to the detailed character assessments and other relevant information set out any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan.

The submitted heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:

- a) an understanding of the significance of the heritage asset, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring; and
- b) that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an



understanding of the significance of the heritage asset and that harm to its significance has been avoided or minimised; and

- c) that, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, including its setting, the extent of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified, and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm;

Where the setting of an asset is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the asset, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, planning permission will only be granted if:

- i) the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss; and
- ii) the nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the sites; and
- iii) no viable use of the asset itself can be found in the medium term (through appropriate marketing) that will enable its conservation; and
- iv) conservation by grant funding or similar is not possible; and
- v) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use;
- vi) a plan for recording and advancing understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, including making this evidence publicly available, is agreed with the City Council.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment.

Conservation areas are listed in Appendix 6 and defined on the Policies Map.

#### **6.4 Archaeological remains**

Much of Oxford's history, especially in its historic core, lies buried beneath the ground. Listed buildings can also contain important archaeological evidence about their past, building techniques and traditions. Oxford has a rich archaeological heritage, from prehistoric times to the modern day. A better understanding and appreciation of the archaeology of Oxford helps us to understand its heritage. Archaeological remains can't be renewed so it is essential they are managed carefully and treated with respect. It is important that Oxford's archaeological legacy is protected and where the loss of archaeological assets can be justified opportunities to investigate and record archaeological remains are fully realised when development takes place.

The unique archaeological heritage of the city encompasses a wide variety of asset types. Some of these are formally designated as Scheduled Monuments, however many assets of comparable significance are not currently designated and warrant appropriate protection through the planning system. Notable assets include prehistoric domestic, ritual and funerary sites located across north Oxford and the remains of an important Roman pottery manufacturing industry to the south and east of city. The town is also distinctive for its middle-late Saxon urban remains, its emergence as a major cloth trading town in the Norman period and for the numerous assets associated with Oxford's development as an international centre for academic study including the remains of multiple religious institutions, academic halls and endowed colleges. Other assets of particular note

include the town defences, the distinctive remains associated with the medieval Jewish Community and the Royalist Civil War defences.

The policy is designed to ensure that the significance Oxford's exceptional archaeological legacy is sustained and that where the loss or harm of archaeological deposits is warranted that development results in a thorough investigation of the impacted archaeology. It will ensure developers consider the potential existence of archaeological remains on a site at an early stage, which will help the design to be sympathetic.

The City Centre Archaeological Area (defined on the Policies Map) has an exceptionally high concentration of archaeological remains, as do some allocated sites (noted in Chapter 9 against the relevant site allocation policies). Any significant breaking of the ground in these locations will require an archaeological assessment. An archaeological assessment may also be required outside of these areas where it is suspected there are archaeological remains. There are known concentrations of past human activity in many parts of Oxford, and early discussion with the City Council to ascertain whether an archaeological assessment is required is strongly advised.

Where deposits exist, information defining the extent and character of these should be included in the planning application. Early assessment and field evaluation to inform sensitive design is recommended. Design should aim to preserve significant archaeology in situ. The presence of deposits or remains will require care in layout of designs to mitigate adverse effects that may result from poor siting of foundations, drainage features and hard landscaping. Where the loss of archaeological assets is warranted by the merits and public benefits of the development archaeological investigation and recording, public outreach, storage of artefacts and the publication and dissemination of results may be an acceptable alternative. In these cases, the potential for design that makes some acknowledgement of the understanding of the past that is gained through the archaeological discoveries should be considered. Understanding and incorporating archaeological remains into current designs will add interest and local distinctiveness.

Because of the richness of archaeological remains in Oxford, especially in the historic core, and because of the significant development pressures, many works are carried out that affect the archaeology of the central area. Such development may have cumulative impacts on certain asset types; there is a danger that allowing the recording of deposits rather than preservation in situ for several individual developments will lead to significant degradation of the archaeological record. In those cases, further work to ensure adequate contextual assessment and mitigation may be required, that takes into account cumulative impacts.

#### **Policy DH4: Archaeological remains**

Within the City Centre Archaeological Area, on allocated sites where identified, or elsewhere where archaeological deposits and features are suspected to be present (including upstanding remains), applications should include sufficient information to define the character and extent of such deposits so far as reasonably practical. This information should generally include :

- a) a Heritage Assessment that includes a description of the impacted archaeological deposit or feature (including where relevant its setting), an assessment its significance and an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on its significance, in all cases using a proportionate level of detail that is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal . The Statement should reference appropriate records (including the information held on the Oxford Historic Environment Record); and
- b) if appropriate, a full archaeological desk-based assessment and the results of evaluation by fieldwork (produced by an appropriately qualified contractor. Pre-application

discussion is encouraged to establish requirements). In the City Centre Archaeological Area where significant archaeological asset types can be shown to be subject to cumulative impact from development, the desk-based assessment should contain appropriate contextual assessment of this impact.

Development proposals that affect archaeological features and deposits will be supported where they are designed to enhance or to better reveal the significance of the asset and will help secure a sustainable future for it.

Proposals which would or may affect archaeological remains or features which are designated as heritage assets will be considered against the policy approach as is set out in policy DH3 above.

Archaeological remains or features which are equivalent in terms of their significance as a scheduled monument are given the same policy protection as designated heritage assets. Proposals which affect the significance of such assets will be considered against the policy test for designated heritage assets set out in policy DH4 above.

Subject to the above, proposals that will lead to harm to the significance of non-designed archaeological remains or features will be resisted unless a clear and convincing justification through public benefit can be demonstrated to outweigh that harm, having regard to the significance of the remains or feature and the extent of harm.

Where harm to an archaeological asset has been convincingly justified and is unavoidable, mitigation should be agreed with Oxford City Council and should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and impact. The aim of mitigation should be where possible to preserve archaeological remains in situ, to promote public enjoyment of heritage and to record and advance knowledge. Appropriate provision should be made for investigation, recording, analysis, publication, archive deposition and community involvement.

### **6.5 Local heritage assets**

Oxford City Council maintains a list of local heritage assets known as the Oxford Heritage Asset Register (OHAR), which is a register of buildings, structures, features or places that make a special contribution to the character of Oxford and its neighbourhoods through their locally significant historic, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest. The OHAR provides the opportunity to identify those elements of Oxford's historic environment particularly valued by local communities. Buildings and structures on OHAR are not given any statutory protection from demolition.

The policy will ensure that heritage assets of local importance will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. Locally important heritage assets can be added to the list when they are identified. The policy sets out criteria describing a local heritage asset. If these criteria are met an asset can be added to the Oxford Heritage Asset Register following approval at a Planning Committee or City Executive Board. Assets can be nominated by members of the public or during the planning application process.

Local heritage assets and their setting often make a place special and they should be given consideration at the design stage to ensure that any adverse impacts are either avoided or mitigated and that local character is enhanced or conserved.

Assets within conservation areas are not included in the Oxford Heritage Asset Register. Individual assets of local heritage significance in conservation areas are identified as part of the process of preparing a conservation area appraisal. They should be considered in planning applications that affect them or their setting in the same way as assets on the Oxford Heritage Asset Register.

#### **Policy DH5: Local Heritage Assets**

Assets will be considered for inclusion on the Oxford Heritage Asset Register if they have:

- *heritage interest that can be conserved and enjoyed; and*
- *value as heritage to the character and identity of the city, or area, or community ; and*
- *a level of significance greater than the general positive characteristics of the local area.*

Planning permission will only be granted for development affecting a local heritage asset (or setting of an asset) if it is demonstrated that the significance of the asset, and its conservation, has informed the design of the development proposed. In determining whether planning permission should be granted for a development proposals, which affects (directly or indirectly) a local heritage asset (that is not designated), consideration will be given to the significance of the asset extent of impact on its significance, as well as the public benefits that may result from the development proposals.

Publicly accessible recording should be made to advance understanding of the significance of any assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact.

### **6.6 Shopfronts and signage**

Outdoor advertisements and signs can impact on amenity and public safety, and therefore sometimes require planning permission. Well-designed signs and advertisements will integrate well with buildings and the character of an area as well as meeting the commercial need for the advertisement. However, obtrusive designs and unthoughtful siting of signs and advertisements can have a detrimental effect on visual amenity or on the character of an area, particularly in conservation areas.

The policy approach will ensure adverts and signs that require planning permission (or listed buildings consent) are of a design, size and materials that complement that character of buildings they are on and the surrounding public realm. The policy will ensure visual pollution and clutters are avoided and will help to maintain Oxford's historic shopfronts. Compromises may need to be made to 'corporate' designs in particularly sensitive areas to meet the requirements of the policy, for example internally illuminated box fascias and projecting signs will not be generally appropriate in conservation areas.

#### **Policy DH6: Shopfronts and signage**

Planning permission will only be granted for the display of an advertisement, shopfront, sign or canopy where the design, positioning, materials, colour, proportion and illumination are not detrimental to assets with heritage significance or visual or residential amenity, as demonstrated through the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a) the design responds to and positively contributes to the character and design of existing buildings and surroundings; and
- b) public safety would not be prejudiced; and
- c) visual pollution and clutter are avoided; and
- d) historic shop fronts are retained

## **6.7 External servicing features and stores for bikes, waste and recycling**

Bike storage is essential in Oxford, where travel by bike is already an important mode share, and where an increase is being encouraged. Retro-fitting of bike stores can lead to poor facilities, which detract from the overall design of a development. For flats particularly, convenient, secure cycle parking needs careful thought, early in the design process.

Given that the total amount of waste generated in Oxford is expected to rise (due to the rise in the number of households) maximising the potential for residents to recycle as much waste as possible will be very important. Ensuring that there is adequate, well placed space for the range of bins required will enable this, and also ensuring that these bins do not detract from the appearance or amenity of the street. It should also be ensured that bins are located and stored in such a way that they can be collected efficiently.

Servicing features such as meter cupboards, pipes and gutters, flues, vents, satellite dishes and aerials can sometimes be designed as an integrated element of the architecture that can contribute positively to the overall design of a building or development architectural feature that benefits the overall design. Chimneys and drainpipes, for example, can help to break up the monotony of a terrace, showing the individual units within the whole. Detailing of these features can be an important contributor to the character of an area. However, servicing features can also create a cluttered appearance and detract from design of an otherwise successful development.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that provision for bins and bicycles is considered as an integral element of the design of a development, from the earliest stage in the design process whether they are included within the main buildings or as freestanding buildings. Consideration from an early stage in the design process will ensure that it is designed in the best way. Guidance on the numbers and sizes of bins that are required for different types of development and design and placement of stores is set out in the City Council's Technical Advice Note on Waste Storage. This will be revised to also include advice on bike storage.

The policy approach seeks to ensure that careful consideration is given to the positioning, design and materials used for external servicing features. Where it would be inappropriate for them to be designed as an architectural element, they should be hidden as much as possible and located sympathetically, for example on less prominent elevations, grouped together and aligned where possible.

### **Policy DH7: External servicing features and stores**

Bike and bin stores and external servicing features should be considered from the start of the design process. Planning permission will be granted where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) bin and bike storage is provided in a way that does not detract from the overall design of the scheme or the surrounding area, whilst meeting practical needs including the provision of electric charging points where appropriate; and
- b) external servicing features have been designed as an integrated part of the overall design, or are positioned to minimise their impact; and
- c) materials used for detailed elements such as for stores or rainwater goods are of high quality so they enhance the overall design and will not degrade in a way that detracts from the overall design

This page is intentionally left blank