

Local Development Framework

Oxford 2026

OXFORD'S CORE STRATEGY

Preferred Options

March 2007



Responding to this consultation

We would like you to help us by telling us what you think of the preferred options set out in this document.

You can do this by filling in the separate **comment form**, and returning it to us by post at the address on the right or by scanning your response and emailing it to us.

You can also complete an **electronic version** of the questionnaire online at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy

Please send your comments to us by **Friday 11th May 2007**.

What will happen to my comments?

Your views will help to inform the next stage of the Core Strategy – the submission document which will be published in January 2008.



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An electronic version of this paper is available on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy



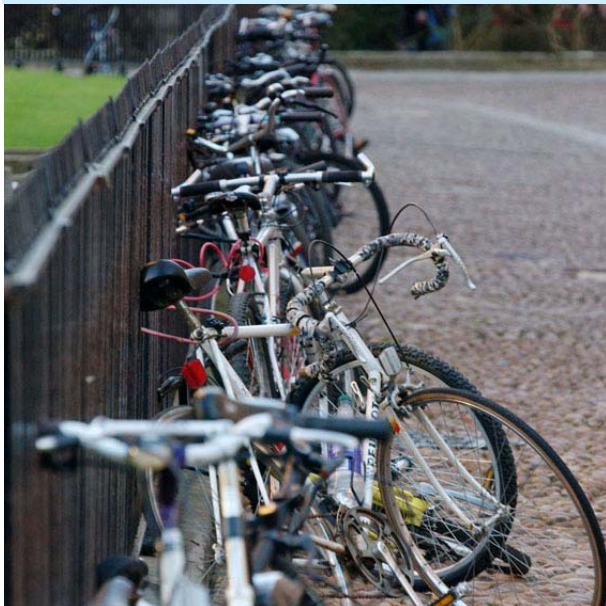
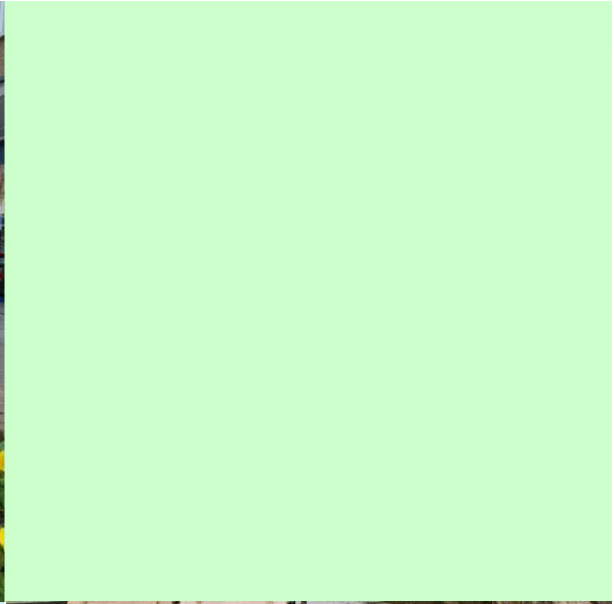
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INTRODUCTION

The City Council has produced this Preferred Options document as the second stage in the process of seeking your views on how Oxford should plan for, and manage, growth and development over the next 20 years.

How does this affect me?

Planning affects many aspects of our lives – from where we live to where we work, from where and how we shop to where and how we spend our leisure time. It is important that we get it right.

A new planning system

The Government has introduced a new planning system that aims to respond more quickly to changing circumstances. At present we have a Structure Plan, prepared by the County Council, and a Local Plan, prepared by the City Council. Under the new system, these will be replaced with a folder of documents called the 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). The intention is that this will make it easier to keep things up to date. Figure 1.1 illustrates these changes to the planning system.

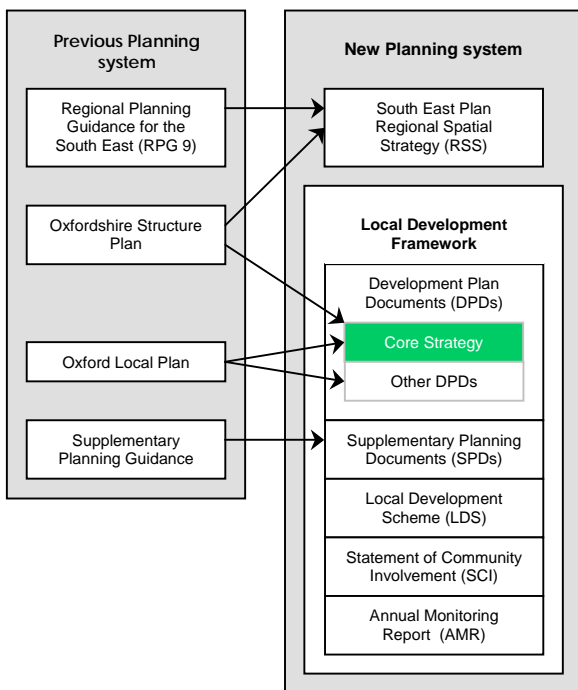


Figure 1 - The new planning system

Spatial planning

The current Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, adopted in November 2005, sets out policies on what land uses are most appropriate in which locations and what can be built where. This is used to inform decisions on planning applications.

The new system goes beyond that to consider how land use, design and movement should integrate with other proposals and strategies to improve the overall quality of life, including broader issues such as health, education, and community safety. This is known as 'spatial planning'. It is not limited to things that are controlled by the City Council, so working with partners and other agencies will be vital.

What is a Core Strategy?

The Core Strategy is the document that will set out the strategic elements in the planning framework for Oxford up to 2026. It is concerned with the strategic pattern of development across Oxford. This means that it will, for example, determine which broad areas are suitable for more housing, or require improved transport links.

The Preferred Options document contains a clear vision, objectives and a strategy. The Core Strategy will also include the policies needed to implement the strategy, and a system for monitoring whether the strategy is being delivered.

The Core Strategy is a Development Plan Document (DPD), which means it will form the starting point for determining planning applications. It will be considered by an independent Inspector before it can be adopted. All other DPD's must be in conformity with the adopted Core Strategy.

Land allocations, where we earmark particular areas of land for particular types of development, will be included in a later document called the 'Site Allocations DPD'. The sites chosen will need to follow the decisions taken in the Core Strategy.

Stages of preparation of the Core Strategy

In preparing the Core Strategy, the City Council first developed issues and options as a starting point for discussion and community involvement. The City Council consulted on the "Issues and Options" paper in June/July 2006. This gave the people of Oxford, and others, a first opportunity to shape and influence the Core Strategy. It introduced some key issues relating to the development of Oxford from now until 2026 and asked a number of questions as to how these should be addressed.

The consultation aimed to involve the whole community by sending a questionnaire to each household in Oxford. In addition, specific letters were sent to various organisations and individuals, which included all the statutory stakeholders listed in Oxford's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) together with a wide range of interest groups, developers and agents. All the consultation documents were placed on the City Council's website.



Consultation included twelve staffed exhibitions in locations across Oxford. As well as being distributed on a geographical basis, the venues were also selected with the aim of reaching a range of potential audiences. As a result, 2,205 questionnaires were completed and returned (2,147 leaflets and 58 stakeholders' questionnaires), together with a further 40 letters from stakeholders.

In addition, workshops were held with stakeholders and interested members of the public, where all comments made were logged and added to the questionnaire responses. City Council Officers have also met with key partners and stakeholders individually throughout 2006 in order to gain a better understanding of their needs and aspirations. A summary of the comments received on specific issues can be found in a background document.

Preferred Options Document

Now that we have had a chance to analyse the comments on the first stage, we have produced this "Preferred Options" document. The Preferred Options document takes into account the consultation findings as well as national, regional and local policies, the plans and strategies of other agencies and evidence from a range of studies.

There will be a final stage when comments can be made on the submission document. At the final stage, these comments will be considered by an independent Inspector rather than the City Council. Figure 2 illustrates the main stages in the preparation of the Core Strategy, along with the proposed timescale.

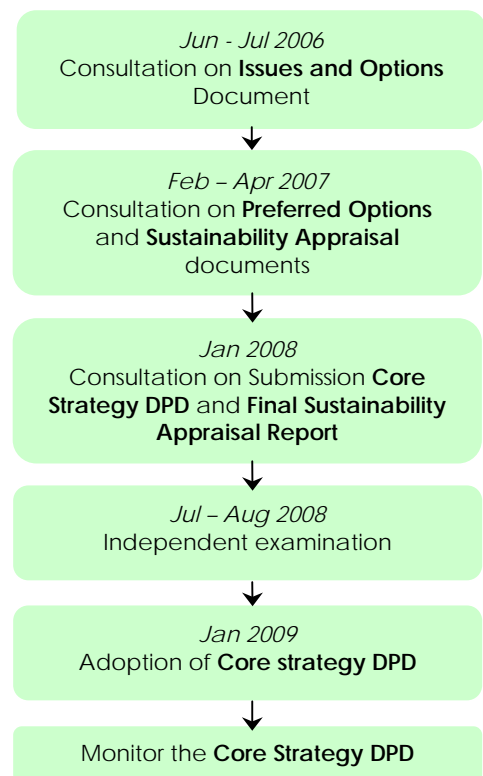


Figure 2 - The stages in the preparation of the Core Strategy

What Happens next?

After the consultation, the responses will be considered alongside some further studies. They will feed into the draft Core Strategy that will be submitted to the Secretary of State in January 2008. At that time there will be another chance for the public and stakeholders to comment on the work produced.

How is the document is structured?

This paper begins with some background information about Oxford (the spatial portrait), and includes a spatial vision and objectives. It then sets out the City Council's proposed spatial strategy and the options for delivering that strategy. The options are grouped into topic-based themes, with a section on strategic locations at the end of the document.

Where a number of options have been identified, the document sets out the pros and cons of each of the alternative options alongside the City Council's preferred option. Where only one option seems appropriate, this has been put forward as a preferred approach. It will still be possible to object to a preferred approach, or to suggest amendments to the approach suggested.

Alongside this paper, we have published a separate questionnaire. The views gathered in this consultation process will help us to prepare the final submission document for the Core Strategy, which will be assessed by an Inspector before being adopted.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

An assessment known as Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the Core Strategy during its production. This considers the social, economic and environmental (including impact upon natural resources) effects of the document, and ensures that it accords with the principles of 'sustainable development'. Each of the preferred options was developed, refined and assessed against sustainability criteria throughout this process.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA/SEA) is available for public consultation alongside this Preferred Options document.

There is also a requirement under the Habitats Regulations to complete an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to demonstrate that the policies in the Core Strategy do not harm European designated sites. In Oxford, these are the Oxford Meadows, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The AA will inform the policies proposed in the submission Core Strategy. The Preferred Options proposed seek to avoid adversely affecting the integrity of the SAC in accordance with the Habitats Regulations.

An Evaluation of Transport Impacts is also being undertaken to assess the implications of the core strategy for Oxford on the trunk road system (the A34 and the M40)

Your views matter

This Preferred Options paper will be consulted on over a six-week period from **Friday 30th March to Friday 11th May 2007**. We want your views on the options we are putting forward.

This period of consultation represents a very important part of the process, as the responses received will help to inform the content of the draft Core Strategy which is likely to be submitted to the Government Office of the South East in January 2008.

The City Council wants to hear your views on the options set out for consultation.

The City Council would like to thank you for taking the time to read and comment on this document.

SPATIAL PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Oxford is not a large City, but it has a unique and world-renowned built heritage. It is one of the most photographed, filmed and written-about cities in the world.

The City has a total area of about 46 sq km (29 sq miles). While parts of the urban area are very densely developed, 52% of the City is actually open space. Some 27% of Oxford is in the Green Belt, with much of this land being flood plain. The historic city parks and nature conservation areas (including a Special Area of Conservation and several sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs)) create pockets and corridors of green within the City boundary.

Oxford is centrally located within England, with easy access to international airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham and Luton), the railway network, and the M40 motorway.

The population of Oxford at 2006 is estimated to be 150,100 and the projected population in 2026 is expected to be approximately 176,100¹. There are approximately 56,000 properties in Oxford.

House prices in Oxford are, on average, 8.8 times greater than annual incomes. This ratio is considerably higher than the South East average. Consequently the average joint attainable mortgage is far lower than the average price of houses. As house buying in the City is out of reach of most households, there is a huge demand for more affordable rented housing in Oxford.

Oxford is a top international tourist destination and attracted almost 8 million visitors in 2001.

The City centre is a regional shopping destination, which performs extremely well and has a low vacancy rate. Demand from retailers to be represented in the City centre is at a high level. Oxford is ranked 6th as a retail centre of regional importance in the South East².

Oxford is a major centre for education, healthcare, bioscience, IT, publishing and the motor industry. It has low unemployment: 1.6%, which is comparable to the South East (1.5%), and the UK (2.4%). However, it experienced the slowest percentage increase in employment out of all the Oxfordshire Districts between 1991 and 2001. Oxford is one of the largest employment centres in the South East with a workforce of around 90,000. It plays an important role in the South East economy, which in turn makes a key contribution to the nations' Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

There is a large, and increasing number of students in Oxford (over 30,000 full time at both Universities). This means that Oxford has a high proportion of 16-29 year olds (32% - twice the national average). Despite having the highest proportion of residents aged 16-74 holding a degree, Oxford also has a higher proportion of people without any qualifications than Oxfordshire, the South East, and England and Wales.

Oxford has a high level of in-commuting, with around half its workforce living outside its boundary. Also, there is relatively little out-commuting, with only 25% of economically active Oxford residents working outside the City. Only 43% of Oxford's workforce travel to work by car, which is the lowest proportion in the entire South East region and amongst the lowest in England and Wales.

As well as a city historically famous for its architecture and Universities, there is another less well-known Oxford, which has pockets of high unemployment, areas of deprivation and a huge need for affordable housing. Some areas of the City experience relatively high crime rates, health deprivation and low levels of educational achievement. For instance, Northfield Brook ward is in the most deprived 10% of wards in England.

¹ Office for National Statistics. 2004 based sub-national population projections.

² Town Centres Future Study (Nov 2004) Research by DTZ on behalf of SEERA

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Background

Oxford faces many development pressures. These include a huge demand for market housing; a pressing need for affordable housing; enabling key employment sectors such as education, healthcare and R&D to continue to flourish; and development needed to maintain the city's role as an important regional centre for retail, leisure and cultural activities.

All of this is set in the context of a scarcity of available land. Development is constrained by Oxford's tight administrative boundaries; the Green Belt which both encircles and extends into the City; extensive areas of flood plain within the river valleys of the Isis and Cherwell; areas of nature conservation importance; and the City's outstanding architectural heritage.

In addition, as indicated in the spatial portrait, there are wide social, economic and environmental disparities between different parts of the City. Some areas of Oxford are amongst the most deprived in England; others are amongst the least deprived. Oxford's cultural diversity and its genuinely cosmopolitan nature are features to be valued and celebrated, but they also bring challenges in terms of building a socially cohesive community, where people from different backgrounds will enjoy similar life opportunities.

Consultation

The Issues and Options paper identified 23 spatial issues, ranging across various topics such as housing, the economy, social exclusion, transport, energy and leisure. It also identified the key overarching issue of development constraints, i.e. a scarcity of land to accommodate an increasing population and economic development.

The majority of respondents to the stakeholders' questionnaire agreed that the issues presented in the consultation paper were the main issues for Oxford, although a variety of other spatial issues were also suggested. Responses to the summary leaflet were wide ranging and reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, all the issues presented in the consultation paper, plus some others.

It is clear from our consultation that the local community strongly values Oxford's heritage, its architectural beauty and its extensive green spaces, and that the community also wishes to see action to resolve traffic congestion and pollution, to improve the quality of the built environment in some areas, and to provide more affordable housing. Whilst there was general support for favouring brownfield over greenfield development, concerns were expressed about the overall effect of infilling and intensification on the character and transport network of some areas of the City.

Community Strategy

The Core Strategy will identify the main priorities that deliver the spatial aspects of the Community Strategy. Oxford's Community Strategy 2004 is based around the five themes of:

- a vibrant and inclusive economy;
- safer communities;
- a better living environment;
- opportunities for life; and
- active and healthy communities.

The Community Strategy is prepared by the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP), which includes key organisations whose actions or services (or both) affect Oxford's quality of life. The OSP has established a list of priorities as it takes forward work on implementing and reviewing the Community Strategy. These priorities are:

- affordable housing;
- inequalities and community cohesion;
- street scene, including cleaner Oxford; and

- City centre revival, including the West End development.
- enterprise in the City and tourism; and
- energy use and climate change.

Research and evidence base

The identification of issues has also been informed by a wide range of published research and evidence, including the following studies; the Housing Requirements Study (2004); the Housing Viability Study (2004); the draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2007); the draft county-wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007); the Employment Land Review (2006); the Retail Needs Study (2004); and the Green Space Study (2005). The draft SHLAA is published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options.

Work is currently underway on updating the Retail Needs Study and on two further pieces of research: the Role of Education and Health Sectors in Oxford's Economy; and the Hotel and Short-Stay Accommodation Study. In addition, we have commissioned a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the whole of Oxford. These studies will be completed in time to inform production of the submission version of the Core Strategy, as well as future Development Plan Documents, such as the Site Allocations DPD.

Key challenges

In order to focus on what is crucial for the future of Oxford, the wide range of issues identified at the Issues and Options stage has been refined into a set of key challenges. These take account of the characteristics of Oxford, consultation findings, the Community Strategy and the evidence base underpinning the Core Strategy. They also form the context for the spatial vision and objectives, and the spatial strategy that follow.

The key challenges are considered to be:

- Adapting to a low carbon society;
- Tackling homelessness and the affordability gap by increasing the supply and choice of housing, especially affordable housing;
- Building on the 'Oxford brand' by enabling key sectors of the economy, including the universities and hospitals, to continue to thrive;
- Reducing inequalities and social exclusion by promoting regeneration and investment in neighbourhoods that suffer from significant deprivation;
- Reducing traffic congestion and pollution;
- Mitigating and adapting in a City that is vulnerable to the threat of flooding;
- Ensuring that Oxford continues to meet the social, cultural and leisure needs of its citizens and those within its wider catchment area;
- Meeting development needs without prejudicing the outstanding quality of the built and natural environment, which makes Oxford such a special place to live, work or visit;
- Ensuring that new development and the public realm is of a quality consistent with Oxford's international reputation.

CORE STRATEGY SPATIAL VISION

The Spatial Vision builds on the Spatial Portrait of Oxford and takes account of existing plans and strategies to set out what kind of city Oxford should be in 2026. From this vision the Core Strategy objectives and Preferred Options will flow. It cannot encompass every aspiration for the future, but concentrates on the key strategic planning aims that could be accomplished within the next twenty years.

Our vision of Oxford is a city that celebrates its unique character, while embracing the changes that are necessary to ensure its continued prosperity in the 21st Century. A city that is proud of its past, but also modern and forward-looking.

Alongside development to meet today's needs comes a responsibility to future generations. Our vision is that Oxford will be at the forefront of innovation to tackle climate change, and that the City will lead the way in minimising the use of natural resources. Oxford's Local Development Framework will seek to ensure that growth and change go hand in hand with the highest standards of environmental protection and management.

The Local Development Framework will aim to promote Oxford's distinctive identity and its many assets. That means conserving and enhancing the city's outstanding heritage and its most prized green spaces, and also supporting carefully managed growth and innovation in areas where Oxford already excels; education, healthcare, scientific research and manufacturing. Tourism will be managed to maximise its benefits to the City.

The transformation of the West End and the expansion of retailing, leisure and cultural activities in the City centre will ensure that Oxford is a vibrant urban centre able to play a leading role within the region. At the same time, we aim to enhance the character and role of district and neighbourhood centres in the City so that local communities can access the essential services they need close to their homes.

Oxford has a major housing shortage, and a key priority will be to provide more affordable and family homes. We aim to ensure that Oxford continues to find innovative ways to reduce the impacts of traffic, and that development is supported by appropriate services and infrastructure. We will seek to improve the public realm and to achieve a standard of architecture and urban design that matches Oxford's worldwide reputation.

A key part of our vision is that Oxford should be a city where everyone has opportunities to achieve a high quality of life, and where all our diverse communities feel safe, are valued, and are able to share in the city's success. The Local Development Framework will seek to promote social inclusion. Development will be planned to bring the maximum benefits to all parts of Oxford, especially areas needing regeneration.

CORE STRATEGY SPATIAL OBJECTIVES

The 17 Core Strategy Spatial Objectives are set out below. These were derived from the Spatial Portrait and Spatial Vision and from comments received at the Issues and Options stage. The Spatial Objectives will lead into the development of Preferred Options for the Core Strategy and each option will show a link to at least one Spatial Objective.

1. Maximise Oxford's contribution to tackling the causes of climate change and to minimise the use of non-renewable resources
2. To provide the development required to meet Oxford's needs, ensuring an appropriate balance of housing and employment growth in the context of other competing land uses
3. Ensure that all new development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure provision and community facilities
4. To promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities in employment, healthcare and education across Oxford
5. Ensure an appropriate mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to meet existing needs and future population growth as far as possible
6. To provide a range of leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities
7. Strengthen and diversify Oxford's economy and provide a range of employment opportunities across the City
8. Promote Oxford as a centre of excellence for higher education, health services and medical and scientific research
9. Maintain and strengthen the local benefits from Oxford's role as a national and international tourist destination
10. Maintain and strengthen the regional role of Oxford city centre as a primary focus for shopping, employment, leisure and cultural activities, with District centres providing a complementary role.
11. Maintain, enhance and promote access to Oxford's rich and diverse natural environment
12. To help protect people and their property from flooding
13. Preserve and enhance Oxford's exceptional historic legacy, important views, setting and the distinctive townscape characteristics of Oxford and its neighbourhoods
14. Ensure that all new development delivers a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm
15. Maximise the reuse of previously developed land and make full and efficient use of all land, having regard to the distinct character of each neighbourhood
16. Ensure that new developments are located in accessible locations to minimise overall travel demand
17. To promote a reduction in car use, minimise the impact of traffic and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport

SPATIAL STRATEGY

Oxford's regional and sub-regional role

Oxford should continue to grow and develop as the main city in its sub-region and as a Regional Hub within the South East. Oxford already has a very significant standing as a world-class University City, the only one in the region. The interaction between the universities, teaching hospitals and research and spin out companies makes a distinctive and essential contribution to the regional and national economy. Oxford is also the principal service, cultural and administrative centre for Oxfordshire.

The potential of Oxford and its sub-region to act as a catalyst for growth and investment has been recognised in a number of ways. Oxford is part of a grouping of nine 'core' cities and towns in the South East Region, and is at the centre of the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region, which is identified as one of the nine 'Diamonds for Growth' in the Regional Economic Strategy. The Government has recently named Oxford as a 'New Growth Point', in recognition of the City's potential for growth, and the fact that we are on the way to delivering more housing by 2016 than the figure in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. The County Council has secured a provisional funding allocation of over £60m from the South East Regional Transport Board to improve strategic road and rail access to Oxford in 2013-2015. All of these factors demonstrate that Oxford is equipped to play its role in the regions' economic future.

Oxford is an inherently sustainable location for housing, as indicated by some of the statistics in the spatial portrait. It is also in a relatively good position to assimilate growth because of its well-established bus and cycle networks, and its social infrastructure made up of extensive retail, health, leisure, cultural and community provision. Dispersing growth away from Oxford results in the need for commuting into the City from surrounding areas, thereby increasing pressures on the transport system, and adding to congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

For these reasons, the City Council will continue to put the case for a review of the Green Belt around Oxford, on the basis that an urban extension to Oxford would be a more sustainable location for new housing and economic growth in Central Oxfordshire than continuing the Oxfordshire Structure Plan's strategy of dispersing much of the growth in the county to the 'county towns'. This is an issue that will be resolved at the regional level, and the City Council is ready to work positively with the County Council and neighbouring districts on a Green Belt review should that be an eventual outcome of the South East Plan process.

Climate change and Oxford's environment

Climate change is an urgent and pressing issue at all spatial levels (global, national, regional and local). It is of direct relevance to Oxford, given that significant areas of the City are vulnerable to the threat of flooding. Climate change is taken very seriously by the City Council, which has implemented a number of initiatives, including adopting a Climate Change Action Plan and establishing a Climate Change Action Team. The City Council is committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 3% year on year, and hopes that this aim will be adopted by other organisations and businesses in Oxford.

The planning system has a particularly important role to play in tackling climate change, both in minimising the impact of human activities on greenhouse gas emissions and in preparing for the potential adverse effects of climate change (e.g. the increased probability of extreme weather events such as floods). The City Council is already leading the way in terms of minimising the use of natural resources in new developments through its adopted Natural Resource Impact Analysis SPD. The Core Strategy will take this forward, not only by promoting low and zero carbon developments, but by ensuring that the twin challenges of mitigating and adapting to climate change are central to the spatial strategy. This means being prepared to pursue bold policies, for instance preventing further residential infilling within existing built-up areas of the City that are at risk of flooding.

Supporting the role of particularly sustainable locations, such as the City centre and District centres, will also help to achieve climate change objectives. The City centre will continue to be the focus for developments which attract a lot of people serving a wide catchment area and its role as a Primary Regional Centre will be

enhanced through the renaissance of the West End quarter. A number of key transport infrastructure improvements will be focused on the West End to support the spatial strategy.

The role of District centres will be supported, and they will be expected to accommodate a greater share of future retail development during the Core Strategy period, given that there will be limited scope available in the City centre following implementation of the Westgate and St Aldates and Queen Street schemes. The District centres are well connected to radial bus routes into the City centre, but priority will be given to improving the network of cross-City public transport links and to improving cycle and pedestrian access to these centres.

Whilst the City Council wishes to promote managed growth and development in Oxford, the exceptional quality of Oxford's built and natural environment will continue to be protected and enhanced. This includes its intrinsic environmental assets, such as the City's irreplaceable historic core and the extensive green wedges which penetrate into the heart of the City from the surrounding countryside. Protection of the flood plain along the river corridors will retain the distinctive physical form of the City, as well as helping to reduce the risk of flooding and providing an invaluable recreational and ecological resource.

Meeting development needs

The existing Local Plan focuses nearly all the development needed up to 2016 on previously developed ('brownfield') land. Using existing brownfield land in this way, and making the most efficient use of land by building at higher densities, helps to protect valuable open space within and around the City. However, depending on the scale, nature and precise location of brownfield developments, they can put more strain on existing infrastructure, such as roads, schools, libraries, health services, water supply and sewerage capacity, as well as adding to traffic congestion in residential areas.

In terms of housing, it will never be possible to meet demand, or even proven need, within Oxford given the scarcity of land and environmental constraints. New housing will continue to be focussed on brownfield land, but given that average densities in Oxford are already amongst the highest in the South East and that there are serious concerns about the number of family homes being converted into flats, it is considered that there is limited scope for further increases in densities outside the City centre. Priority will be given to more affordable housing, and to delivering a broader mix of housing type, size and tenures to promote balanced and stable communities.

In view of the level of housing need and the likelihood that the potential for brownfield redevelopment will decline over the next 20 years, it will be necessary to bring forward some limited residential development on greenfield sites.

Although Oxford's economy has many strengths, a recent Employment Land Study shows that there is a danger of complacency about the City's economic health. To ensure continuing economic success, key sectors of the economy need to be nurtured and developed through a policy of managed growth, whereby existing employment sites are protected and provision is made for a moderate increase in employment. Some employment development will take place in the West End, and through the modernisation and re-development of existing brownfield sites. However, it will also be necessary to bring forward at least one significant area of greenfield land to meet the employment needs that have been identified during the Core Strategy period. The proposed increase in employment will be more than offset by additional housing so as not to exacerbate in-commuting.

The options for accommodating strategic greenfield development, both for residential and employment generating development, are explored in the 'Strategic Locations for Development' section at the end of this document.

Social Inclusion

A key principle of the Core Strategy will be to promote balanced and stable communities and to seek to reduce the inequalities and social polarisation that currently exist within Oxford. Development will be promoted in areas in need of regeneration, with the aims of improving the mix of housing, providing new community facilities and employment opportunities, and improving accessibility to and from these areas.

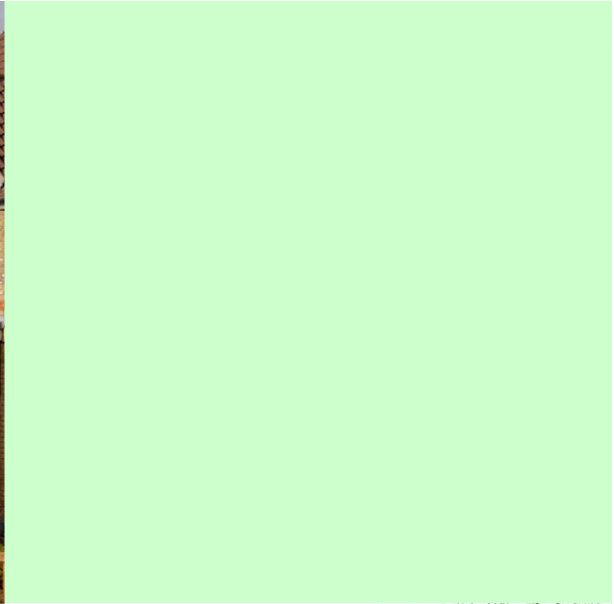
A related aspect of the spatial strategy is to recognise that, even in a fairly compact city like Oxford, many residents will seek to meet their everyday needs within their own communities. Sixteen 'urban villages' or neighbourhoods have been identified within Oxford, which are illustrated on the map at page xxx. Whilst some of these urban villages may be quite small in geographical and population terms, they reflect distinctive communities based on factors such as neighbourhood shopping centres, townscape character and physical features such as main roads. The City Council intends to develop the urban villages concept as a spatial planning tool within the Oxford LDF. This will help to refine the application of planning policy to suit local circumstances, and to achieve an adequate distribution of locally accessible community facilities and open space across the City.

The proposed spatial strategy is illustrated in the key diagram at page xxx.

Key principles for Spatial Strategy

- Oxford will be a key urban centre in the South East region, a Diamond for growth and investment and the main driver of the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Regional economy;
- We will work positively with the County Council and neighbouring authorities to find the most sustainable solutions to the development needs of the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region;
- Mitigating and adapting to climate change will be at the heart of the City Council's planning strategy and will underlie all the policies of the Core Strategy;
- Priority will be given to the provision of more affordable housing and to ensuring that new housing delivers an appropriate mix of housing type, size and tenures, in recognition of Oxford's status as a New Growth Point;
- Managed growth in employment will be promoted;
- The City centre will continue to be a Primary Regional Centre, with its role enhanced by the renaissance of the West End quarter;
- Improvements will be promoted in district centres, and on housing estates in need of regeneration;
- The 'urban villages' concept will be developed to plan for an adequate distribution of community facilities and open space across the City;
- The majority of development will take place on brownfield land, particularly in the early part of the Core Strategy period, but provision will be made for the release of greenfield land to meet Oxford's needs.
- Oxford's environmental assets will be protected, particularly areas designated for nature conservation interest or recreational value, and the City's outstanding built heritage.

[Insert map of urban villages]



Maintaining a
balanced
housing supply



LEVEL OF HOUSING GROWTH AND TIMING OF DELIVERY

Introduction

Far more people want to live in or buy a property in Oxford than are currently able to do so. With an ever increasing population nationally and a growing number of smaller households forming, this puts immense pressure on the housing stock in many areas of the country. The pressure is particularly great in the South East of England, and in attractive and economically dynamic areas like Oxford.

The Core Strategy will determine the level of growth that is most appropriate for Oxford over the next 20 years. This is based upon the targets set by government as well as the specific needs of Oxford as set out in local strategies and policies.

One of the roles of the planning system is to ensure that new homes are provided in the right place at the right time. Presently there is a huge need for housing but it is important to ensure that appropriate infrastructure to support the extra housing is also delivered in parallel.

Year	Housing completions in Oxford	Cumulative Oxford completions total	Structure Plan target	Cumulative Structure Plan target
2001/02	439	439	433	433
2002/03	267	706	433	867
2003/04	578	1,284	433	1,300
2004/05	669	1,953	433	1,733
2005/06	943	2,896	433	2,167

Figure 3 - Housing completions³

housing completions exceeds 550. There are also people who wish to move to Oxford but cannot, as well as a backlog of need for 1,400 dwellings so the actual need is higher. The draft SEP target and the current Structure Plan target is not enough to meet Oxford’s housing needs. The Housing Requirements Study 2004⁶ shows that there is a need for between 1,700 and 1,800 new affordable dwellings per year in Oxford. The amount of affordable housing required to meet the needs of the homeless, those who are unemployed, and those on modest incomes and unable to afford market housing, is greater than the total housing allocation in the Local Plan.

Spatial objective

To provide the development required to meet Oxford’s needs, ensuring an appropriate balance of housing and employment growth in the context of other competing land uses

Policy and guidance

PPS3 says that the planning system should deliver a sufficient quantity of housing taking into account need and demand and seeking to improve choice

The **draft South East Plan (SEP)** requires an annual average of 350 new dwellings in Oxford between 2006 and 2026

The **Oxford Local Plan** and **Oxfordshire Structure Plan** set an annual target of 433 dwellings between 2001 and 2016

The **Housing Requirements Study** concludes that there is a need for between 1,700 and 1,800 affordable dwellings per year

Evidence base

The population of Oxford in 2006 was estimated to be 150,100 and the projected population in 2026 is expected to be approximately 176,100⁴. With the average household size in Oxford being 2.32⁵, this crudely equates to a need for around an extra 11,000 dwellings in Oxford by 2026 (550 per year) to keep pace with future rates of births, deaths and migration.

The draft SEP target for Oxford is only 350 dwellings a year. However, Oxford’s current annual rate of

³ Indicator 1, *Annual Monitoring Report 2006*, Oxford City Council

⁴ Office for National Statistics. 2004 based sub-national population projections. They project forward the 2004 mid year population estimates giving an indication of future trends in population for the next 25 years from 2005 to 2029. This is a trend based projection for household growth not the number of dwellings to be built. Assumptions for future levels of births, deaths and migration are based on observed levels over the previous five years. They show what the population will be if recent trends in these continue. The projections do not take into account any future policy changes that have not yet occurred.

⁵ Office for National Statistics, dataset KS19.

⁶ Oxford’s Housing Requirements Study (April 2004) Fordham Research Ltd

What is the required level of housing growth?

The draft South East Plan (SEP) says that there should be 7,000 new dwellings built in Oxford between 2006 and 2026. This equates to an annual average of 350 dwellings. This is lower than the current annual average set by the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Oxford Local Plan of 433 dwellings for the next 10 years.

Oxford's past rate of housing completions has exceeded targets, and we consider that Oxford will continue to exceed its current target in the future. We consider that due to the extremely high need for affordable housing, the target for Oxford should be much higher than that set out in the draft SEP and the City Council has made representations to the South East of England Regional Assembly (SEERA) on this issue whose responsibility it is to draft the SEP. The City Council is keen that Oxford should accommodate more housing than the target in the draft South East Plan in order to deliver more affordable housing. At present, the SEP is in draft form, and it is expected that the housing targets for Oxford will be amended. The Preferred Options will therefore consider options against their flexibility to adapt to an increase in the SEP target. Aside from the strategic locations discussed later, the Site Allocations DPD will consider other locations for housing development.

Oxford is classed as a 'New Growth Point'. As a result the Government is entering into a long-term partnership with Oxford City Council, recognising the City's potential for growth. Under all the options, there is still a significant gap between those who wish to live in the Oxford sub-region, and the ability to accommodate this level of housing within Oxford's boundaries. The City Council will continue to campaign to have a Strategic Green Belt review of the Oxford sub-region.

How much housing can Oxford accommodate?

The draft Oxford Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (draft Mar 2007) concludes that there is the potential for previously developed land within Oxford to deliver approximately 8,000 dwellings until 2026. This figure includes commitments, small and large site windfalls, sites allocated in the Local Plan and the potential in the West End. It also includes brownfield sites that were suggested to the City Council for development, although it excludes a full map survey of previously developed land which will be completed prior to submission of the Core Strategy and might yield further brownfield sites. Figure 4 shows a housing trajectory for the period 2006-2026⁷ and shows that the City Council can meet its SEP target on brownfield land.

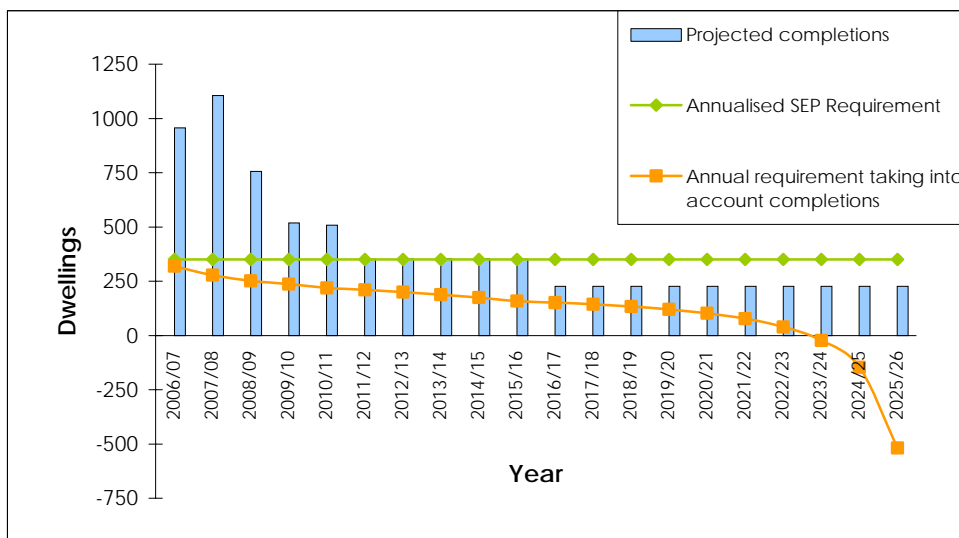


Figure 4: Oxford's housing trajectory, delivering on brownfield sites only and based upon SEP target of 350 dwellings per year

However, the SHLAA shows that there is potential on other land within Oxford to reach a target of at least 11,000 dwellings until 2026. This would require making some hard decisions on which land should be used. The issue of where to accommodate housing is discussed later in the 'Strategic locations for development' section of the Preferred Options (Page 76).

⁷ Figures sourced from Oxford's draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2007 (Oxford City Council) (Open for public consultation at the same time as the Core Strategy Preferred Options)

Level of housing growth	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option - Plan to deliver enough sites to meet the predicted population growth (550 dwellings per year/11,000 dwellings over 20 years)</p>	<p>Will provide more affordable housing than if growth was restricted to the Structure Plan or South East Plan targets</p> <p>Will meet the needs of more households than if growth was restricted to the South East Plan or Structure Plan targets</p> <p>Potential for larger developments to create new sustainable communities including local services and facilities rather than piecemeal development.</p>	<p>Would require limited development on some non- residential sites, for example: employment sites, greenfield sites, safeguarded land or Green Belt</p> <p>Would be likely to increase pressures for intensification in existing built-up areas, with consequential impacts on townscape character and the transport network</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 – Plan to deliver enough sites to exceed the predicted population growth (greater than 550 dwellings per year/11,000 dwellings over 20 years)</p>	<p>Will provide more affordable housing than if growth was restricted to the Structure Plan or South East Plan targets</p> <p>Will meet the needs of more households than if growth was restricted to the South East Plan or Structure Plan targets</p> <p>Potential for larger developments to create new sustainable communities including local services and facilities rather than piecemeal development</p>	<p>Would require significant development on some non-residential sites, for example: employment sites, greenfield sites, safeguarded land or Green Belt</p> <p>Would be likely to significantly increase pressures for intensification in existing built-up areas, with potentially serious consequential impacts on townscape character and the transport network</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 - Plan to deliver enough sites to exceed the South East Plan, by continuing to meet the annual target in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan/ Oxford Local Plan (433 dwellings per year/8,660 dwellings over 20 years)</p>	<p>Will provide slightly more affordable housing than if growth was restricted to the South East Plan target</p> <p>Will meet the needs of slightly more households than if growth was restricted to the South East Plan target</p> <p>Fewer difficult decisions about land would be taken compared with Preferred Option</p>	<p>Restricting delivery to the target will result in the delivery of much less affordable housing than is required</p> <p>Artificial restriction of growth does not ensure maximum provision of housing to help meet the needs of the growing population</p>
<p>Alternative option 3 - Plan to deliver enough sites only to meet the housing target as set out in the draft South East Plan (350 dwellings per year/7,000 dwellings over 20 years)</p>	<p>Minimal amount of land required and therefore minimal impact on the environment and traffic congestion</p> <p>Less likely that greenfield land will be needed</p> <p>Less pressures for intensification in existing built-up areas</p>	<p>Restricting delivery to the target will result in the delivery of much less affordable housing than is required;</p> <p>Artificial restriction of growth does not ensure maximum provision of housing to help meet the needs of the growing population;</p> <p>Final version of SEP may be higher than 350 a year</p>

TIMING OF HOUSING DELIVERY

The Plan, Monitor and Manage (PMM) approach seeks to ensure that housing that is delivered is adequately supported by the appropriate infrastructure such as roads, local services and facilities. PPS3 says that Local Planning Authorities should develop policies and implementation strategies to ensure that sufficient, suitable land is available to achieve their housing delivery objectives. If at any time there is a serious period when housing development is not coming forward, the PMM approach allows for the bringing forward of sites in order to manage delivery. However, the City Council is keen to deliver as much affordable housing as possible, when there is opportunity to do so, as this helps people in housing need find a place to live as quickly as possible. The two options below relate to whether housing delivery is managed or housing is delivered as soon as possible.

Timing of housing delivery	Pros	Cons
Alternative option 1 – Allow housing to be delivered on identified sites as soon as the sites become available during the Core Strategy period	<p>Ensures market and affordable housing constructed and ready for occupation as soon as possible</p> <p>Some households on housing register waiting list will find accommodation sooner</p> <p>Does not overly restrict new housing from being developed when opportunities arise</p>	<p>Infrastructure provision is generally keeping pace with new housing development in Oxford but there is potential for it to fall behind if significant housing is delivered early on in the beginning of the Core Strategy period</p> <p>Would be unlikely to lead to the sustainable and balanced level of housing growth advocated in PPS3</p>
Alternative option 2 – Ensure that housing supply on identified sites is managed across the Core Strategy period	<p>Helps to ensure new infrastructure provision keeps pace with new housing, and thereby to husband land supply</p> <p>If household needs and sizes change, there is opportunity to deliver housing that responds to changing needs across the Plan period</p>	<p>Housing could be delayed unnecessarily</p> <p>Some households on the housing register waiting list would have a longer wait</p>

MIX OF HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES

Introduction

Different households require different types and sizes of housing so it is important to ensure that an appropriate mix of housing is delivered to meet everyone's need.

Due to the high price of housing in Oxford, households that can afford to purchase a house could rarely afford a house larger than their actual need. Household sizes are reducing which would suggest a need for a greater number of smaller dwellings. However, there is concern that there is a continuing loss of family housing (3 or more bedrooms) available in Oxford, and that new build housing is mainly 1 and 2 bed small units.

Evidence base - what is an appropriate mix?

It is a difficult task to determine the most appropriate mix for Oxford. Due to the constrained nature of the City centre and its highly sustainable location, it is more appropriate to recognise the City centre as an area where higher densities, and therefore smaller dwellings, are generally more appropriate.

Evidence from the Census⁸ shows that 1 and 2 person households make up 64.5% of the population of Oxford; 3 and 4 person households make up 28% and 5+ person households make up 7.5% of the population of Oxford. Whilst this data is 5 years old, it is unlikely that the proportions would have altered significantly over the last 5 years. The City Council is currently producing a Supplementary Planning Document on the Balance of Dwellings which will aim to provide details on the most appropriate mix of dwellings sizes for Oxford, as well as information on the loss of family housing.

The preferred approach set out below is considered most appropriate for Oxford for the following reasons:

- Higher density housing developments are historically generally more common in the City centre. Local Planning Authorities should make the most efficient use of land, especially in sustainable areas. The City centre has excellent public transport-links and sites here would be suitable for some car free development, thus providing opportunities to deliver higher density developments. The District centres also have generally good accessibility by public transport, and are suitable locations for higher density developments.
- By recognising that the City centre and District centres will inevitably yield smaller dwellings and taking this into account when trying to deliver a range of dwellings sizes across Oxford, this gives opportunities to ensure that out of centre sites deliver more family sized dwellings.

Spatial objective

Ensure an appropriate mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to meet existing needs and future population growth as far as possible

Policy and guidance

PPS3: The planning system should deliver a mix of housing. Local Authorities should plan for a mix of housing, particularly in terms of tenure and price and a mix of different households such as families with children, single person households and older people

The draft South East Plan (SEP): says that it is essential that the housing that is provided is appropriate to the needs of the community, which means that a range of types, sizes and tenures of housing will be required, reflecting the differing requirements and circumstances of different types of households

Mix of housing

Preferred approach :

Ensure that a balanced mix of housing is provided across Oxford, while the City centre and the District centres will be more appropriate for higher density/smaller units. Mix of housing covers issues such as tenure and price for a range of households such as families with children, single people and older people. Further details would be provided in future DPDs and SPDs

⁸ Office for National Statistics, dataset UV51 (Number of People Living in Households), 2001

DELIVERING NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING THAT MEETS LOCAL NEED

Spatial objective

Ensure an appropriate mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to meet existing needs and future population growth as far

Introduction

Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate (shared ownership) housing provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing is important in prescribing the nature of the development, and particularly its mix of housing tenures. Affordable housing is a key priority for Oxford City Council. One of the strategic priorities in the Oxford Plan is to deliver more housing in Oxford including more affordable housing⁹. Oxford's Housing Strategy 2005-2008¹⁰ and Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008¹¹ seek to increase the supply of affordable housing and an objective of the Oxford Community Strategy¹² is to improve the supply of affordable housing.

Evidence base - what is the local need for affordable housing?

House prices in Oxford are, on average, 8.8 times greater than annual incomes¹³. This is significantly higher than the average across the South East. Much more affordable housing is needed in Oxford than can ever be provided. There is a need for between 1,700 and 1,800 affordable homes every year¹⁴ but Oxford does not have the capacity to deliver this amount of affordable housing. Over the past 5 years, an average of only 20%¹⁵ of all dwellings completed were affordable. To ensure that there are no wasted opportunities, we must deliver affordable housing that is of the right size, type, tenure, and is actually affordable to those households who need it.

The local authorities of Oxfordshire are currently undertaking a joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). It aims to enable the City Council to understand the nature and level of both housing demand and need within Oxford, the Oxford Sub-region, and Oxfordshire as a whole.

Key issues

There are three ways to increase the amount of affordable housing being delivered in Oxford. The first would be to increase the overall target for all housing. The City Council seeks to ensure that the necessary proportion of affordable housing is secured on all qualifying residential sites so the more land that is available for housing, the more affordable housing will be delivered. Options regarding the housing target are dealt with on page 23.

The second method would be to increase the proportion of affordable housing from qualifying sites. The adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 policies require developments above a certain threshold to provide generally a minimum of 50% affordable housing. In considering the percentage of affordable housing required on qualifying sites we need to ensure that a balanced mix of tenures are provided, and that sites remain viable. It is generally considered that there is little scope to go above 50% and still maintain a sustainable mix of housing tenures, and also for sites to remain viable.

The third method would be to reduce the threshold for sites that would be expected to provide affordable housing. The adopted Local Plan sets the threshold at 10 or more dwellings or a residential site of 0.25ha or greater. A lower threshold would increase the number of sites providing affordable housing, and hence the overall quantum. However, there may be concerns regarding viability. It is considered that this issue that should be reviewed in a future Housing DPD.

⁹ Oxford Plan 2006-2009 (July 2006) Oxford City Council

¹⁰ Oxford's Housing Strategy 2005-2008, Oxford City Council

¹¹ Oxford's Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008, Oxford City Council

¹² Oxford's Community Strategy (2004), Oxford Strategic Partnership

¹³ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, Table 7.7 (2005) ONS and Table 586 Housing market: median house prices (2005) DCLG, based on Land Registry Data

¹⁴ Oxford's Housing Requirement's Study (April 2004) Fordham Research Ltd

¹⁵ Page 18, Oxford's Annual Monitoring Report (2006) Oxford City Council

Another method is to require a proportion of the total floorspace of the residential development to be affordable. This would give the City Council more scope to determine the size of affordable dwellings, and should deliver more family sized affordable dwellings. However, with only a specified proportion of the floorspace given over to affordable housing, fewer affordable dwellings would be delivered overall because fewer larger dwellings could be accommodated in the affordable floorspace quota than smaller dwellings.

Reducing the proportion of affordable housing is a popular option for developers as it improves viability and might encourage more sites to come forward for development. This option removes the shared ownership element which would have assisted households in the middle group (between those qualifying for affordable housing and those able to afford property in the open market).

Affordable housing from residential development	Pros	Cons
Preferred option - Continue to implement existing policies on the provision of affordable housing as set out in the Local Plan and SPD (residential developments on qualifying sites should provide 50% affordable housing on site)	<p>Developers and landowners know what is expected from a development and it will not be a step change in provision</p> <p>Delivers a balanced mix of housing on each site</p>	Current rates of affordable housing delivery do not come close to meeting need
Alternative option 1 - Increase the proportion of affordable housing required from residential development (e.g. 60%)	More affordable housing will be delivered on sites that are released for development meeting the needs of more households in housing need	<p>Fewer sites may get released for development due to reduced land values</p> <p>Contributions towards other planning obligations may need to be reduced in order to make development viable</p>
Alternative option 2 - reduce the proportion of affordable housing required from residential development (e.g., to 40% but to be all social rented)	May encourage a greater number of landowners to release sites for housing	<p>Would provide housing for fewer households in housing need on quality sites</p> <p>Would remove entirely shared ownership housing</p>
Alternative option 3 - Require 50% of residential floorspace as affordable rather than 50% of all dwellings	The City Council would have more control on the size of affordable housing and would potentially deliver more family sized affordable dwellings delivered in line with the City Council's aspiration to support balanced communities	Overall number of affordable dwellings would be likely to reduce.

“Key Workers”

Oxford is home to a large number of public sector employers who employ “key workers”; such as the NHS Trusts, police and fire service and there is concern from these and other local employers that they have recruitment and retention difficulties due to the high cost of housing in Oxford. At present Oxford uses the definition as set out by the Regional Housing Board but the Housing Corporation allows for local areas to define who constitutes a key worker, which Oxford is keen to do. A Housing DPD would be the most appropriate place to discuss the issue of affordability, need and delivery mechanisms of key worker housing and what the local definition of key workers should be.

Affordable Housing from Commercial Development

Many commercial developments employ a wide range of employees and inevitably some of these will be on low incomes and in housing need. The current Local Plan policy requires a contribution towards affordable

housing provision on-site or financial or other contributions at a level that is appropriate to the scale and kind of the development. It is considered that this approach should continue into the Core Strategy.

Affordable housing from commercial development

Preferred approach:

Continue to implement existing policies on the provision of affordable housing from commercial development as set out in the Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD. Where a need for affordable housing is directly related to a commercial development, the City Council will seek a financial or other contribution appropriate to the scale and kind of the development.

The policy is applied to all commercial developments. However, it is not applied to retail developments or non-profit making public sector projects, such as those in education or health sectors.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Introduction

Students who live outside of university-provided accommodation contribute to the pressure on the housing market. One way of easing the pressure is to provide more purpose-built accommodation for students which can deliver higher densities of occupation than market housing. Students living in the private rental market tend to house-share in family sized dwellings so increasing the amount of purpose built student accommodation should help to release more housing onto the private market for families to rent or buy.

Evidence base

Currently the policies in the Oxford Local Plan require there to be no more than 3,000 students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) at each university (6,000 total) living outside university-provided accommodation from 2008. The University of Oxford is planning to reduce the growth rate in both undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers from the recent elevated levels and to 'plateau out' at 0% growth by 2009-10. Oxford Brookes University plans an increase in student numbers of between 1 to 2% a year.

Key issues

Given the shortage of general housing in Oxford it is crucial that all increases in student numbers (both undergraduate and postgraduate) are matched at least by an equivalent increase in student accommodation. Whilst some students will choose to live outside of provided accommodation, new student accommodation must be of good design and have modern facilities in order to be attractive to students.

Reducing the number of students living outside University provided accommodation from the 3,000 limit in 2008 to a lower level, perhaps 2,500 in 2016 and 2,000 by 2026 at each university would require the allocation of a significant amount of land for student accommodation, probably around seven hectares which would need to be considered in the Site Allocations DPD. This would free up a significant amount of general housing although there may be concerns that not all students would choose to live in purpose built accommodation, particularly postgraduates. This is particularly relevant at the University of Oxford, where most of its students who live outside provided accommodation are postgraduates. Another possibility would be to have separate targets for undergraduate and postgraduate students. If there is support for this at preferred options stage we will carry out further research before submission to decide what level of student accommodation would be appropriate for each group.

Student accommodation provision	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option – Continue to require all increases in academic floorspace to be matched by a corresponding increase in purpose built accommodation equivalent to the increase in student numbers</p> <p>Also require a progressive reduction in the number of students living outside university provided accommodation to 2,500 at each university in 2016 and 2,000 by 2026, potentially providing separate targets for undergraduates and postgraduates.</p>	<p>Does not increase the pressure on Oxford's housing market from the current situation</p> <p>By 2026 2,000 fewer students would be living in ordinary residential accommodation, than is currently permitted under Local Plan policies</p> <p>Student accommodation can be provided at significantly higher densities compared to general housing</p>	<p>Requires a significant area of land to be developed for student accommodation</p> <p>The targets are ambitious. The two universities might find them onerous to comply with</p> <p>Might be difficult to persuade sufficient students to live in the accommodation</p> <p>4,000 students would still be living in ordinary residential accommodation</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 - Continue to require all increases in academic floorspace to be matched by a corresponding increase in purpose built accommodation equivalent to the increase in student numbers</p>	<p>Does not increase the pressure on Oxford's housing market from the current situation</p> <p>Student accommodation can be provided at significantly higher densities compared to general housing</p>	<p>Does nothing to reduce numbers of students living in general housing</p> <p>6,000 students would still be living in ordinary residential accommodation</p>

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

Background

Many gypsies and travellers wish to find and buy their own sites to develop and manage. An increase in the number of approved private sites may also release pitches on local authority sites for gypsies and travellers most in need of public provision. A more settled existence can prove beneficial to some gypsies and travellers in terms of access to health and education services, and employment, and can contribute to greater integration and social inclusion within local communities.

Evidence base

An assessment¹⁶ suggests that there are approximately 1,200 Gypsy and Traveller households currently living in the Thames Valley region. As a result of existing, unmet accommodation need, combined with the formation of new households, there is an indicative need for 187 additional, permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches across the Thames Valley by 2011.

There are currently no authorised Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites in Oxford, although two sites are located just outside the City (at Redbridge Hollow and Sandford-on-Thames). The number of unauthorised caravans in Oxford has tended to be relatively low. The assessment suggested a need for five permanent pitches in Oxford.

The accommodation study pointed out that there is a strong preference amongst many Gypsy and Traveller households to live alongside other members of their family, and a majority of those surveyed expressed a wish to stay in the same area, often on the same site so it is therefore difficult to assess whether provision of additional permanent pitches in the area should be in Oxford itself, or would be better provided as extensions to existing, established sites. Nevertheless, it is clear from Government guidance that fair and reasonable provision should be made for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Core Strategy, through criteria based policies. Whether specific sites are allocated to provide Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Oxford will be considered in the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD. The need for additional transit sites, which provide temporary stopping places for the traveller and gypsy communities, has not been assessed and is therefore not known.

Spatial objective

Ensure an appropriate mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to meet existing needs and future population growth as far as possible

Policy and guidance

Circular 01/2006: stresses importance creating sustainable, respectful and inclusive communities, whilst increasing significantly the number of Gypsy and Traveller sites, based on regional and sub-regional assessments

PPS3: local authorities should plan for a mix of housing types, including the need to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsy and traveller accommodation

Preferred approach

The Core Strategy will set out a criteria based policy on the location of Gypsy and Traveller sites and pitches. Criteria will require that proposals:

- make efficient use of land without overcrowding;
- respect areas of high landscape, conservation or ecological value, and not compromise the purpose or function of the Green Belt;
- are accessible to local shops, services, schools and healthcare facilities on foot, by bicycle and by public transport;
- are acceptable in respect of vehicular access, parking and services;
- are not within the flood plain, unless justified by a flood risk assessment; and
- will not result in unacceptable levels of nuisance.

The policy will form a framework for any site allocations for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation deemed necessary through the Site Allocations DPD

¹⁶ Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment for the Thames Valley Region (2006), Tribal Consulting. Commissioned by the Association of Councils of the Thames Valley Region (ACTVaR)

Travelling Showpeople

The City Council recognises there may be a regional need for permanent sites to accommodate travelling showpeople. However, as the nature and needs of such development is very specific, we do not propose to set out a spatial policy in the Core Strategy for this type of development. If a need is identified, the issue could more appropriately be addressed in preparing the forthcoming Site Allocations DPD.

Boat Dwellers' Accommodation

Houseboats in Oxford provide a small number of permanent residences. Boat dwellers are recognised as an important part of Oxford's social and cultural heritage. Opportunities for additional moorings are, however, limited. It is therefore not proposed to set out a spatial policy in the Core Strategy for this type of development. Saved Policy HS.17 in the Oxford Local Plan sets out the criteria upon which residential mooring proposals will be judged. Potentially suitable sites for residential moorings could be identified in preparing the forthcoming Site Allocations DPD.



ECONOMY

Introduction

Oxford's economy comprises key employment uses within the traditional definition, principally Class B uses (offices, business, light and general industrial) together with those 'non' employment uses in key sectors, such as education, health, retail and tourism.

Employment growth in Oxford has been contained. There is a shortage of land and competition from a range of uses. Oxford has therefore had to recycle existing employment land for new uses over many years. Whilst there are examples of recent successes, e.g. BMW and the Oxford Business Park, many former employment sites have been lost and redeveloped for housing.

Oxford is an important centre for higher education, health services, high-tech, and medical scientific research. The City benefits from the 'cluster effect' (spatial grouping) of these uses together with the network of associated support businesses. Oxford, together with the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region, is identified as a 'Diamond for growth' in the Regional Economic Strategy.

The balance between all forms of employment and housing growth is key to ensuring a prosperous and healthy economy and an adequate supply of housing available for the local workforce. The level of unemployment in Oxford is low by comparison to national levels, but there are significant pockets of deprivation.

Research and evidence base

The Economic Study of Oxford¹⁷ assessed a range of economic growth scenarios. The preferred approach was 'managed economic growth' which now forms the basis of Oxford's Economic Development Strategy.

Oxford's Employment Land Study 2021¹⁸ assessed the supply and demand for employment space in Oxford. The overall approach reflected national aims for sustainable patterns of development, including making sufficient land available and contributing to sustainable economic development, ensuring efficient use of resources and providing good access to jobs for all. It highlighted the strength of Oxford's economy as its world class entrepreneurial universities and hospitals and internationally known research base and "brand"; its cluster of biomedical and science based industries, with a good supply of Research and Development premises and local support network; and a highly-skilled workforce. A complementary study aims to look specifically at the important contribution made by education, health and retail sectors to Oxford's economy.

Key Issues

Oxford is a centre for medical and scientific research, healthcare and higher education. However the shortage of land and competition from other land uses could restrict further growth. The limited land available for employment and the high house prices could impact on Oxford's economy. The appropriate balance between employment and housing growth is key to a prosperous economy. Employment growth should be directed to meeting the needs of the key sectors. A range of sites and premises need to be protected to promote diversity in the local economy. Regeneration and modernisation should play an important role in providing more job opportunities for the local workforce. The creation of prosperity and building on the strength of Oxford's economy needs to benefit the local workforce and provide more employment opportunities for residents.

Spatial objectives

Strengthen and diversify Oxford's economy and provide a range of job opportunities across the city

Promote Oxford as a centre of excellence for higher education, health services and medical and scientific research

Policy and guidance

PPS1: promote a strong, stable economy that brings jobs and prosperity for all

Draft South East Plan: promote regional and local priorities for economic development

Regional Economic Strategy (RES): Oxford and Central Oxfordshire identified as a 'Diamond for growth.'

Community Strategy: create a vibrant and inclusive economy

¹⁷ Economic Study of Oxford (July 2004) SQW

¹⁸ Oxford's Employment Land Study 2021 (March 2006) Nathaniel Lichfield

Building on Oxford's economic strengths

Preferred approach:

To recognise Oxford's economic strengths in the fields of science and technology, education, biotech and spin-off companies from the Universities and hospitals. Provide the supporting infrastructure, including space, for the cluster of business activities necessary to support the managed growth of these key sectors.

Protecting Oxford's Employment sites

Preferred approach:

To protect key employment sites, which add to the diversity of the employment base, and allow regeneration and modernisation for a broad range of employment uses, particularly those related to Oxford's key sectors

Appropriate economic growth	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option - 'managed growth' (allocate one reserve site 17.5 ha plus West End 2ha, protect and modernise existing sites, new jobs created 4,500)</p>	<p>Recognises Oxford's role as a 'Diamond for Growth' in the context of its sub-regional setting and land constraints</p> <p>Provides a minimal increase in land, allowing for limited growth in key sectors</p> <p>Protects and modernises existing sites to provide an adequate range and supply of land and premises</p> <p>Promotes diversity and more job opportunities particularly in key sectors</p> <p>Maintains competitiveness and sustainable prosperity for Oxford's economy</p>	<p>Provides only the minimal land supply for long term needs</p> <p>Requires the release of one area of Safeguarded Land (e.g. Peartree)</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 - minimal growth (no new allocations, protect and modernise existing key sites, limited amount in West End, new jobs 1,000)</p>	<p>Allows new allocated sites to be used for other uses i.e., residential</p> <p>Focuses future employment investment and modernisation on existing key sites</p>	<p>Constrains future economic growth;</p> <p>Fails to meet economic development strategies</p> <p>Provides no additional land supply for future expansion and long term growth of key employment sectors</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 - medium growth (allocates one reserve site and urban extension 37.5 ha plus West End, protect and modernise existing sites)</p>	<p>Pro-active approach to long term growth, providing more flexibility</p> <p>Provides a more significant increase in land for Business Park and extension to Science Park</p> <p>Offers a greater diversity of premises and in the range of job opportunities</p>	<p>Difficult to deliver since the urban extension is outside the City's boundaries</p> <p>Would need to be subject to a Green Belt Review</p> <p>Requires the release of one area of Safeguarded Land (e.g. Peartree)</p>
<p>Alternative option 3 - 'higher growth' (allocated two reserve sites and urban extension 57.5 ha plus West End, protect and modernise existing sites, new jobs created 12,500)</p>	<p>Assumes higher growth for Oxford than predicted in South East Plan</p> <p>Provides the most significant increase in land supply with scope for Business Park, Science Park extension and opportunities for relocation</p> <p>Promotes the greatest diversity and level of job opportunities</p> <p>Offers major potential for creating prosperity and promoting Oxford's economy</p>	<p>Difficult to deliver since the urban extension is outside the City's boundaries would need to be subject to a Green Belt Review</p> <p>Requires the release of two areas of Safeguarded Land (eg. Peartree and Barton)</p> <p>Reduces the opportunities for accommodating other uses, such as residential</p>

TOURISM

Tourism is critical to Oxford's economy. The City has an international reputation, and almost 8 million visitors came to Oxford in 2001¹⁹. A significant proportion (6.4 million) of these however are day visitors, as opposed to longer overnight stays. Tourism development is aimed at encouraging tourists to stay longer and spend more. Clearly tourism brings its own problems, and it is important to ensure that the adverse effects are minimised, especially those linked to transport.

Spatial objective

Maintain and strengthen the local, national and international role of Oxford as a tourist destination

The Preferred approach is to encourage 'sustainable' tourism growth. This recognises the contribution that tourism makes to Oxford's economy, its role in providing employment and in meeting the needs of visitors, workers and residents.

Local economic development strategies seek to realise the potential of the City in a managed way that reflects Oxford's historic legacy. The strategic spatial approach recognises Oxford's role as a gateway to the Cotswolds. It aims to protect, diversify and add to the range of short-stay accommodation in Oxford to encourage longer stays. Improvements to the quality of existing attractions will be encouraged, together with new attractions, which add to diversity in Oxford. A study is currently being undertaken to assess the supply and demand for hotel and short stay accommodation in Oxford. It is due for completion in March 2007.

The preferred locations for new attractions would be within the City centre and in particular through the positive contribution such uses make towards regeneration, such as Oxford's West End area. There is, for example, a desire for a new Conference centre/Concert Hall in Oxford, which together with a new 4/5 star hotel should ideally be situated within the West End Area. There is also interest in a new Science Centre and a Story Museum.

Sustainable tourism growth

Preferred approach:

Promote sustainable tourism by encouraging longer stays and greater spend in Oxford by providing and adding to the quality of existing tourist attractions and by protecting and diversifying the range and amount of short-stay accommodation. Promote strategic spatial links with the Cotswolds emphasising Oxford's role as a gateway

¹⁹ Tourism Strategy (2003-2008) Oxford Inspires

RETAIL

Introduction

Oxford City centre is a regional centre for retail as well as a district centre for the local population. Oxford needs to provide additional retail floorspace to prevent decline in its regional role.

A key element of maintaining the vitality and viability of the City and District centres is to define the future role and function of these centres. Whilst retail development underpins future investment, these centres will provide both an important economic and social focus.

There are a number of key drivers for change which may significantly impact on future retail provision in Oxford. This could include the effect of internet shopping; shopping as more of a 'social experience'; and the impact of any improvements to the Westgate shopping centre on existing provision in the City centre. These possible future changes may lead to pressure to review the future mix of uses within the City and District centres in future DPDs.

Research and evidence base

The Town Centres Future study²⁰ analysed the network and relationship between centres in the South East. Oxford is ranked 6th as a retail centre of regional importance. Oxford's Retail Needs Study²¹ (RNS) showed the City centre to be trading at a high level, partly due to the lack of new floorspace provision. It also identified a need for significant additional non-food (comparison) floorspace of between 31,000 and 36,500 m² by 2011. Oxford is well provided for in terms of existing food stores, and therefore the need for additional floorspace for food (convenience) goods was considered to be low, amounting to only 1,400 m² by 2011.

An update of the Retail Needs Study is currently being undertaken which will forecast the need for future floorspace for non-food and food provision to 2016. Due to the limitations of long term forecasting, only broad indications for 2026 can be provided at this stage. This study is being undertaken at the moment, and its findings will inform the Core Strategy submission document.

Key Issues

The City centre is in high demand from retailers, but only limited floorspace is available. The principal new opportunities are the regeneration of the Westgate shopping centre and the St Aldates/Queen Street redevelopment proposal. Both schemes are identified in the adopted Oxford Local Plan.

The District centres provide a complementary role as part of Oxford's established retail hierarchy, serving the local population. The existing four established centres ensure a sustainable focus and pattern for development. Each centre has its own distinctive character and mix of uses. The size and nature of the individual centres is different and is reflected in their capacity for accommodating further growth.

The adopted Local Plan also identifies a regeneration zone in the heart of Blackbird Leys. This area should now become a new District centre for the focus of all social and economic development in the area. This is considered further in the strategic locations section. The Local Plan considers there is unlikely to be a need for further out-of-centre retail development. This is still considered to be the case, especially if Blackbird Leys becomes a fifth district centre. The redevelopment of the Westgate Centre will meet most of the identified

Spatial objective

Maintain and strengthen the regional role of Oxford City centre as a primary focus for shopping, employment, leisure and cultural activities, with District centres providing a complimentary role

Policy and guidance

PPS6: appropriate scale, vitality and viability of town centers

Draft South East Plan: identifies a network of town centres and classes Oxford as a primary regional centre

Structure Plan: supports development that maintains and enhances sub-regional role

Community Strategy: promotes a viable and inclusive economy

²⁰ Town Centres Future Study (Nov 2004) Research by DTZ on behalf of SEERA

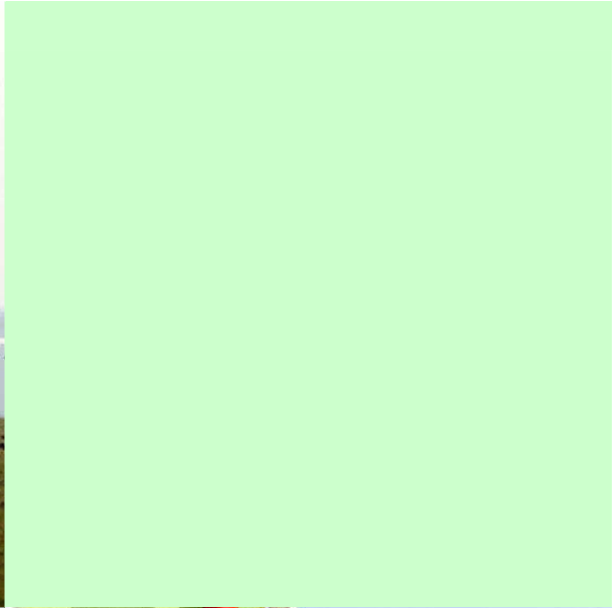
²¹ Oxford's Retail Needs Study (Feb 2004) Roger Tym and Partners

need for comparison goods to 2013, whilst smaller developments currently in the pipeline will meet the need for convenience floorspace to 2011. However, there is likely to be further retail need up to 2016, and beyond.

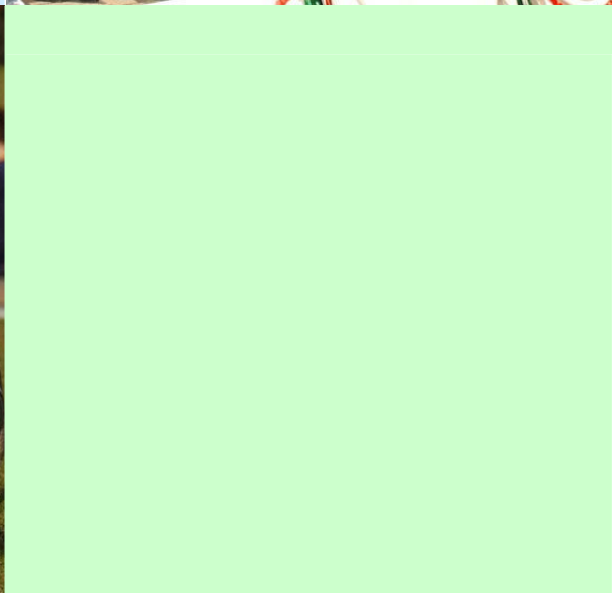
Whilst all District centres performed well, the Cowley centre / Templar's Square was considered to be the best performing centre, with the greatest floorspace, largest proportion of retail uses, and a diverse range and type of units. This centre is well served by public transport but also has three multi-storey car parks together with a large open surface car park. As such it draws shoppers from a larger catchment area, serving Oxford as a whole, whereas the other district centres principally serve the local residential population. Cowley centre / Templar's Square is therefore considered to be a Primary District centre.

The other established District centres in Summertown, Headington and Cowley Road provide an important focus for local facilities and services. Their position within the retail hierarchy will continue to offer opportunities to enhance and strengthen their role. The distinctive characteristics of each centre should be promoted and there is clearly scope for making significant improvements to the public realm and shopping environment to make the centres more attractive.

Retail	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option - Oxford's retail hierarchy will be defined as follows. Development should be of an appropriate scale in relation to the role and function of each centre:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First - City centre • Second - Primary district centre (Cowley centre/Templar's Square); • Third - Secondary district centres (Summertown, Headington, Cowley Road and new District centre at Blackbird Leys); • Fourth - edge-of-centre locations; and • Fifth - Neighbourhood shopping centres 	<p>Seeks to maintain and enhance the important role of the City and District centres</p> <p>Recognises importance of local circumstances and promotes development in those district centres which are best capable to accommodate additional growth</p> <p>Resists inappropriate development in out-of-centre locations</p> <p>Provides the framework for promoting the appropriate mix of uses within existing centres</p>	<p>Does potentially divert retail investment from nearby district centres such as Cowley Centre/Templar's Square or Cowley Road</p> <p>Does not treat all district centres on an equal basis</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 - As Preferred option, but treat all district centres the same</p>	<p>Retains and adds to the established retail hierarchy</p> <p>Directs investment on an equal basis between the identified centres;</p>	<p>Does not recognise the individual characteristics of each centre, and potential opportunities available</p> <p>Increases risk of out of centre development</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 - As Preferred option, but omit new district centre at Blackbird Leys</p>	<p>Recognises characteristics of the existing individual district centres</p> <p>Does not potentially divert retail investment from nearby district centres such as Cowley Centre/Templar's Square or Cowley Road</p>	<p>Does not strengthen network of district centres and therefore increases risk of out-of-centre development</p> <p>Fails to recognise the positive benefits of identifying Blackbird Leys as a new centre which would act as a catalyst for investment and regeneration</p>



Creating safe,
active and healthy
communities



COMMUNITY SAFETY

Introduction

Community safety is a crucial aspect of the quality of life of every community. It relates to crime and the fear of crime, and also to the creation of safer and friendlier environments within communities through good design and integration with the surroundings.

Research and evidence base

In general people feel relatively safe in Oxford. 96.6% of people in 2004/05 feel safe walking during the day. After dark, people feel less safe, with only 71.2% in 2004/05 feeling safe walking on the streets at night²².

Considerable progress has been made in reducing crime levels in recent years, e.g. in relation to burglary and car crime. However, Oxford has a relatively high percentage of crimes committed per 1,000 of the population compared with the average for the region and UK. A majority of Oxford's residents think that vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles (52.8%), and people using or dealing with drugs (59.6%), are problems in their local area²³.

Key issue

The Oxford Safer Communities Partnership establishes an overall strategy and targets for Oxford in terms of crime reduction and prevention. The partnership includes Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police, and Oxford City Primary Care Trust, amongst others.

The Area Action Plans prepared by the six Area Committees also establish specific actions and measures for each of the areas in terms of community safety.

Spatial objective

Ensure that all new development delivers a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm

Policy and guidance

Local Government White Paper: stresses the need for stronger leadership in terms of community safety through the collaboration of the different partnerships involved.

Safer Places, the planning system and crime prevention: informs and advises on how to promote safer places by adopting and implementing good design criteria along with other supplementary actions.

Oxford Community Strategy: establishes the main objectives, priorities and actions for Oxford in terms of community safety.

Community safety

Preferred approach:

Continue the work with Oxford's communities and collaborating with partners from Oxford Safer Communities Partnership and the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and other relevant schemes and strategies to tackle crime and fear of crime throughout Oxford.

Continue to pursue the principles of design criteria (for example Secure By Design) to promote safer environments and reduce the opportunity for crime.

²² Area profile for Oxford ((Audit Commission)

²³ As above

GREEN SPACE

Introduction

Green spaces are an important part of the City's infrastructure. People use them for relaxation, recreation and sport, bringing all the health benefits associated with regular exercise. Allotments provide exercise and fresh produce, and reduce food miles. Access to good quality green space can often contribute to the regeneration of deprived communities.

Evidence base:

A Green Space Study²⁴ assessed the provision of green space in Oxford. This informed Oxford City Council's Green Spaces Strategy²⁵. This Strategy includes a number of objectives relevant to the Core Strategy. These are:

- Ensure that provision of facilities meets the needs of the population
- Maintain and improve access to green spaces and the wider countryside
- Address physical barriers to access parks, green spaces and allotments
- Maintain and enhance the built and natural heritage of the green space portfolio

The Study and Strategy focus on publicly accessible open space only.

Key issues

Oxford's Green Spaces Strategy includes detailed actions to achieve the above objectives which include creating a hierarchy of parks and assessing the recommendations in the Study to address gaps in provision where they occur across Oxford. The Strategy considers the potential for the shared use and rationalisation of facilities that are currently under-utilised. This might lead to a limited amount of green space being available for other uses.

The Green Spaces Strategy recommends that provision of green space should be maintained at a minimum of 5.75 ha per 1000 population. Future provision will need to take account of future population increases. The Study found that there are significant variations across Oxford. Those areas with a significant deficit of open space provision are Summertown, Littlemore, Headington, East Oxford, the City Centre, Blackbird Leys and Barton and Sandhills. The 'urban villages' concept will be developed to plan for an adequate distribution of green and open space across the City.

It is important that green space is created of a reasonable size to be of recreational value. Most residential development sites in Oxford are small so relying only on larger developments for new green space provision would result in limited opportunities. Pooling contributions by assessing cumulative provision may be more appropriate but due to the constrained nature of Oxford, the opportunities for so doing are limited. City parks provide opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities, including outdoor sports facilities and informal recreation, together with the opportunity for events and shows. Two areas where access to City parks is poor are north-east Oxford and Littlemore. Opportunities to address this will be explored in a Site Allocations DPD.

Green space

Preferred approach:

Ensure that all Oxford residents have suitable access to safe, managed and well maintained areas of publicly accessible green space in line with the recommended distances in the Green Space Study. Priority for the creation of new green spaces will be given to areas with a significant shortage of open space provision.

Spatial objective

To provide a range of leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities

Policy and guidance

PPS17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation: local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, to create public open space from vacant land, and to incorporate open space within new development on previously-used land.

Draft South East Plan: Local authorities should actively pursue a net gain in biodiversity by maintaining and establishing accessible green networks and open space in urban areas

²⁴ Oxford City Green Space Study (August 2005) Scott Wilson

²⁵ Oxford Green Spaces Strategy 2006-2011. This is a five year strategy .

OUTDOOR AND INDOOR SPORT

Introduction

Sport has a vital role in improving public health and also helps to bring communities together. Providing sports facilities in the right locations reduces travel distances and can encourage walking and cycling.

Evidence Base

Leisure facilities can provide opportunities for recreation at a local level as well as at a regional level. At the local level, an Indoor Facilities Study²⁶ found that Oxford has sufficient public swimming pools and sports hall provision, but has a significant deficiency in community accessible fitness provision, although there is considerable provision in the private sector. Despite these levels of provision, there are gaps because the facilities are not equally distributed across Oxford.

The Playing Pitch Assessment²⁷ found adequate provision in Oxford, including the potential for a 10% increase in the number of teams playing on them, although some areas have deficiencies in certain types of playing pitches.

Key Issues

Not all sports facilities provide the same level and quality of provision, and not all areas of Oxford enjoy the same level of access to a full range of facilities and activities. The City Council's Leisure Strategy²⁸ aims to try to redress this imbalance and ensure that the provision of sports facilities meets the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities of Oxford. The Strategy does not specify particular areas of Oxford where improvements are needed. The Green Spaces Strategy proposes the establishment of a hierarchy of pitches, with three centres of excellence across the City

Overall there is a surplus of playing pitches in Oxford, but this is not necessarily a justification for permitting the re-development of playing fields, but rather an opportunity to generate greater interest in playing sport at all levels. However, if there is the potential for shared use and rationalisation of facilities that are currently under-utilised, this might lead to some pitches being available for other uses.

The Leisure Strategy will consider the requirements for 'niche' options such as a new commercial gym or swimming pool but requires the forthcoming Leisure Facilities Review to make decisions on some of the more specific facilities that should be provided in Oxford.

Spatial objective

To provide a range of leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities

Policy and guidance

PPS1: Development plan policies should provide access for all to leisure, open space and sport and recreation by ensuring all new development is located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport

Oxford's Community Strategy: aims to support improved cultural and recreational activities and increase opportunities for participation and deliver improved health and leisure services in our communities

Sports facilities

Preferred approach:

Ensure that all Oxford residents have suitable access to a variety of indoor and outdoor sports facilities. Priority for the creation of new sports facilities will be given to areas with a significant shortage of sports facilities as identified in the Indoor Facilities Report and the Playing Pitch Assessment. Priorities for specific new local and regional sports facilities will be in line with the City Council's Leisure Strategy and Leisure Facilities Review, sites will be considered in the Site Allocations DPD.

²⁶ Oxford City Council Final Indoor Facilities Report (Jan 2006) Strategic Leisure Limited

²⁷ Oxford City Council Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy 2003-2006 (Jan 2006) Strategic Leisure Limited

²⁸ Overarching Leisure Strategy (April 2006) Oxford City Council

HEALTH AND HOSPITALS

Introduction

Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) is the local NHS body that commissions and pays for local health care services on behalf of the people of Oxfordshire, including Oxford City. This includes services provided locally from hospitals and ambulance services, mental health care, General Practitioners, dentists, pharmacists and opticians. The PCT also employs health care staff to provide community based health care services. It works in partnership with local GP practices in Oxfordshire to provide services such as district nursing, health visiting, school nursing and a range of specialist and therapy services. A partnership has been formed between Oxford City PCT, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and other NHS Trusts to build better and more flexible accommodation to deliver integrated health, social care and community services for the people of Oxford, known as Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT).

Oxford is an important centre for healthcare and research, with a broad range of facilities serving a regional catchment and also patients from further afield, including overseas. The services include important heart, cancer, and dermatological services at the John Radcliffe and Churchill Hospitals, musculo-skeletal disorders at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre, and mental healthcare services at Littlemore Mental Health Centre, the Warneford and Park Hospitals.

Key issues for primary care

Many of Oxford's GP practices occupy buildings that are not appropriate for modern healthcare because of lack of space, poor access for people with disabilities, inflexible space and poor-quality accommodation, that limits the ability to make changes or develop or improve services. The Oxfordshire PCT and local authorities want to significantly redesign the health and social care services provided by the NHS and local authorities in Oxford, which will address these problems. Key parts of this vision include developing co-locations for services where local people can access services in one place, and developing more integrated home and community-based services.

Primary care

Preferred approach :

To ensure that high quality convenient local health services are provided in all parts of Oxford in co-ordination with the PCT Strategic Service Development Plan

Spatial objectives

To promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities in employment, healthcare and education across Oxford

Promote Oxford as a centre of excellence for higher education, health services and medical and scientific research

Policy and guidance

PPS1: address accessibility, both in terms of location and physical access, to health facilities for all members of the community

Draft South East Plan: local planning authorities should ensure the provision of additional and reconfigured health and social care facilities to meet the primary care needs of communities

Oxford's Community Strategy: deliver improved health services in our communities through the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT)

Oxford Primary Care Trust 'Strategic Service Development Plan,' Second Edition
November 2005

Key issues for hospitals and medical research

In recent years there has been a significant level and concentration of development at the Headington hospital sites. This includes a specialist Children's Hospital at the John Radcliffe, the redevelopment and provision of new facilities at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre and the construction of a new cancer centre at the Churchill Hospital.

Having a medical centre of excellence in Headington is of major benefit for the healthcare of local people, although it has added to development pressure on Headington. Together with Oxford Brookes University, the concentration of healthcare facilities has created opportunities for public transport, but has also resulted in significant traffic congestion. It is important to encourage more staff, patients and visitors to use modes of transport other than the private car. One example could be to provide a new bus link from the A40 to Foxwell

Drive that would enable buses to reach the John Radcliffe Hospital, without using Marsh Lane and Headley Way. While there is scope for some further development, particularly on the Churchill Hospital site, both the John Radcliffe and Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre sites are now extensively developed and there is limited scope for further expansion on these sites.

In view of these constraints an alternative option would be to seek to move at least some new healthcare provision outside Headington. General Practitioners will increasingly be managing the care of more of their patients outside of hospital, particularly those with long term conditions such as diabetes, breathing problems and heart conditions. Resources are being freed up to enable them to do this and this model of care suits many patients better. Local people with long term conditions would not need to go to hospital so frequently if they and their GP's had access to diagnostic equipment such as digital x-ray, echo cardiogram and ultra sound closer to where they live and work. The PCT would like to be able to replace and improve the diagnostic services lost when the Radcliffe Infirmary site closed, elsewhere in the City centre, perhaps as part of the West End regeneration, to enable this.

There are, however, limits to how much hospital care could be located away from the existing hospital sites in Headington, particularly if it resulted in patients having to travel unnecessarily between sites. There are also current allocations in the adopted Local Plan, which have not yet been taken up. The greatest opportunities may arise in the field of medical research, where facilities do not always need to be developed adjacent to clinical hospital facilities. The Barton Safeguarded Land is located close to the John Radcliffe Hospital, although currently there is very poor access between the two sites due to the A40. If a new link road could be established between the two, development of medical research facilities in this location could be ancillary to the John Radcliffe. While there would be some traffic between the two sites, this could be strictly limited.

Limiting new hospital developments in Oxford could reduce localised traffic congestion. However, Oxford is a regional centre for health facilities and the synergies from locating new development close to existing health care and research facilities would not be achieved.

At present no preferred option has been selected, as each option has advantages and disadvantages. The approach finally selected may be one that incorporates elements of all three.

Hospitals and medical research	Pros	Cons
Option 1 - Continue to locate new hospital and medical research facilities in Headington, while seeking to limit the amount of new traffic by improving access by other modes of transport	Would enable medical research to benefit from the synergy of being located close to the hospitals, the universities and the existing medical research facilities	Providing further medical research facilities is likely to worsen the already significant level of congestion in Headington There is a shortage of further land that could be allocated for medical research in Headington
Option 2 - Continue to locate new hospital facilities in Headington when this would be the best location, but seek to locate new medical research elsewhere for example, Littlemore or the Safeguarded Land at Barton	Would potentially enable more land to be provided for medical research While medical research would be further away from the hospitals it would still be relatively close	Without improved transport links, such as a new bridge over the A40 at Barton, the sites would be significantly further away from healthcare facilities in Headington
Option 3 - Seek to restrict the amount of new hospital and medical research facilities in Oxford, to avoid worsening traffic problems	Would help to reduce traffic congestion in Oxford It would potentially allow more land to be made available for other uses such as housing	Oxford is an important centre for medical research and limiting the amount of land available for this purpose would either mean that the research did not proceed or would locate elsewhere, without the synergy to existing medical and research facilities

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Introduction

Education is a crucial part of people's lives and ranges from primary and secondary learning, further and higher education, special educational learning, adult learning courses and extra curricular activities. Access to all types of education is a crucial factor in achieving a high level of qualifications and skills.

Evidence base

At the compulsory education levels, the number of children in Oxford has been increasing over recent years although the number of children as a percentage of the total population has been dropping²⁹. Oxford is also home to many private schools. It is estimated that 13% of Oxford's pupils attend private schools.

At the secondary and further education levels (ages 11-18), Oxford's students are generally performing less well than the South East but comparable to England on average. The success rate for work based learning is increasing, but is considerably lower than the regional and national averages³⁰. At the higher education level, Oxford has a significantly higher proportion of people with a degree than the South East and England³¹ although probably because many students choose to stay in Oxford after completing their degrees.

Key issues for primary, secondary and further education

Certain areas in Oxford suffer particularly severe deprivation in education, skills and training, for example, Barton and Sandhills, Blackbird Leys and Northfield Brook. However, whilst there are variations across Oxford, on average educational results are poorer in Oxford than the rest of the County, the South East and England as a whole so there is a need to increase performance across the City³². Following a reorganisation by Oxfordshire County Council, a number of schools in Oxford were closed and redeveloped although there is still a requirement for new housing to contribute towards education provision.

The Oxford and Cherwell Valley College occupies a large site in the West End of Oxford and also has a campus in Blackbird Leys. The college would like to redevelop these sites to provide state of the art modern educational facilities. This will be dealt with in the West End AAP and the Site Allocations DPD/Blackbird Leys SPD.

Access to education

Preferred approach:

Continuing to work with the different agencies to ensure provision of the necessary facilities to improve access to all levels of education throughout Oxford with particular priority for areas of educational deprivation.

Spatial objective

To promote social inclusion and reduce inequalities in employment, healthcare and education across Oxford

Promote Oxford as a centre of excellence for higher education, health services and medical and scientific research

Policy and guidance

PPS1: address accessibility, in terms of location and physical access, to education facilities for all members of the community.

The draft South East Plan: highlights the importance of working with partners to promote a strategic increase of education and skills provision.

Oxfordshire Community Strategy: establishes the top priorities for the county in educational terms and encourages increased applications to further and higher education from low-income group students and neighbourhoods with low participation rates.

Key issues for higher education

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) has a reputation for academic excellence, and is important to the Oxford economy. Its Oxford campus consists of a number of loosely connected sites in Headington. OBU also has campuses at Wheatley and Harcourt Hill, in neighbouring district authorities. The OBU campus is perceived as having a lack of identity, poor-quality teaching space, limited flexibility, and a disconnected layout, with external spaces being poorly utilised. OBU is drawing up a master plan that will seek to address these issues by re-configuring the existing campuses and commissioning more flexible, efficient buildings. OBU envisages

²⁹ Office for National Statistics

³⁰ Office for National Statistics

³¹ An Economic Profile of Oxfordshire (2005) Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council

³² Office for National Statistics

reducing the floorspace on its existing Oxford campuses by 10%, although it expects student numbers will increase by between 1 and 2 % a year for as far ahead as can currently be estimated. There is therefore no need to allocate further land for the University's use, apart from student accommodation which will be considered in the Site Allocations DPD. The OBU master plan intends to make better use of existing resources and create better connections between campuses. With these sustainability issues central to the Core Strategy, the preferred approach is to help OBU produce and implement its master plan.

Oxford Brookes University

Preferred approach:

The City Council will not allocate land for Oxford Brookes University use (except purpose built student accommodation). Seek to work with the university and other agencies to improve connections between campuses; deliver more efficient and flexible academic buildings and high quality urban design. New development will take into consideration the Oxford Brookes University master plan.

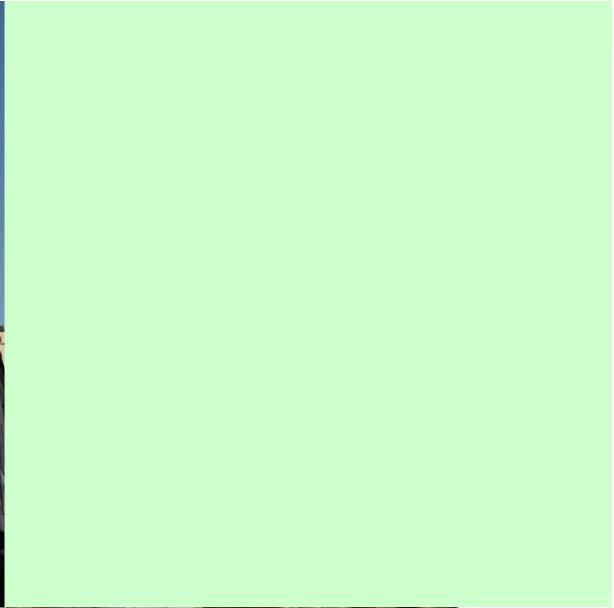
The University of Oxford is a world-renowned centre of academic excellence as well as one of the largest employers in Oxford. The majority of its buildings are in central Oxford with some sites in east Oxford, Summertown, Headington and outside of Oxford at Begbroke. The University estimated in 2000 that it would need 100,000m² of academic floorspace over a 20-year period³³. Since the report was prepared, the University has acquired the Radcliffe Infirmary site, which is expected to supply part, but not all, of the extra floorspace needed. In planning for the future of the University up to 2026, it is important to update its estimates of future needs. The University of Oxford has produced a corporate plan³⁴ that includes a programme of action. The University hopes to relocate its administrative centre outside of the City centre in the long term and establish a book depository. It may also need to relocate its Local Examination Building and Department for Continuing Education, currently at Ewert Place. Land for further development within Oxford is in short supply as the Science area is almost at capacity and Headington has little remaining land for medical research. The University is currently undertaking a master plan for the science area. If development in Oxford was restricted there may be potential for University land outside Oxford's boundary to be developed.

The City Council recognises the need for the University to maintain its position as a centre of academic excellence and, considering the educational and economic advantages of its expansion, it is appropriate for the Core Strategy to consider how best the university should develop in order to meet its future needs. A current study of the role of the education and health sectors in Oxford's economy will help to refine this assessment of the University's needs before the Core Strategy submission stage. The Site Allocations DPD would consider the potential for specific sites for the specific uses outlined above.

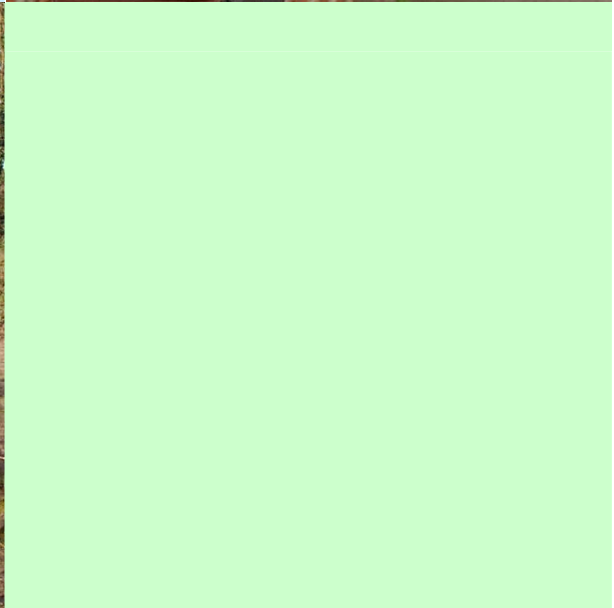
University of Oxford	Pros	Cons
Option 1 - Continue to locate new university related development on existing university sites at higher densities, but do not allocate new sites for University use elsewhere in Oxford	<p>This could enable more land in Oxford to be allocated for other uses that may otherwise have been used for academic use</p> <p>Concentrating all development on existing sites would reduce journeys between new sites.</p>	<p>Nearly all existing University sites, apart from the Radcliffe Infirmary (RI) have already been developed to nearly full capacity</p> <p>If not enough capacity on existing sites, new development might need to be outside the city boundary leading to less integration of sites and longer journeys between sites.</p>
Option 2 - Continue to locate academic core activities in central Oxford. Allocate new sites in Oxford, for activities such as medical research, administration and ancillary activities	<p>Could locate academic facilities near existing sites, which should enable it to operate more efficiently and keep journeys between sites short</p> <p>Will reduce pressure on existing sites, enabling the reorganisation of some ancillary facilities onto other sites</p>	<p>Will reduce land in Oxford that is available for alternative uses e.g. Safeguarded Land) and potentially develop in areas not traditionally used for university use</p> <p>Less integration of sites than if development concentrated at very high density on existing same sites</p>

³³ Report on the Future Land Requirements of the University of Oxford in relation to The Radcliffe Infirmary Site Sept 2000) Turnberry Consulting

³⁴ University of Oxford: Corporate Plan 2005-6 to 2009-10



Promoting local
distinctiveness and
environmental
quality



TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER, URBAN DESIGN AND THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Good design is about making places that are functional, durable, viable, attractive for people to use, and that reflect the importance of local character and distinctiveness. High quality urban design and high-quality architecture are essential to the creation and maintenance of successful townscapes.

Evidence base

Oxford is a world-renowned historic city, with a wealth of fine buildings from the 11th to the 20th century and archaeological material both above and below ground. The historic core has a unique and distinctive pattern of streets, buildings and skyline, and there are important views of it from within Oxford and from the surrounding hillsides. It has grown organically within the river valleys of the Isis and Cherwell and extends to the ring of surrounding hills that give the City its green setting. The quality and character of Oxford's historic environment and local townscapes should be considered as a creative force to inspire good urban design rather than as an obstacle to development. Emphasis will be on the positive management of change.

Outside the internationally famous historic core, a diversity of townscapes and landscapes make up today's Oxford. As the City has grown, we see successive periods of buildings form part of the familiar and cherished local environment, for example the Victorian suburbs of North Oxford and East Oxford; inter-war suburbs such as Cowley and Cutteslowe; post-2nd World War developments such as Barton; and within these areas several historic villages such as Old Marston and Iffley. A complete townscape study³⁵ of Oxford provides an outline of the key characteristics of 52 character areas in Oxford. A more detailed appraisal of the character of Oxford's conservation areas is in progress, with a number already complete.

Key issue

Particular to Oxford is the distinctive skyline of spires, domes and towers seen from the surrounding hills. There are also important views out across the historic core and to the surrounding hills from key City viewpoints. Since 1962 planning policy within a 1,200-metre radius of Carfax has limited development to a maximum of 18.2 metres in height, or ordnance datum 79.3 metres which has proved effective in maintaining the 'view cones' from important view points within and outside Oxford's boundary.

Townscape character and urban design

Preferred approach: Proposals for development should strengthen, enhance and protect the positive qualities of Oxford's landscape and townscape character. New development should contribute to the local distinctiveness of particular areas of Oxford, as identified in the published conservation appraisals and as illustrated in the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting, to achieve positive landscape and townscape enhancements. Poor quality design will be resisted.

The historic environment

Preferred approach: The City Council will seek to preserve and enhance Oxford's historic environment above and below ground as set out in PPG15 and PPG16. Development will not be permitted that would detract from, or obstruct, the identified views of Oxford, particularly within the 'view cones' and the high buildings area.

Spatial objectives

Preserve and enhance Oxford's exceptional historic legacy important views and the distinctive townscape characteristics of Oxford's neighbourhoods

Ensure that all new development delivers a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm.

Policy and guidance

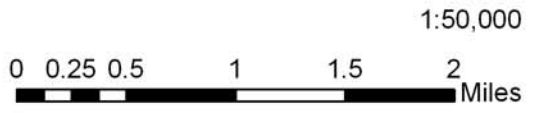
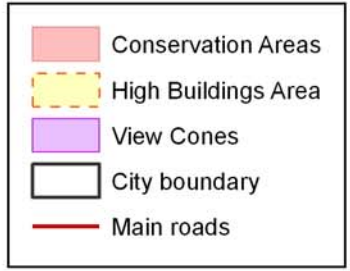
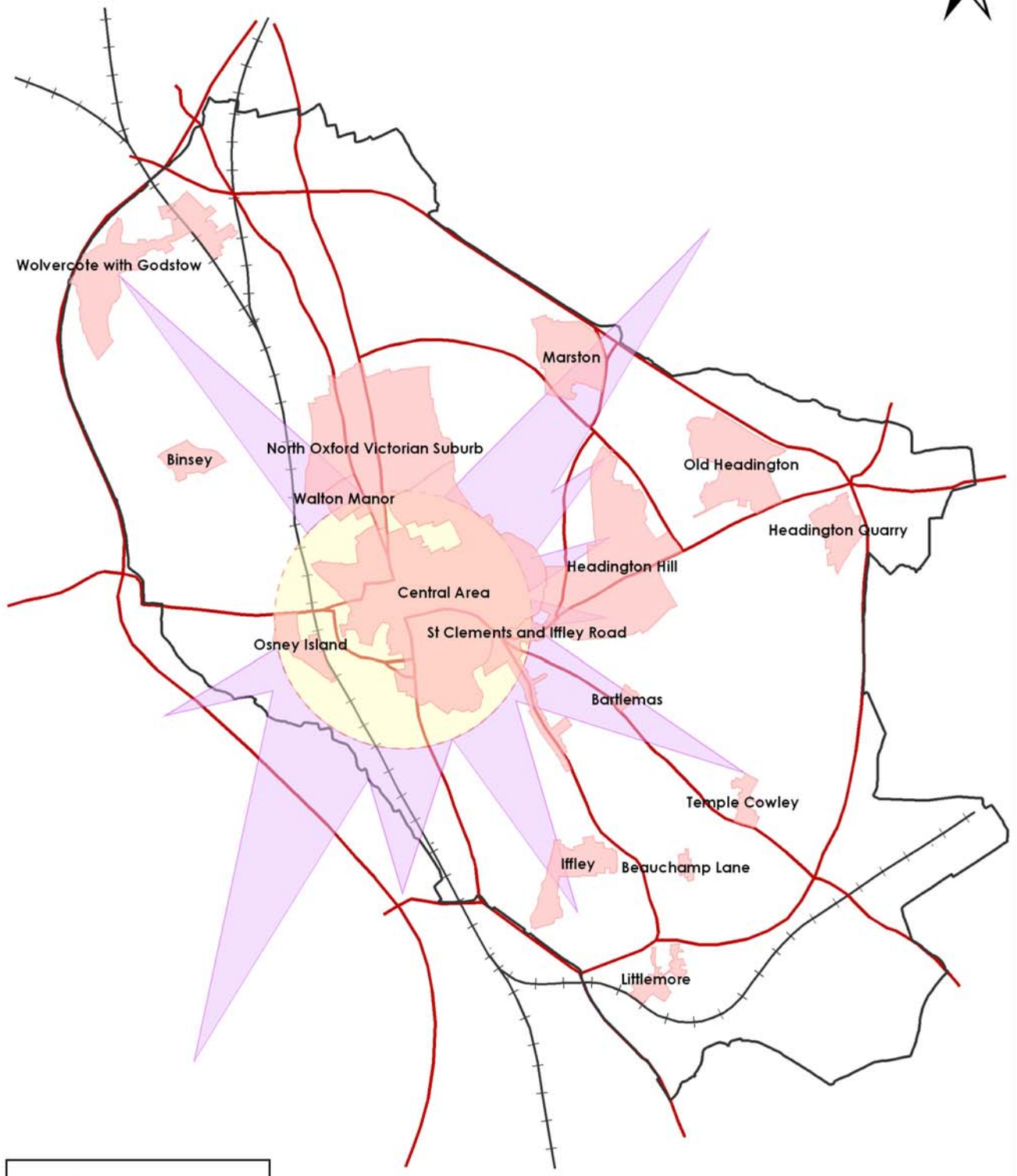
PPG15 and PPG16: The protection of the historic environment is a key aspect of wider environmental responsibilities. Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource.

Draft South East Plan: promote and support design solutions that are relevant to context and build upon local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.

Community Strategy: seeks to protect and enhance the built environment.

³⁵ A Character Assessment of Oxford City in its Landscape Setting (March 2002) Land Use Consultants

OXFORD'S HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Introduction

In recent years more has become known about the impact people are having on natural resources and the world around us. It is now widely recognised, for example, that the levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) released into the atmosphere as a result of our ever-increasing demand for energy are harming the environment, and weather patterns are changing as a result. Alongside this, our demand for materials, both natural and man-made, is depleting resources at an increasing rate.

Key issues

Oxford City Council has a longstanding commitment to making Oxford more sustainable, and to do what it can to address these issues at a local level. Incorporating sustainable design and building principles in developments is one important way that this commitment can be realised. Oxford City Council has already adopted and implemented many initiatives, including signing the Nottingham declaration; all Oxford City Council electricity is now purchased from a green supplier; nearly all 8,000 of the City Council's housing stock already have cavity wall insulation; and Oxford Solar Initiative resulted in around 100 solar installations;

The Natural Resource Impact Analysis SPD establishes a minimum standard of 20% provision of energy on-site from renewables (for developments over a certain threshold).

Proposals also have to demonstrate that a minimum standard on all the other sections covered in the document - energy efficiency, choice of materials³⁶ and embodied energy and water resources – will be achieved. The Site Allocations DPD will consider whether there are any suitable sites in Oxford for renewable and low-carbon energy sources and related infrastructure. Opportunities will also be explored for appropriate investment in water efficiency measures.

Spatial Objective

Maximise Oxford's contribution to tackling the causes of climate change and to minimise the use of non-renewable resources

Policy and guidance

PPS1: highlights the need to reduce the consumption of natural resources by making more efficient use of existing resources and should promote and encourage the use of renewable resources

Draft PPS1 supplement: Planning and Climate Change reflects the Government's expectations on how spatial planning should tackle climate change

The **Draft South East Plan** establishes a sub-regional target of 140 MWs for 2010 for land-based renewable energy for the Thames Valley and Surrey. The target rises to 209 MWs in 2016

The **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Implementation Plan for the Draft South East Plan** sets out the necessary actions relevant to spatial planning to implement the Plan's policy.

Reform of the Renewables Obligation and Statutory Consultation on the Renewables Obligation Order 2007 (Dti) sets a 10% national target for electricity production from renewable sources by 2010 and 20% by 2020.

Energy and natural resources

Preferred approach:

Require all new developments to achieve the highest standard of sustainable design, construction techniques, and natural resources use and management, including:

- energy efficiency
- renewable energy
- waste and recycling
- water resources
- materials

All developments should incorporate energy solutions towards Zero Carbon Developments, and adaptation solutions where appropriate. Encouragement will be given to exemplar schemes of sustainable development or environmental management.

Continue collaborating with partners in raising awareness, informing, promoting and encouraging the up-take of resource and water/energy efficiency and renewable energy in existing and new developments.

³⁶ Includes the section on recycled materials and waste disposal.

FLOODING

Introduction

Flooding is a serious issue for Oxford. Flooding that occurs in residential areas can be costly and dangerous.

Research and evidence base

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) show the probability of floods occurring. An SFRA for Oxford will inform the Core Strategy submission document. In preparing the preferred options the Environment Agency’s Flood Zone Maps have been used to identify areas likely to be at most risk of flooding.

Climate change will bring changes to rainfall and flooding patterns. Estimates indicate that peak river flows could increase by 10% by 2025. This means that areas of Oxford currently with a low risk could be re-classified to having a higher risk.

A significant area of Oxford is at risk of flooding, with large built-up areas in South Oxford, West Oxford and lower Wolvercote currently having a 1% or greater annual risk of flooding (Zone 3a). In addition, there are the undeveloped flood plains of the Isis and Cherwell, large parts of which regularly flood, and where the Local Plan currently prevents inappropriate development.

Key issue

With such a high need for housing in Oxford, there is pressure to develop in Zone 3a. PPS25 advises that more vulnerable uses such as housing, student accommodation, health services, nurseries and educational establishments should only be allowed in this zone if it passes the exception test. However, due to the constrained nature of Oxford, there has been a considerable amount of small infill development over past years which all contribute to making the ground less permeable, increase run-off and exacerbate the risk of flooding. If climate change is to be taken seriously, strong actions are required. The City Council considers that there should be a complete moratorium on all new dwellings and student accommodation in Flood Zone 3a (as defined by the forthcoming SFRA). However, it is more important for the other more vulnerable uses (health services, nurseries and educational establishments) to have the potential to be developed near to where need arises. An SPD on flooding will be produced. The Environment Agency is planning a flood relief scheme to the west of Oxford. While this would provide some protection for the City, no scheme can remove all flood risk.

Spatial objective

To help protect people and their property from flooding

Policy and guidance

PPS25: Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to demonstrate that there are no sites reasonably available in areas less likely to flood that would suit the type of development or land use proposed.

Draft South East Plan: Inappropriate development should not be allocated or permitted in Flood Zones 2 and 3 or areas where there is a history of groundwater flooding, or where it would increase flood risk elsewhere, unless there is over-riding need and absence of suitable alternatives.

Flooding	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option – Include a policy for windfall developments in flood zone 3a, which prevents all additional residential development and purpose built student accommodation but sets out criteria to judge whether other more vulnerable communities uses may be acceptable. An exception will be made on sites already used for residential purposes where the proposed development would reduce the risk of flooding to the occupants without increasing it elsewhere.</p> <p>Do not allow inappropriate development in the undeveloped flood plain, and apply the PPS25 approach to all development.</p>	<p>Will not increase surface water run off resulting from new dwellings</p> <p>Prevents new dwellings being built in an area at risk of flooding</p> <p>Adds clarity and consistency</p>	<p>Will remove opportunities for new dwellings and student accommodation in some built up areas of Oxford.</p> <p>Land may be required elsewhere to meet housing need</p>
<p>Alternative option – apply the PPS25 approach to all new development Do not allow inappropriate development in the undeveloped flood plain.</p>	<p>Allows some opportunities for new dwellings in flood zone 3a provided exception test in PPS25 met which will help to meet housing need</p>	<p>New development will increase surface run-off and exacerbate flooding in Oxford</p>

WASTE AND RECYCLING

Introduction

The waste management hierarchy promotes a national strategy for dealing with waste produced. Waste minimisation, including recycling and reuse of material, is at the top of the hierarchy, with sending material to landfill at the bottom. Recovering energy from waste bridges the gap in the middle.

The amount of waste generated in Oxford has been low, but so has been the amount of material recycled. Use of natural resources can also include land, so the link to the spatial objective includes, by minimising the use of natural resources, sending less material to landfill. Producing less waste and increasing recycling are important issues that everyone must face.

In Oxford household material is collected for recycling fortnightly. This reduces the need for waste recycling sites for household waste.

Evidence base

In terms of household waste generated, Oxford produces less household waste than the Oxfordshire average, with 316 kg per head for 2005 compared with an average 480 kg per head in Oxfordshire.

The percentage of household waste recycled has been increasing in Oxford, with 14% in 2004/05 and 19% in 2005/06. However, these percentages are below the county average of 30% in 2004/05 and 33% in 2005/06, and the national average of 22% in 2004/05³⁷.

The City Council recently introduced a new recycling and waste collection scheme which has led to a reduction in the amount of waste sent to landfill in the months of November and December 2006 by 11% and almost 17% respectively. Since the new scheme was introduced in one-third of the City, the recycling rate in Oxford has increased by 8% to 27%.

If we find the City needs a site for a materials recycling facility (MRF) or waste-to-energy plant, we will consider it in a Site Allocations DPD. This may be appropriate as part of a mixed-use development at Peartree or Barton.

Spatial objective

Maximise Oxford's contribution to tackling the causes of climate change and minimise the use of natural resources.

Policy and guidance

The **draft South East Plan** aims to reduce growth of all waste in the region to 1% per annum by 2010 and 0.5% per annum by 2020.

The **draft South East Plan** seeks to increase the amount of waste recycled and composted from around nine million tonnes at present (35% of all waste) to 17 million tonnes by 2015 (55%) and 21 million tonnes by 2025 (65%).

Waste and recycling

Preferred approach:

Continue collaborating with the County Council and others to ensure appropriate provision of sites and facilities for aggregate recycling and local waste management and treatment and support the aims of the waste management hierarchy, which prioritises in order the reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery of waste over disposal.

The City Council will have regard to the implications of the County Council's Minerals and Waste Core Strategy DPD and Minerals and Waste Site Allocations DPD.

³⁷ No data available for England for 2005/06.

BIODIVERSITY

Introduction

Oxford is probably unique among the cities of Britain in having such a high concentration of high quality, ecologically important sites.

Research and evidence base

The draft South East Plan (SEP) has identified Oxford as part of an area of Strategic Opportunity for Biodiversity Improvement in relation to wetland habitats. This particularly relates to lowland meadows, of which Oxford currently has 234 ha³⁸ as there is considerable scope for improving neighbouring meadows to reduce the isolation of sites and create a network. The Regional Biodiversity Targets for habitat improvements to meadows are for 2,050 ha by 2010 and 4,010 ha by 2026 and for habitat improvement of 950 ha of fen/reedbed by 2020 and 1,900 ha by 2026; and to improve 500ha of lakes, ponds/open water by 2010 and 1,000 ha by 2026.

The Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre paper³⁹ identifies the flood plain meadows of the Isis and Cherwell in Oxford as conservation target areas. It also identifies a small part of the eastern edge of Oxford as forming part of the Shotover Conservation Target Area. There are also opportunities for biodiversity enhancement/habitat creation in other parts of Oxford, such as along the Lye Valley and Boundary Brook corridors where there is rare fen habitat, woodland and grassland and along the Littlemore/Northfield and Bayswater Brooks, which are important for water voles. Other documents containing information on Oxford's biodiversity are the two Biodiversity Action Plans⁴⁰. The Oxford Biodiversity Network Map⁴¹ shows potential for habitat links and buffer zones.

Key Issues

The key strategic issue for the Core Strategy to address is to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity interest in Oxford, and to actively pursue opportunities to achieve an enhancement.

Spatial Objective

Maintain, enhance and promote access to Oxford's rich and diverse natural environment

Policy and guidance

PPS9: aim to maintain, enhance and, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests.

Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: A Good Practice Guide: the Core Strategy should provide strategic objectives for biodiversity and geological conservation. Good practice to develop a Core Policy which would deliver this and include criteria to direct corporate activity & shape development control decisions.

Draft South East Plan: local authorities should identify opportunities for biodiversity improvement, including large-scale habitat restoration, enhancement and re-creation in the areas of strategic opportunity identified.

Community Strategy: Oxford has a unique and celebrated natural heritage that needs protecting and enhancing.

Biodiversity

Preferred approach:

The City Council will seek to ensure that development in Oxford does not result in a net loss of biodiversity, and that opportunities are taken to enhance Oxford's biodiversity. This will be done by:

- protecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- protecting Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs);
- maintaining, restoring and adding to the network of unimproved flood meadows within the Isis and Cherwell flood plains;
- taking opportunities to create links between natural habitats and to identify a strategic Oxford habitat network; and
- requiring the inclusion of features beneficial to biodiversity (or geological conservation) within new developments throughout Oxford.

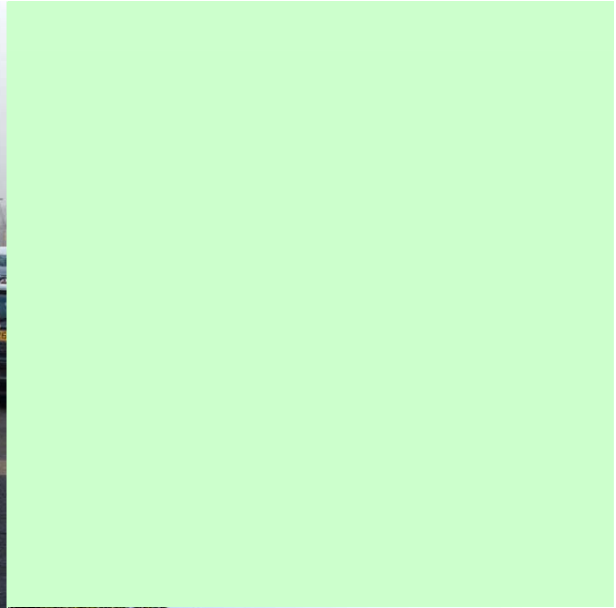
³⁸ See Annual Monitoring Report for 2005/6

³⁹ *Oxfordshire Conservation Target Areas Mapping Project Report* (July 2006) G Hawker and P Burrell, Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre

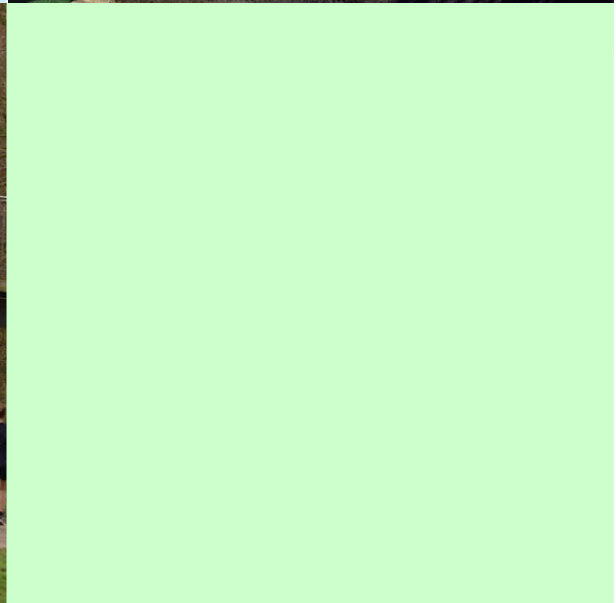
⁴⁰ *Oxfordshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan* (updated 2006) Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum and *Oxford City Biodiversity Action Plan* (due January 2007) Baker, Sheppard and Gillespie

⁴¹ *The Oxford Biodiversity Network Map*, Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre

Insert map of SSSIs/SACs etc



Improving transport accessibility

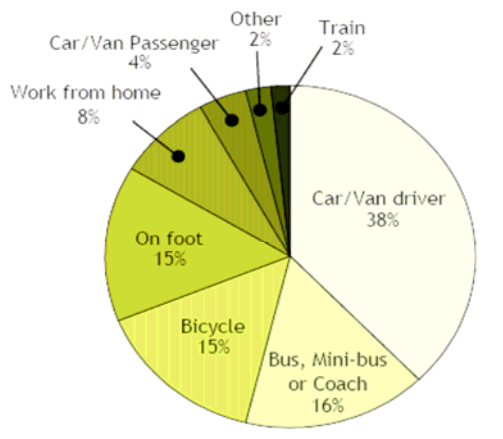


TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Introduction

Oxford is a compact city with a well developed public transport network. People travelling within Oxford and its bordering settlements do so by various means, reflecting the City's spatial form, demographic character, and established culture and traditions. For example, most work journeys by Oxford residents are not by car. Oxford has one of the highest proportions of bicycle journeys in the country.

Oxford is a sub-regional transport hub, and non-residents within the sub-region, and beyond, rely on the transport system. Around 50% of the City's workforce commute into Oxford from outside. The Highway Authority (County Council) is developing an 'Access to Oxford' strategy towards addressing these issues.



Oxford residents' main method of travel to work, from Census 2001 (Source: Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)

Evidence base

The evidence base for transport policy is, in the main, contextual, given that detailed transport monitoring and analysis is the responsibility of the Highway Authority. Key documents and strategies include:

- Local Transport Plan monitoring (Annual Progress Reports, LTP Delivery Report);
- Oxford Air Quality Action Plan;
- Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS);
- Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS);
- Oxford Cycle Network Review.

Spatial objectives

Ensure new developments are located in accessible locations to minimise overall travel demand;

To support a reduction in car use, minimise the impact of traffic and support walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Policy and guidance

PPG13: promotes sustainable and integrated transport; promotes accessibility to jobs and services by public transport, walking and cycling; supports reducing the need to travel, especially by car.

Draft South East Plan: emphasises the need for local policies to rebalance the transport system in favour of non-car modes; recognises Oxford as a regional transport hub, supporting a range of multimodal transport services, and as a centre of regional significance for accessibility and interchange.

Oxfordshire Structure Plan: emphasises the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport in new development, to reduce dependence on cars and promote travel choice and safety.

Local Transport Plan: aims to tackle congestion, improve accessibility, make roads safer, improve air quality, and improve the street environment.

Community Strategy: improve air quality in the City centre; support work to maintain street appearance across the City

Key Issues

Oxford enjoys good links with the national road network, but many primary routes into the City are near or at capacity, in particular the A34 and part of the A40 Oxford ring road. Congestion and delays affect public transport users and those travelling by car. As Oxford's housing stock and economy continue to grow, an ever greater demand will be placed on the primary road infrastructure. The local highway authority is to address bottlenecks on the ring road, and more effective management for the A34 trunk road, as part of their capital spending programme, and the 'Access to Oxford' strategy. A further study of the A34 is planned for 2007/08 as a result of the New Growth Points funding.

In Oxford, congestion occurs regularly on most of Oxford's main radial routes⁴². Traffic entering the City's eastern suburbs⁴³ has increased, partly due to significant development in Headington, Marston and Cowley. Congestion on Oxford's roads directly affects air quality, accessibility, and the street environment. Oxford has one of the most established and successful Park and Ride networks in the country, which will continue to be a crucial means of discouraging unnecessary journeys into Oxford by private car. The City Council supports managing public parking to promote alternatives to the car (including further Controlled Parking Zones), increasing the capacity of Oxford's Park and Ride network, and promoting restraint-based parking standards where alternatives to the car are readily available. Congestion charging will need to be investigated further during the Core Strategy period.

Bus:

There are generally excellent opportunities for bus travel within Oxford and from surrounding towns and some villages, although delays to bus services caused by congestion are a daily problem. Bus routes into the City centre from most areas of Oxford are numerous and frequent. Journeys between suburban areas of Oxford are more infrequent or require journeys into the City centre and out again, often requiring the passenger to change buses in the City centre and adding to cost and delay.

The Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) has been successful in reducing traffic flow and preventing traffic growth in the City centre, while maintaining high accessibility. Further improvement of the public realm is desirable under OTS, particularly pedestrianisation of Queen Street. A Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) feasibility study is being carried out jointly by the City and County Councils to help combat poor air quality. Elsewhere in Oxford, the Headington and Marston Transport Strategy (HAMATS) focuses on reducing the impact of travel to hospitals, educational and research institutes in the eastern suburbs.

Tourist coaches have a vital role in supporting Oxford's role as a tourist destination, but are currently difficult to accommodate in the City centre. The City and County Councils are working jointly on a tourist coach strategy to ensure suitable vehicle routing, parking and drop-off facilities.

Walking and cycling:

There are good opportunities for cycling and walking, particularly within Oxford's boundaries, although these networks need further development. Pedestrian and cycle areas of the public realm in the City centre and some district centres also need improving.

Rail:

Oxford Station is generally well related to the national railway network. However, links to eastern regions of England and the Oxford-Cambridge arc are relatively poor.

Oxford Station becomes congested because of a lack of platform space and through tracks. This leads to trains having to queue, and delays to scheduled services. The station building itself is basic and does not create the welcome expected by people arriving at the international city of Oxford. The City and County Councils are working in partnership with the railway industry on a range of designs that would allow major capacity and design improvements to the station. In the future a rail corridor may be developed between

⁴² Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

⁴³ Oxfordshire County Council monitoring data (compiled June 2005)

Oxford and Milton Keynes, including improved services between Oxford and Bicester. Substantial progress is being made on this project, which is known as East-West Rail.

Short term transport issues

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) covers the period 2006-2011. The Core Strategy period extends beyond this to 2026. In order for the Core Strategy to best reflect the objectives of the LTP, it is sensible to consider these two periods as short and long term periods where 2006-2011 is 'short term'.

The focus in Oxford should be on facilitating cycling, walking and travel by public transport, while minimising dependence on the private car for travel into and within Oxford. The proposed approach would help to preserve or enhance air quality, help to tackle congestion and carbon emissions, and help implement travel plans. This builds on the policies of the OLP. The success of this approach depends on cross-organisational working by public and private sectors to manage travel demand and influence travel choices.

Park and Ride is essential to enable Oxford to function as a city. We will encourage the County Council to develop remote Park and Ride sites, to intercept car-borne traffic bound for Oxford closer to the point of source. Nevertheless, enlarging existing Park and Ride sites on the City outskirts is likely to be needed to support employment, retail, hospital and leisure development in Oxford.

We propose to prioritise accessibility improvements in the West End of the City Centre, the Headington and Marston area covered by HAMATS, and the Cowley Employment Area. These are all experiencing or have proposed significant travel-generating development. The preferred approach also proposes more local public-realm and interchange improvements in three suburban district centres. These will support their role in the urban hierarchy and promote sustainable travel choices locally.

Oxford's short term transport infrastructure	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option Reduced car based travel by improving accessibility for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists within Oxford, both into the City Centre, and across the radial routes. This will be delivered by a number of measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to plan, monitor and manage Park and Ride usage, and as necessary increase capacity, whilst supporting development of remote Park and Ride; • Give priority to development of an integrated cycle network, including cycle priority at pinch points, and to enhancing pedestrian routes; • Continue to develop integrated travel management working with stakeholders across Oxford; • Manage demand for car access to the City centre by seeking to restrict private car parking to operational needs only, review public car parking provision and maintain a cap on public off street parking spaces in the City centre; • Continue to reviewing public parking charges; • Support the implementation of Low Emissions Zone; • Full pedestrianisation of Queen Street; • Create a place for tourist coaches to park and drop off; • Support development of Premium Routes high quality bus network serving Oxford's radial corridors, through improved bus priority measures and reallocation of roadspace where necessary; • Prioritise transport infrastructure and management to improve for non-car modes in the West End of the City centre, the Headington and Marston Area, and the Cowley Employment Area; and • Focus accessibility and interchange improvements on the district centres of Cowley Centre, Summertown and Headington, by means of improved bus waiting and interchange facilities; creating cycle network foci and improved cycle parking; public realm improvement and enhancement of pedestrian routes. 	<p>Offers greatest potential to ease congestion and improve air quality</p> <p>Increases scope to improve and develop public transport</p> <p>Serious opportunities to improve cycling and walking opportunities</p> <p>Greatest contribution towards reducing greenhouse gases and saving energy</p>	<p>measures are likely to be unpopular with some in short term</p> <p>largely dependent on the cooperation of the local highway authority</p> <p>may be economic impact of further discouraging car access (but also potential economic benefits due to reduced congestion)</p> <p>greater impact of congestion charging on lower income groups</p> <p>may be localised air quality impacts where bus routes / stops converge</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 - Support significant improvements to car-based infrastructure in and around Oxford, whilst maintaining other existing transport networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase parking capacity in the City and district centres; • set framework for more generous non-residential parking standards; • support junction and highway capacity improvement for general traffic to facilitate new development; <p>Do not improve priority for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians other than localised or site-specific improvements.</p>	<p>Possible short-term benefits to motorists – improved traffic flow in peripheral locations, easier to park</p> <p>May be short-term economic boost at certain locations if public parking capacity increased</p>	<p>Contrary to national guidance/ regional guidance</p> <p>Less efficient use of existing roadspace, likely to increase road congestion and reduce public transport reliability; economic, environmental and social costs associated with increased congestion and overall reduced mobility</p> <p>Local and global environmental impacts, e.g. worsening air quality; impact on historic core; climate change</p> <p>Reduce scope for further development of pedestrian and cycle networks and bus priority and services</p>

Long term transport issues

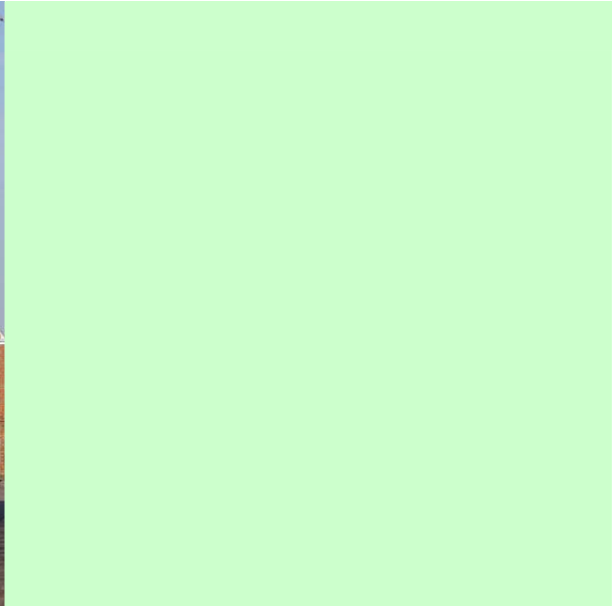
The options above consider the approach to dealing with transport issues in the short term. These measures, whilst important in themselves, will only have a limited impact on the transport infrastructure. The Core Strategy looks forward 20 years and so it should consider more long term solutions to Oxford's transport problems. The City Council will work with local highway authority (Oxfordshire County Council) in the production of its Local Transport Plans covering 2011-26. The City Council's preferred approach is to work with the Local Highway Authority in considering more long term, radical and innovative changes compared to the past. The City Council consider that such approaches should be explored if we are to seriously tackle Oxford's transport problems.

Oxford's long term transport infrastructure

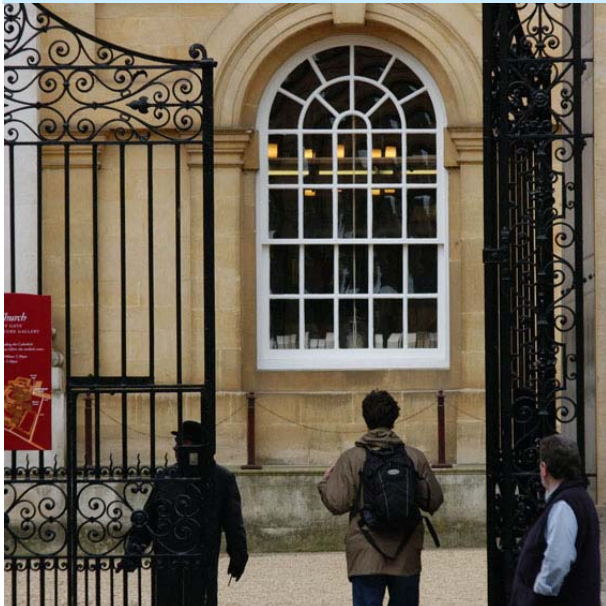
Preferred approach

Oxford City Council is considering an innovative approach to solve Oxford's transport problems which may include one or more of the following solutions, in collaboration with the local highway authority, transport operators and City Council departments where necessary:

- A new or enlarged railway station with greater capacity for through trains, and a design which is appropriate to Oxford;
- Promote innovative transport systems which would reduce the number of large buses and other large vehicles in the City centre, e.g. smaller electric/non-fossil fuel buses;
- Promote an orbital bus route network to improve links between suburban areas of the City;
- Introduce a statutory Bus Quality Partnership/Contract if voluntary arrangements fail to deliver the necessary improvements to air quality on bus routes;
- Further restriction on non-essential through traffic in the City centre;
- Base the cost of resident parking zones and/or public car parking on the carbon dioxide emissions of vehicles;
- Introduce workplace parking levy or congestion charging from which monies raised would be used to make other transport improvements;
- Promote East-West rail and investigate a possible parkway station on the northern edges of Oxford;
- Protect existing rail corridor from development and investigate developing the Cowley Branch Line for passenger services;



Strategic Locations
for development



STRATEGIC LOCATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

A key aspect of spatial planning is how different themes are brought together in particular locations and areas. Whereas the topic-based options earlier in the document relate to the whole of Oxford, this section of the document focuses on particular areas that are of strategic importance to the future growth and development of Oxford. The Core Strategy is concerned with broad locations of development. The options and approaches set out below would form the basis for the broad policy areas shown on the key diagram (see page xxx). This section deals with development located to reduce the need to travel and identifies other broad areas for development in Oxford.

REDUCING THE NEED TO TRAVEL

The sequential approach to locating development works on the basis that the most accessible locations in Oxford are (in order of accessibility) City centre, district centres, and then edge-of-centre locations. These locations have the greatest number of services and shops, and the best non-car accessibility. Maintaining or increasing the mix of uses in an area can also help to reduce the need to travel, as well as adding vitality and diversity and encourage regeneration. The City Council will seek to promote and retain a mix of uses, particularly in areas that are realistically accessible by walking, cycling or public transport, and are close to local facilities.

The first section will consider the role of:

- The City centre;
- District centres; and
- Regeneration areas.

City centre

Oxford City centre fulfils many functions. It is most famous for its unique historic core, with enduring images of architectural beauty and dreaming spires attracting tourists from across the world. It is also a major retail centre, ranked sixth in the South East, and the focus for a wide range of leisure and cultural uses. It contains much of the academic core of the University of Oxford, and various employment uses, and is also home to some residents who enjoy the opportunities of City centre living including the close proximity to work, shops, restaurants and night-life and for whom the City centre acts as a local service centre.

Despite its many assets and attractions, the City centre has its problems. Some parts of the City centre, particularly in the West End quarter, have a poor-quality public realm that does not match Oxford's worldwide reputation. Traffic levels entering the City centre have been successfully contained over many years, without damaging economic viability, but some parts of the City centre are still not particularly welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, the City centre suffers from air pollution in some areas, mainly due to the concentration of buses and coaches within certain streets. Transport improvements are required, including increased capacity at the railway station and changes to the bus network to accommodate the future pedestrianisation of Queen Street. Many of these issues will be addressed in the West End Area Action Plan, which seeks to create a vibrant new urban quarter.

City centre

Preferred approach:

In accordance with the Sequential Test, the City centre, including the West End, will be the main location for developments attracting a large number of people. In particular, developments will be encouraged that support its role as a primary regional centre, such as major retail, leisure, cultural and office development.

The City Council and its partners will promote the renaissance of the West End of the City centre through an Area Action Plan. This will deliver a new mixed-use quarter, with a significant amount of housing and new cultural and employment uses.

Measures relating to the City centre transport infrastructure are dealt with in the transport and accessibility approaches earlier in this document.

District centres

The four district centres of Cowley centre/Templars Square, Cowley Road, Headington and Summertown complement the City centre by providing retail facilities for the local resident population, with other day-to-day services such as banks and leisure uses. They are also the focus for many social and cultural activities.

For the reasons explained earlier in the retail section, we consider that Cowley/Templars Square should be designated as a Primary District Centre as it has a greater capacity for growth than the other District centres. A new mixed-use District centre focusing on the social and economic needs of the area is proposed at Blackbird Leys, to act as a catalyst and a focal point for regeneration. We will examine the relationship between retail growth at Cowley Centre/Templars Square and a possible new district centre at Blackbird Leys in more detail.

Whilst the District centres have generally good accessibility by non-car modes, further improvements are required to support the vitality of these centres. Busy roads bisect all the existing District centres, and public realm enhancements would improve the quality of the environment and help make the centres easier and safer for pedestrians to use.

District centres

Preferred approach:

In accordance with the Sequential Test, the District centres will supply retail, leisure, employment and other uses serving District-level needs.

District centres and their immediate surroundings will be appropriate locations for medium to high density development.

Cowley Centre/Templars Square will be designated as a Primary District Centre in recognition of its greater capacity to accommodate further growth. We will support development in all the District centres provided it is of an appropriate scale and design and maintains or improves the mix of uses available.

The City Council will promote a mixed-use District centre at Blackbird Leys.

Regeneration Areas

Social inclusion is one of the priorities in the City Council's corporate plan⁴⁴ and the Oxford Community Strategy⁴⁵. Spatial planning can help to reduce inequalities by bringing different agencies together to address the social, economic and environmental needs of deprived areas.

The City Council's priorities for regeneration focus on those areas with high levels of deprivation (see map of multiple deprivation on page xxx), and/or where there may be a need to redevelop social housing stock that is coming to the end of its useful life. The City Council is committed to the implementation of the Decent Homes programme. In the longer term, options are being considered for certain types of Council-owned property. These options could include redevelopment of the tower blocks at Blackbird Leys, Northway and Wood Farm, and replacement of Orlits and other prefabricated properties such as those in Barton. It is important that the quality of the public realm and the space between buildings is improved as part of these programmes.

Regeneration areas

Preferred approach:

Regeneration will be promoted in areas of greatest deprivation, with the purpose of building balanced and sustainable communities. This will include improving the existing housing stock and providing a mix of new housing; enhancing or providing local community facilities and services; employment opportunities and training; and accessibility improvements.

The priorities for regeneration activity will be:

- Barton;
- Blackbird Leys;
- Northway;
- Rose Hill; and
- Wood Farm.

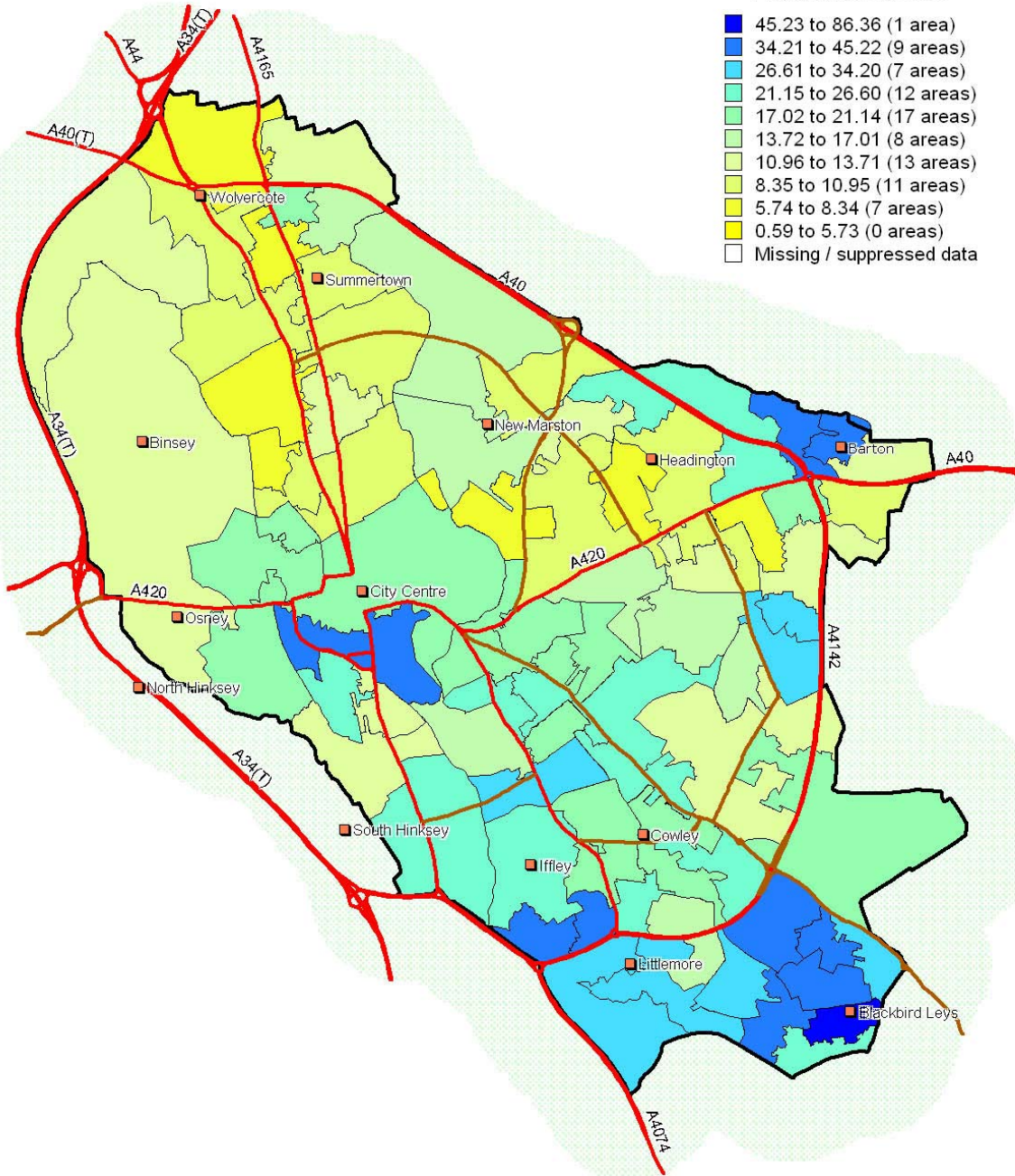
⁴⁴ The Oxford Plan 2006-2009 (July 2006) Oxford City Council

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Score

SOAs ranked across England
Source: ODPM

England level deciles

- 45.23 to 86.36 (1 area)
- 34.21 to 45.22 (9 areas)
- 26.61 to 34.20 (7 areas)
- 21.15 to 26.60 (12 areas)
- 17.02 to 21.14 (17 areas)
- 13.72 to 17.01 (8 areas)
- 10.96 to 13.71 (13 areas)
- 8.35 to 10.95 (11 areas)
- 5.74 to 8.34 (7 areas)
- 0.59 to 5.73 (0 areas)
- Missing / suppressed data



SOAs are Super Output Areas, a statistical geography developed for the Census
 Source: Office of Deputy Prime Minister. Crown copyright.
 Source: 2001 Census, Output Area and Ward Boundaries. Oxfordshire County Council Licence No LA076805
 Crown copyright material is reproduced with permission of the controller of HMSO.
 The colours on this map show 'England level deciles', based on the ranking of areas across England
 Produced by Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion, www.ocsii.co.uk, July 2005



BROAD LOCATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section will identify other broad locations for development. A Core Strategy should not identify particular sites for development as this should be dealt with in the Site Allocations DPD. However, whilst some local authorities are able to identify broad locations for development by a preference for development to one side of a town above another, Oxford is unable to do so, because the tightly drawn administrative boundary does not offer any option but to identify areas within Oxford. To avoid considering sites that should rightly be considered in the Site Allocations DPD, the City Council considers that strategic locations (Oxford's 'broad areas') for development should only be those sites that exceed 10 hectares. This section will set out the City Council's approaches for the development of strategic sites identified in the following categories:

- Brownfield land;
- Green Belt land;
- Safeguarded Land; and
- Greenfield land (open space excluding Green Belt or Safeguarded Land)

The City Council's approach is to consider what the strategic locations are within each of the above categories. This section will also illustrate how these strategic locations could contribute to Oxford's housing need.

Brownfield land

A large amount of development in Oxford has occurred on previously developed (brownfield) land in the past. During 2005/06, 99%⁴⁶ of housing completions in Oxford were on brownfield land, compared to the SEP target of 60%. The City has been able to develop former industrial land that has become available recently in the canal corridor, and several school sites resulting from the County Council's re-organisation of Oxford's schools.

In the future, less brownfield land is likely to come forward for development as many of the large identified sites in the Local Plan have already been developed, or are on the way through the planning process, and relatively few new brownfield sites have so far been identified in the draft SHLAA. While there will be scope for infilling and re-development on smaller sites in existing built-up areas, this will be limited as the Council wants to promote balanced communities and retaining family dwellings by preventing their loss through conversion to small flats.

One option would be to release some existing employment sites for housing. However, Oxford's Employment Land Study (2006) concluded that all the protected key employment sites, and the sites allocated in the Local Plan for employment use, should be protected to ensure a range of different types and sizes of sites and employment uses. The housing potential of the sites that ranked poorly in the Employment Land Study has been assessed in the draft SHLAA, and is considered to be less than 30 dwellings.

This predicted decline in the level of housing on brownfield land implies that some residential development will be needed on greenfield land during the Core Strategy period. The City Council's preferred approach is to continue to focus development on brownfield land. However, to meet a housing target higher than the existing Local Plan target of 433 dwellings per year, some strategic (10 or more hectares) greenfield sites should be allowed to come forward for development before brownfield sites. PPS3 has also removed the sequential approach in PPG3, whereby brownfield land was to be released before greenfield land. Given that housing is planned in five year cycles (2006-2011, 2011-2016 etc.), that the Core Strategy is not expected to be adopted until 2009 and that planning permission for such large sites can take some time, it is considered reasonable to specify that any strategic greenfield sites should not be released prior to 1st April 2011.

Brownfield land

Preferred approach:

Development will be allowed on brownfield land subject to other relevant policies in the Core Strategy. Development will be allowed on strategic greenfield sites as identified in the Core Strategy from 1st April 2011.

⁴⁶ Annual Monitoring Report 2005/06 (Oxford City Council)

The SHLAA estimates that the requirement for housing on greenfield sites could be about 3,000 dwellings if we are to meet the target of 550 dwellings a year proposed earlier in this document. The SHLAA estimates that Oxford can accommodate some 8,000 dwellings on PDL per year over the next 20 years. This figure exceeds the draft South East Plan target for new dwellings in Oxford. The draft SHLAA will be published for consultation alongside this Preferred Options document and, with further technical work, will enable the final SHLAA to inform the policies in the submission Core Strategy.

In addition, other land uses may require some development on greenfield land during the next 20 years. The preferred option of ‘managed growth’ within the Economy section of this document would involve the release of one reserve site of 17.5 ha, while there could also be a need for some medical research and University-related development on greenfield land in the period up to 2026.

Green Belt land

There are 1,215 ha of Green Belt land within Oxford, covering about 27% of the City’s land area. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan Panel Report in December 2004 said that a thorough comparative appraisal was needed of the spatial options for accommodating the future land use and development needs of Oxford and its vicinity. However, the draft South East Plan does not support a review of Oxford’s Green Belt. This matter is being considered at the South East Plan Examination in Public and might result in a review of the Green Belt.

For the purposes of the Core Strategy an initial broad review of the Green Belt within Oxford has been undertaken to consider whether there would actually be any land with the potential for development should a detailed Green Belt review be required by the South East Plan.

Most of the Green Belt land within the City boundary has intrinsic protection because it is part of the undeveloped flood plain or is designated for its nature conservation value. Such land is unsuitable for development. The table below sets out the broad areas of Green Belt land within Oxford and comments on their potential for development.

Broad area	Potential for development
Land west of Oxford including Port Meadow	Vast majority of land in flood plain and Oxford Meadows SAC except a piece of open space segregated from Oxford by railway line. Area not suitable for development.
Land south of City centre	Vast majority in flood plain except for a non-strategic piece of land also designated for nature conservation value. Area not suitable for development.
Land at Northern gateway/Pear Tree	May be some potential at this location. The North Oxford Gateway AAP will consider boundaries.
Land north of ring road at Cutteslowe Park	Flood plain, important publicly accessible open space. Area not suitable for development.
Land at Shotover	Designated for nature conservation value. Area not suitable for development.
Land at Horspath Road	Open air sports facility which currently fulfils purpose of the Green Belt. Area not suitable for development.
Land at Marston junction with eastern by-pass	Core outdoor sports facility including Oxford City Football Club and OxRad. Important publicly accessible open space. Area not suitable for development.
Land north of City centre (Marston/Summertown gap)	Much in flood plain and designated for nature conservation value. Area important in fulfilling the function of the Green Belt (PPG2) by protecting the gap between Marston and Summertown. May be minor areas that could be considered in Site Allocations DPD. Majority of area not suitable for development.

The review of broad areas does not suggest that there are any strategic areas of the Green Belt that would be suitable for large scale strategic development. There may be opportunities for small-scale boundary reviews in a few suitable areas such as the Northern Gateway/Pear Tree which will be considered in the AAP for that area.

Green Belt
Preferred approach: The North Oxford Gateway AAP and the Site Allocations DPD will consider the potential for any small scale review of the Green Belt.

Safeguarded Land

Safeguarded Land is land between the built-up area and the inner edge of the Green Belt that has been protected in the Local Plan to meet possible longer-term development needs. The safeguarded land totals about 70 ha and is divided between three sites – Barton, Peartree, and Summertown.

In the context of a tightly constrained urban area, these areas of Safeguarded Land are of strategic significance and need to be considered within the Core Strategy. Each of these areas is considered below.

Land at Peartree

This land totals just below 16 ha, none of which is affected by any other current policy designations. The land is currently used for low-grade agricultural grazing and is divided in two by a dual-carriageway section of the A44 Woodstock Road. The larger section of some 11.5 ha lies on the west side of the A44, with the smaller section of some 4.5 ha to the east of the A44.

This site was identified as a potential area for the growth of the University of Oxford in the background paper to the adopted Local Plan. It is understood that the University is now not interested in this site. The land occupies a strategically important position at the northern edge of Oxford, and offers the opportunity for a high-quality development to create a landmark 'northern gateway' to the City. However, the three roads in the area – A34, A44 and A40 – mean that background noise is very high. The segregation of the site from the rest of Oxford means it is not appropriate for residential development.

The Peartree area experiences significant congestion and the County Council has developed proposals for highway improvements as part of the 'Access to Oxford' package in the Local Transport Plan. The highways and transport issues would need to be resolved before any development could take place.

An Area Action Plan would be an appropriate way to consider the land-use and transport issues of the northern gateway in an integrated manner. It would also need to consider the role of other land in the area, such as the adjoining Park and Ride site, and may include a Green Belt boundary review of neighbouring land.

Because the Peartree land is close to the Oxford Meadows SAC, the Appropriate Assessment of the Core Strategy will examine whether development of this land would directly or indirectly harm the SAC.

The land would appear suitable for a mixed-use, employment-led development. Its location adjoining the strategic road network would also make it suitable for the relocation of Oxford's emergency services, so freeing up City centre land, especially in the West End, for redevelopment.

Pear Tree/Northern Gateway	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option – Identify the Pear Tree site and surrounding land as a strategic location to provide a modern mixed use employment site, which would include an emergency services centre (fire station, police station). Other uses could include university related development. An Area Action Plan would bring forward this area</p>	<p>Would enable the emergency services to satisfy their need for new modern facilities in a location with good transport connections</p> <p>The Oxford Employment Land Study has identified a need to allocate an area of safeguarded land for employment purposes</p> <p>This area is of low landscape quality. Development would provide the opportunity for landscape enhancement to create a new gateway to Oxford</p>	<p>Peartree is in an area of significant congestion close to the A34 and A40</p> <p>It is understood that the University of Oxford is now not interested in locating their development in this area</p> <p>Appropriate Assessment would be needed to decide if there would be any significant impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>
<p>Alternative option 1 – Identify Pear Tree for residential development, plus a range of complementary mixed uses.</p>	<p>Would satisfy some of the need for affordable housing</p> <p>This area is of low landscape quality. Development would provide the opportunity for landscape enhancement to create a new gateway to Oxford</p>	<p>Poor residential environment, adjoining major roads. Likely to be very noisy</p> <p>Would be cut off from local facilities due to the need to cross roads with heavy traffic</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 – Continue to safeguard this land from development during the Core Strategy period (up to 2026). Review this in future Core Strategies.</p>	<p>Protects an area of greenfield land</p>	<p>Does not satisfy the need for employment development; does not solve problems of fire service/police services</p>

Land at Summertown

This land totals about 17 ha, of which around 8 ha is currently occupied by protected open space (school playing fields) and a small area of flood plain in the south eastern corner. Some of the site is in low-grade agricultural use.

The land is next to a residential area and close to Summertown district centre. It would be a sustainable location for residential development, within easy walking distance of existing services and with good access to public transport and cycle networks. The draft SHLAA estimates that the site could take about 500 residential units. However, the land is also in an environmentally sensitive location adjoining the Cherwell valley green wedge, so any development would need to be carefully landscaped. The areas of playing field could be 'swapped' so that the residential units were closer to Summertown, and the playing fields could be a barrier to the Cherwell valley.

There is an opportunity to provide more public open space as part of any development in this area. This could include improving footpath links and bridges to give access to the Cherwell Valley, as well as providing formal open space within any development, which may include children's play provision.

Land at Summertown	Pros	Cons
<p>Preferred option – Allocate the site for residential development.</p>	<p>Would provide more affordable housing.</p> <p>Sustainable location close to retail, leisure and school facilities in Summertown</p> <p>Area is not of intrinsic landscape quality or high biodiversity interest</p> <p>Opportunity to provide improved footpath access to the Cherwell Valley</p> <p>Opportunity to create more open space in Summertown where a shortage has been identified</p>	<p>Loss of greenfield site</p> <p>Potential loss of sports facilities</p> <p>Site located in a sensitive environment close to the Cherwell valley</p>
<p>Alternative option – Continue to safeguard area from development during the Core Strategy period (up to 2026). Review this in future Core Strategies.</p>	<p>Protects an area of greenfield land</p>	<p>Does not satisfy need for affordable housing</p>

Land at Barton

This is the largest area of safeguarded land, totalling about 36 ha. About 12.5 ha is currently occupied by protected open space and a small area of flood plain adjoining Bayswater Brook. Most of the site is low-grade agricultural grazing land. The site also includes a large electricity sub-station. The land is separated from the rest of Oxford by the A40 ring road. It would be difficult to integrate development on this site into the wider community because of the access issues and the ‘severance’ effect of the A40.

If the site were developed, it would be important to provide better access from this land to the rest of Oxford, including a new bridge over the A40 giving bus, cycle and pedestrian access into Headington.

Bayswater Brook on the northern boundary of the safeguarded land is designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). This would need protecting with an appropriate buffer zone, probably in the form of a linear nature park.

The site would appear to be most suitable for a mixed-use, residential-led development or for the expansion of health and/or university-related uses such as medical research although the site could only be developed if the issue of access to Oxford is resolved. The draft SHLAA estimates that the maximum number of residential units the land could take would be around 1,200 dwellings.

To provide good-quality living conditions there would need to be a landscaped noise screen along the A40 or some non-residential use in this area, with a buffer zone from the sub-station if this was not relocated as part of the development.

Land at Barton	Pros	Cons
<p>Alternative option 1 – Continue to safeguard land from development during the Core Strategy period (up to 2026). Review this in future Core Strategies</p>	<p>Protects an area of Greenfield land</p> <p>Provides an opportunity to assess the needs of this land better, and identify solutions to the site's many difficulties</p>	<p>Does not meet the needs of the various options outlined below</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 – Allocate for a residential development plus a range of complementary mixed uses</p>	<p>Would provide more affordable housing</p> <p>Barton is one of the most deprived areas in Oxford and residential development on the adjoining Safeguarded Land would offer an opportunity to regenerate this area</p> <p>Opportunity to create more public open space in this area, where there is currently a shortage</p> <p>Housing may create a better edge development to Oxford in this sensitive location, adjoining the Green Belt.</p>	<p>The site is isolated due to severance from Headington by the A40 and from Barton by allotments and sports facilities</p> <p>The location of the electricity sub station and the A40 could create a poor residential environment in parts of the site</p> <p>Potential adverse impact on features of biodiversity interest such as hedgerows, Bayswater Brook and areas of grassland of botanical and invertebrate interest</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>
<p>Alternative option 3 – Allocate for hospital and university use</p>	<p>Reduce traffic pressure on Headington, where the road junctions are at or close to capacity</p> <p>Would help to satisfy the likely long term need for more medical research and hospital related development in the Headington area</p> <p>Reduce pressure for further infilling development and/or development on greenfield land in Headington</p>	<p>Poor links to other University and hospital sites unless a new bridge is provided creating improved access to the hospitals and University medical research facilities in Headington</p> <p>Potential harm to features of biodiversity interest such as hedgerows, Bayswater Brook and areas of grassland of botanical and invertebrate interest.</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>
<p>Alternative option 4 – Allocate for employment and support mixed uses, for example emergency services</p>	<p>The Oxford Employment Land Study has identified a need for more land for employment purposes, which development of this site would help satisfy</p> <p>Barton is one of the most deprived areas in Oxford and employment development on the adjoining Safeguarded Land would provide an opportunity to regenerate this area</p>	<p>Site has poor transport access and this could only be improved by creating a new access point on the A40, which might be problematic in highway terms</p> <p>Potential adverse impact on features of biodiversity interest such as hedgerows, Bayswater Brook and areas of grassland of botanical and invertebrate interest</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>
<p>Alternative option 5 – Commercial/retail development</p>	<p>Barton is one of the most deprived areas in Oxford and commercial/retail development on the adjoining Safeguarded Land would provide an opportunity to regenerate this area</p> <p>Could help fund accessibility improvements</p>	<p>Out-of-centre retail/commercial development would conflict with the Sequential Test and would not be consistent with sustainable development objectives</p> <p>Lose opportunity to create more affordable housing</p> <p>Site has poor transport access and this could only be improved by creating a new access point on the A40</p> <p>Potential impact on features of biodiversity interest within the Safeguarded Land</p> <p>Loss of greenfield site</p>

Greenfield land (open space excluding Green Belt or Safeguarded Land)

Development on other open space within Oxford, such as playing fields and allotments, was an unpopular option in the consultation at Issues and Options stage. The scope for development of this land is likely to be limited as there are shortages in some areas and most of it is in active use. However, many of these areas are sustainable locations because they are easily accessible and close to existing services.

Most areas of open space in Oxford (excluding Green Belt or Safeguarded Land) that are not protected for their nature conservation value are too small (less than 10 hectares) to be considered strategic areas. The only site identified of a strategic level is the Southfield Golf Course, which is within walking distance of the Headington hospitals and the buses along Cowley Road into the City centre. The site is currently a golf club and is protected in the Local Plan as open-air sports facilities. Whilst it has some public footpaths crossing it, it is a private golf club and is not generally publicly accessible open space. It therefore has limited recreational value to the local community.

However, the golf course lies in an environmentally sensitive location within the Lye Valley and Boundary Brook corridors, which provide attractive footpath routes with nationally rare fen habitat. A significant area of the site has local nature conservation designations and would therefore be unsuitable for development. Part of the Lye Valley SSSI lies just outside the golf course, and could potentially be affected by changes to water supply and hydrology or by additional recreational pressures. Any development should improve access to undeveloped areas of the site whilst also maintaining and creating additional areas of natural habitat.

Vehicular access to the site could significantly limit the developable areas. Whilst the eastern part of the golf course could be accessed from Hollow Way, access to the western part of the site is likely to be much more problematic. Hill Top Road would not be suitable for a main access, and other options such as through to Barracks Lane would need to be explored. The above considerations suggest that the golf course, particularly the western section, should only be developed if there is a proven need for this site to meet housing targets.

Other areas of open space will only be allocated for development if a proven need for that land can be demonstrated, and the open space is not required for the well being of the community it serves. This will be considered as part of the Site Allocations DPD.

Southfield Golf Course – East	Pros	Cons
<p>Alternative option 1 Allocate the Eastern part of Southfield Golf Course for development for housing (may also be joint with the Western section – see options below).</p>	<p>The site is in a very sustainable location close to bus, pedestrian and cycle routes to the city centre, to the hospitals, and major employment areas</p> <p>Would improve public access to some areas of the site</p>	<p>Likely to be local concern over traffic generation</p> <p>Loss of greenfield land</p> <p>Potential adverse impact on adjoining areas designated for their nature conservation interest</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 Do not allocate the Eastern part of Southfield Golf Course for development for housing.</p>	<p>Retains open space and golf club although not publicly accessible</p> <p>Would not increase traffic in the local area</p>	<p>Alternative sites in, potentially, less sustainable locations may be required to meet housing need instead</p>

Southfield Golf Course – West	Pros	Cons
<p>Alternative option 1 Allocate the Western part of Southfield Golf Course for development for housing (may also be joint with the Eastern section – see options above).</p>	<p>The site is in a very sustainable location close to bus, pedestrian and cycle routes to the city centre, to the hospitals, and major employment areas</p> <p>Would improve public access to some areas of the site</p>	<p>Likely to be local concern over traffic generation. Vehicular access to this part of the site would be difficult to achieve</p> <p>Loss of a large area of greenfield land between Cowley and Headington</p> <p>Potential adverse impact on adjoining areas designated for their nature conservation interest</p>
<p>Alternative option 2 Do not allocate the Western part of Southfield Golf Course for development for housing.</p>	<p>Retains open space and golf club although not publicly accessible</p> <p>Would not increase traffic in the local area</p>	<p>Alternative sites in, potentially, less sustainable locations may be required to meet housing need instead</p>

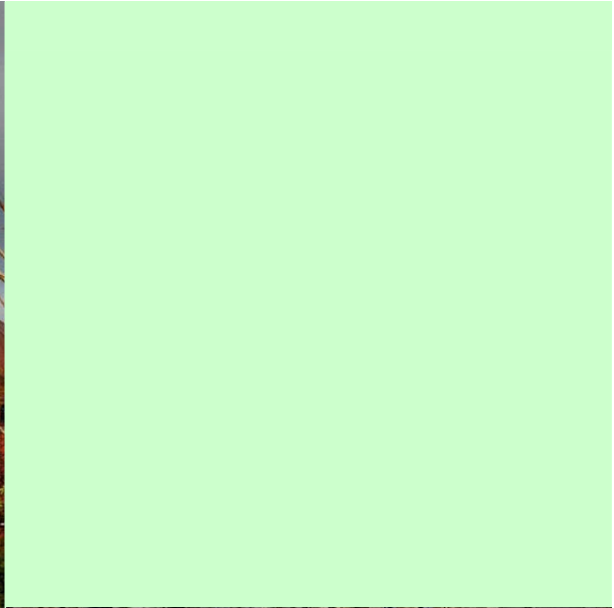
How could these broad locations for development meet housing need?

The section on the 'Level of housing growth and timing of delivery' (page 21) showed how Oxford could meet the South East Plan target. It also referred to Oxford's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)⁴⁷ having evidence that the City Council's preferred option of 550 dwellings per year (11,000) could be met within Oxford.

The SHLAA indicates that if a number of strategic sites were allocated for housing, then the 11,000 target could be met. Current estimates are that brownfield land is likely to deliver approximately 8,000 dwellings. The capacity of the Summertown Safeguarded Land and the east portion of the Southfield golf course could deliver around 900 dwellings in total. This leaves around 2,100 dwellings required to meet the 11,000 target. Barton Safeguarded Land plus the west portion of Southfield golf course are of a size that could meet this requirement.

It is likely that some further brownfield sites will be identified once the final version of the SHLAA is published but at this stage it is not possible to give an indication of the number of dwellings these might yield. These further brownfield sites should be able to contribute in some way to the 11,000 dwellings. This might alleviate the requirement for one or part of a strategic site, or might lead to the management of a strategic site to ensure that all deliverable brownfield opportunities have been maximised before greenfield land it is developed.

⁴⁷ Oxford's draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2007 (Oxford City Council) (Open for public consultation at the same time as the Core Strategy Preferred Options)



Implementation
and
monitoring



DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

Spatial objective

Ensure that all new development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure provision and community facilities

Development tends to place new demands on the local infrastructure. Transportation may be needed for people living or working on the new development. New school places may be required for children living in new houses. Waste water and sewerage services may need to be updated. Other needs are also created by new developments include open space, and public art.

Policy and guidance

Circular 05/2005⁴⁸, the draft South East Plan, Planning obligations: Practice Guidance⁴⁹ and Securing community benefits through the planning process⁵⁰ all contain guidance on the appropriateness and methods of achieving developer contributions. There is currently a consultation on Planning Gain Supplement⁵¹ being undertaken, the results of which could affect influence the Core Strategy submission document.

The Planning Obligations SPD⁵² sets out the range of infrastructure needs which will be generated by new development. This SPD will be adopted in 2007.

Key Issues

Development should not place an unreasonable burden on existing infrastructure. Oxford already needs careful management of its existing infrastructure. It is essential that development should not take place until the infrastructure needed to support it is available.

It is not expected that all necessary infrastructure will be physically provided by the developer, or on the development site, but rather that contributions will be provided by the mechanism of a Section 106 agreement. It is expected that contributions will reflect the need for new infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the new development.

Not all developments are large enough to require a new school, a new sewer or a new bus stop. But they may have a cumulative effect that will lead to local infrastructure becoming overloaded. In this case, contributions should be pooled. The size of the contributions should be calculated by need created by development. Contributions can be financial, or on-site measures where appropriate.

The Government is proposing an amendment to the existing system of Planning Obligations with the introduction of Planning Gain Supplement. The City Council will continue to work to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is provided to match the needs of the proposed development.

Developer contributions

Preferred approach:

Permission will only be given for developments where the necessary infrastructure, services, facilities and amenities to support them are in place, or will be provided when needed.

⁴⁸ Circular 05/2005 Planning obligations (2005) ODPM

⁴⁹ Planning obligations: Practice Guidance (Aug 2006) DCLG

⁵⁰ Securing community benefits through the planning process (Aug 2006) Audit Commission

⁵¹ Changes to Planning Obligations: a Planning-gain Supplement consultation (Dec 2006) DCLG

⁵² Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2007) Oxford City Council

MONITORING

Monitoring plays a crucial role in the overall planning process as it allows us to assess the implementation and effects of adopted planning policies and also to respond more effectively and quickly to new circumstances that can occur in Oxford. The City Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) in December every year.

The monitoring framework will be set out in the submission version of the Core Strategy. It will be structured around the Core Strategy themes, which will be linked with the related spatial objectives and sustainability appraisal objectives. The Core Strategy policies will be accompanied by targets, indicators and information regarding baseline data, and sources will be provided when available or appropriate.

Different types of indicators will fulfil different tasks in the monitoring framework:

- **Core indicators** – A group of indicators set nationally for all local authorities to provide data in a consistent format.
- **Local indicators** – Indicators selected to complement the information provided by the Core indicators and to highlight key issues in Oxford.
- **Contextual indicators** – Indicators that show the baseline position of the wider social, environmental and economic circumstances against which the policies operate.
- **Significant effect indicators** – A group of indicators that assess the effects of the adopted policies against the sustainability appraisal targets.

SUGGESTED GENERAL GLOSSARY[– as explanation or reference for acronyms and technical terms – no need for precise definitions]

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