

# FOREWORD

(To be added)

## **Next steps**

Gathering the views of stakeholders and the public has been key throughout the production of the AAP, to ensure that the framework created is sound. You may give your views on the policies of the AAP. Your comments will be considered by an independent Inspector, who will examine the document (which is programmed for January 2008) and make any changes necessary so it can be adopted.

The period for making comments is from Friday 1 June to Friday 13 July 2007. Please write them on the form available on the City Council's website ([www.oxford.gov.uk/ldf](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/ldf)), at the Council Offices and at the Westgate Library.

This submission document has been formally endorsed by the City Council as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the West End. Once adopted the AAP will be a formal development plan document and will form the basis of all planning decisions in the West End. It will also be used to stimulate and guide the renaissance of the area.

# INTRODUCTION

## **The West End**

Oxford City Council has prepared this Area Action Plan (AAP) to guide future development and change in the West End, the southwest corner of the City centre.

Currently, the West End of Oxford is under-utilised and does not match Oxford's international reputation, or live up to its potential as a City centre area of the highest quality. As it is part of the centre of our historic city, its renaissance is important to the long-term success of the City as a whole.

A high quality and mixed-use development as befits its location and role will be created. This is not a simple housing-led or office-led redevelopment project. The renaissance of the West End is not just about buildings and their uses, but about creating a community that can mature. It is about creating an exciting piece of City centre for the people who will live, work, study or spend leisure time there. It is about creating a vibrant, successful and sustainable community.

The renaissance of the West End is an exciting project with great potential.

Insert **map** of the West End and its location

## **The AAP**

This document has been produced by the City Council in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), landowners and developers, amenity groups and local people. This partnership approach does not end with this document's publication but continues through to the implementation and delivery of the West End renaissance.

The AAP uses a wide range of tools to influence the type of place that the West End will become; it does not rely simply on land-use policies to deliver the change proposed for the West End. Many of the plans and proposals for the West End could not be delivered solely through the planning process, but require the continued involvement of the various partners.

The AAP is both a policy and a delivery tool. It goes beyond traditional land use policy documents by considering issues of funding, timing and delivery. The AAP identifies many key infrastructure projects that will contribute to the renaissance of the West End, for example investment in the public realm and spaces.

By guiding the types of development to take place in the West End, and setting out in broad terms when and what development will take place, the Area Action Plan will become the document through which the vision and objectives for the West End can be achieved.

Instead of considering a series of individual sites that happen to be located near to each other, the AAP has been designed to address the issues and needs of the West End as a whole. The relationships between the development sites and those areas of the West End where change is not expected are very important in achieving the aims of the project. No one site will be able to deliver on its own the kind of change that is sought; instead it is the sum of the parts that will deliver the renaissance.

The renaissance of the West End will be an extended process, not a short-term event. Some of the plans and proposals will take longer than others to come to

fruition. The AAP will continue to be a living document. It will be monitored and updated if necessary, to ensure it continues to be relevant and effective until the renaissance is complete.

### How to use this document

The AAP in its entirety (text, policy boxes and appendices) comprises the City Council's policies and vision for the West End. For ease of reference some helpful sections of the policy have been highlighted in the policy boxes. However all text should be seen as a component part of the policy approach.

Throughout the document bullet points have been used to illustrate aspects of the project that are either commitments of the City Council or tasks that will be carried out with others in the West End partnership, for example:

- The City Council will continue to work with the Housing Corporation to seek Social Housing Grant towards the cost of delivering affordable housing in the West End.

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Developers will be required to contribute towards various infrastructure projects that will enable the renaissance to be delivered and the West End to function smoothly; where a policy or project will involve developer funding this is indicated by the use of the symbol in the margin.

## VISION

The West End project aims to transform this key part of the City centre, raising it to the standard the Oxford's reputation deserves. The renaissance of the West End will look to the future; developments will be economically and socially sustainable have environmental sustainability at their heart.

It is vital that new development in the centre of Oxford should enhance its appeal, reinforce its economic stability and create a strong community. Successful City centre areas contain a wide mix of uses that create activity at different times of day. Within the West End there is significant potential to re-establish high-quality 'urban-living', providing much-needed new housing. It is also important that the West End is attractive to visitors, employees and businesses. The West End will be able to provide new leisure, retail, community and tourist attractions as well as some office space.

To meet the opportunities that exist for improvement, it is necessary to ensure an attractive environment is created, with good public spaces and high-quality design. The spatial vision diagram helps to show where major improvements are needed, and gives an overall idea of how the West End should be developed. The diagram shows key streets in which public realm improvements will increase the attractiveness of the area for all those using it. Attractive streets will be created, with room to wander. Interspersed along the streets will be a variety of spaces, to pause and relax or to gather. The diagram shows public squares and open spaces in the West End that will be created or enhanced.

An attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists will reward those who get out of their cars and changes to bus provision and to the train station will help people travel to the area. New routes will be created to make the area easy to move around.

These are shown on the spatial vision diagram. The West End renaissance will be delivered with care, with a view to solving some existing environmental and access problems, and to prevent new problems developing in the future.

There are many existing attractive features in the West End that provide an excellent basis for the renaissance. Waterways, hidden away for decades, will be opened up for everyone to enjoy, and the edge of Castle Mill Stream will form a green route through the West End. With careful design the many historic features in the West End will become well integrated into new developments and the rich heritage of the area will be brought to life.

The sites shown in the Spatial Vision diagram are the key sites that will have the biggest effect on the renaissance of the West End and the improvement of the City centre.

Insert: **Spatial Vision Diagram** (showing: water, key streets for public realm improvement, public spaces (green and urban), new links to be created)

### **Achieving the vision**

The West End Partnership will continue its hard work towards the achievement of this vision. This Area Action Plan is one tool that will be used to do this; as such it has been structured around four key aims; the West End renaissance will create:

- An attractive network of streets and spaces
- A high quality built environment
- A strong and balanced community
- A vibrant and successful West End

The final but very important aspect of the West End renaissance to be addressed in this document is Delivery and Implementation. It is key that the policies and plans set out in the AAP are delivered on the ground; a set of well-meaning policies alone will not deliver the change envisaged for the West End.

#### **Key values of the West End renaissance:**

##### *Demand excellence*

In the West End, only the best will do. To improve quality of life in Oxford, the highest quality in every aspect of planning and execution will be expected.

##### *Think future*

Whenever new ground is broken, we must build something our grandchildren will be proud of. We'll be forward-thinking, socially responsible and strive to create something memorable and lasting for future generations.

##### *Collaborate*

To bring the shared vision of Oxford's future to life, we will engage with stakeholders and future users, asking for and responding to their views.

##### *Seek balance*

We will strive to find the common ground as we develop the new quarter – balancing old with new, public realm with private space...

##### *Be open*

The new quarter will be open, welcoming and accessible to all. Open space and open access will be integral to the development. We'll also be open-minded and encourage open and honest dialogue.

##### *Imagine!*

The new quarter will delight and surprise. It will release Oxford's energy, diversity and creativity. We'll be innovative in our thinking and pioneering in our delivery. In the new quarter, we won't be afraid to do things differently!

## **AN ATTRACTIVE NETWORK OF STREETS AND SPACES**

Streets are vital for allowing people to access and move around the area easily. Walking, cycling and use of public transport can be encouraged by the good design of streets, and motor traffic can be carefully managed to minimise its impact.

The creation of attractive streets and spaces is crucial to making the West End a successful and exciting place. Well-designed streets can also be places to meet and to interact. The West End will provide public spaces for people to linger and to gather for events and festivals, as well as quiet and tranquil green spaces.

Streets and the spaces between buildings are often referred to as the public realm. Most people's perception of an area is affected by their experience of the street environment and public realm. At the moment, the public realm is poor in many areas of the West End. Residents, workers and visitors deserve a public realm and public spaces of the highest quality. Improving the quality of the public realm is a key objective of the West End renaissance.

### **Public realm enhancements**

The public realm will be improved to make spaces more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists, who will be given priority whenever possible. Elements such as lighting, public art, signs, street furniture, trees, plants and surfacing materials contribute to the attractiveness and functioning of the public realm. Certain principles should guide the design of these elements:

- minimise clutter on the streets and in parks;
- always consider safety;
- find innovative technical and design solutions;
- choose materials that are sustainable and, where practicable, from a local source;
- ensure a high quality, durable finish with a contemporary design; and
- elements should be part of a design 'family' and relate well to each other.

The West End Design Code is an essential element of the AAP, crucial in creating the type of place the West End will become. The Design Code is attached as Appendix 1. It provides a framework for the design of streets and buildings.

As part of the West End renaissance project it is planned to review the City centre Public Realm Strategy. The new document entitled "Improving the Street Environment" will be used to inform the design of the public realm in the West End. This will ensure a consistent approach, setting out a 'palette' of materials and principles that will help create a high-quality public realm in the City centre, including the West End. It is particularly the case in the most highly trafficked streets that not enough attention has been given to the pedestrian experience. For several streets in the West End improvements to the public realm are essential.

Oxpens Road (including Thames Street and Hollybush Row) is the only through-road available to connect the main northern and western routes into the City to the main southern route. In pedestrian, cycle and public realm terms, many people see Oxpens Road as a problem. The street was engineered for a higher volume of traffic than it carries, resulting in a wide street with no sense of human scale, where traffic is intimidating. The road bisects the heart of the West End, acting as a barrier to pedestrian movement. The feel and ambience of Oxpens Road needs to be transformed as part of the West End renaissance.

Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street form the two main approach roads to the heart of the City centre from the railway station and the west. They lead out from Frideswide Square towards the main shopping and leisure areas. These roads form boundaries to the Island Site (the site bounded by Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street) and Worcester Street car park, which are key sites for development. These busy and important routes are not attractive spaces for pedestrians, as they have narrow footways and a poor public realm. Traffic modelling has shown that it is possible to narrow traffic to one lane in each direction in Hythe Bridge Street. This would enable the pavement to be significantly widened.

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#### **Policy WE1: Public Realm**

The public realm will be enhanced across the West End, and in particular in the key streets shown on the map X below. Streets and public spaces should be designed in accordance with the framework set out in the Design Code (Appendix 1) and the strategy set out in “Improving the Street Environment” (once it is published).

- The City Council, working with the County Council as Highway Authority, will publish “Improving the Street Environment” to update the City centre Public Realm Strategy.
- The City Council, working with the Highway Authority, will ensure the up-keep of the public realm to a high standard and will work with developers to achieve this.

#### **New links**

Ease of movement for pedestrians depends on good urban design. It is important that the street network is designed so that routes are where people wish to go and are easy to identify.

The existing street pattern and connectivity (the way streets are linked) have been analysed as a movement and accessibility study by Space Syntax to inform the Design Code. Routes have been identified that would increase accessibility around the area. Map X (below) identifies the routes for new streets through the area.

A new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Thames to join Oxpens Field to the Thames towpath is proposed. This would link the West End to Osney Mead and the West Oxford Cycle Route. Improvements will also be made to the route running east from the pedestrian bridge over the railway, along Osney Lane and onto Castle Mill Stream. New links will be needed through the development sites at Oxpens, the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, and the Westgate Centre. The planning permission for the Westgate centre redevelopment incorporates a new bridge over Castle Mill Stream and new links through the site.

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#### **Policy WE2: New links**

New links as mapped in Map X will be provided. The new pedestrian and cycle links identified should be created to improve access and movement.

Development of sites on or near those identified for new links will be expected to help deliver them and proposals must not prejudice their delivery.

New routes should be built to Highway Authority adoption standards.

- The City Council will work with the Highway Authority to ensure high quality maintenance of rights of way and footpaths.

### **Designing streets to reduce the impact of traffic**

Street-design measures such as traffic calming to reduce speeds, shared space, pedestrianisation, signal changes and redesigning streets and junctions all help to minimise the impact of traffic on the public realm. Changes to street design and how it affects traffic and motorists' behaviour will be essential to ensure an attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

An important part of the renaissance of the West End is to facilitate the pedestrianisation of Queen Street, one of the key retail streets in the City centre. Queen Street currently plays a key role in the bus network carrying around 85 buses an hour at peak times, acting as part of a loop for turning buses and as a convenient location for bus stops. Pedestrianisation of this street will improve the quality of the retail experience and remove the conflict between buses and pedestrians. The Highway Authority has investigated new bus routing options and identified some technically feasible solutions to allow the pedestrianisation of Queen Street. One solution is to make use of a new bus priority route along Oxpens Road and Hollybush Row. This, combined with improvements at Frideswide Square, should result better bus penetration into the West End and in an easy route for buses needing to turn.

The redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre will create new bus stopping areas in Castle Street and Norfolk Street, which will allow the bus stops to be removed from Queen Street. However, some bus services terminating in the City centre will need to loop elsewhere when Queen Street is pedestrianised. The redevelopment of other sites in the West End creates the opportunity for the current bus priority route to be extended.

In order to facilitate a bus priority route along Hollybush Row, cars will be redirected to use Becket Street as well as Hollybush Row. Becket Street will be made two-way. Improvements will take place at the junction with Frideswide Square and Hollybush Row that will allow buses to flow freely and reduce congestion in Frideswide Square. A new junction will also be created on Oxpens Road with a new road that will pass through the Oxpens site. Junction changes may be implemented at other points along Oxpens Road to give buses priority.

An aspiration of the City Council is to reduce the negative impact of scheduled coaches on the City centre. Scheduled coaches include the airport coaches and the frequent coach service to London. The Highway Authority will investigate a range of solutions to remove coaches from Gloucester Green and re-route services so that they no longer use High Street and St Aldates. However, this is part of wider transport considerations beyond the scope of the West End renaissance project. Possibilities will be investigated as part of a separate project and the review of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (2006-2011).

An extended bus priority route along Oxpens Road and Hollybush Row would enable scheduled coaches to avoid Castle Street and Norfolk Street. It would also offer the potential for buses to loop without using Queen Street. This work will be taken forward to the detailed design stage, when air quality and other impacts that depend on detailed design features will be tested.

The Highway Authority is investigating a comprehensive traffic management system to improve bus journey times, air quality and the street environment in the City centre and the inner parts of the main roads leading into the West End (Abingdon, Botley,

Woodstock and Banbury Roads). This system would co-ordinate traffic signals outside the City centre with traffic flows around Frideswide Square and other junctions, to ensure traffic does not clog up the City centre. This system would also allow Frideswide Square to be simplified without causing additional delays to buses or inconveniencing pedestrians and cyclists.

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#### **Policy WE3: Redesign of streets and junctions in the West End**

Planning permission will not be granted for the development of sites on or near those streets or junctions identified for improvements if it would prejudice the delivery of the transport improvements set out above.

As the West End is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport it is appropriate to restrict the amount of parking provision. By managing parking, be it public, private or residential, unnecessary car trips to the West End can be discouraged and efficient use of land can be made. The City Council recognises the value of public parking provision to the economic viability of the City centre and wishes to maintain the current level of provision. Levels of private parking, both residential and non-residential, will be minimal in the West End and car-free developments will be encouraged (see Appendix X for parking standards).

Transport Assessments should assess the impact of a proposed development on the highway network and details of measures to mitigate that impact both within the vicinity of the site and within the wider context. (See the Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans Supplementary Planning Document (2007) for more details.)

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#### **Policy WE4: Public parking**

Planning permission will only be granted for the redevelopment of Worcester Street Car Park when the City Council is satisfied that appropriate alternative public car parking provision will be made. This may be through provision of on street parking on Oxpens Road and by increased capacity at Becket Street car park.

- The City Council will work with the Highway Authority to take forward the detailed design work and implementation of schemes to improve traffic management.
- The City Council will work with the Highway Authority to test possible solutions to re-route scheduled coach services so that they are removed from the High Street and St. Aldates.
- The City and County Councils commit to working with the bus companies to implement bus and coach routing changes in the City centre to deliver the pedestrianisation of Queen Street.
- The City and County Councils will seek to maintain the existing levels of public parking available in the City centre.

#### **Urban public spaces**

At present, the principal urban public spaces in the West End are Bonn Square, Frideswide Square, Gloucester Green, Carfax and the new space at the Castle (which is widely seen as a good example of opening up new spaces and the use of high quality materials). There are also the important 'arrival spaces' of Gloucester Green bus station and the railway station. These spaces vary greatly in size, quality and function. The intention in the West End is to create a series of linked spaces, each with its own feel and function, which will encourage cultural/street activities. It is proposed to enhance and in some cases redesign the existing public spaces and to create new ones.

Frideswide Square needs to be greatly improved. Hamilton-Baillie Associates undertook an appraisal of the space at Frideswide Square and produced some initial designs based on shared space principles and intended to build on pedestrian 'desire lines' (routes people want to take), clarify the route from the City centre to the railway station, promote steady continuous vehicular flow and improve safety. With changes planned to the railway station and the reconfiguration of the forecourt, this area should be transformed into a more attractive and welcoming space with improved circulation.

The railway station performs a vital role bringing visitors to the City centre. Increasing capacity combined with a station that is welcoming and easy to use, is key to ensuring that people will want to use the railway, which is a highly sustainable means of travel. One option to increase capacity at the railway station would be to create a new south-facing bay platform on part of Becket Street car park. The use of Beckett Street Car Park is currently restricted to rail passengers. The current amount of parking on Becket Street car park should be retained by decking the rest of the car park. It will be important to ensure that the decking does not adversely affect the setting of St Thomas' Church.

Gloucester Green is a modern square surrounded by shops and restaurants and is home to regular farmers, food and craft markets. Redevelopment of the cinema (while maintaining the existing use) would present an opportunity to create more 'active' frontage and a more obvious access to the square, helping to integrate Gloucester Green and George Street.

Bonn Square will be redesigned becoming an uncluttered area that can be used flexibly for day-to-day and programmed activities, while respecting the history of the site. The City Council is the lead authority in building the winning scheme of an international design competition, with the County Council and SEEDA as its partners.

Carfax (the space in front of Carfax Tower) is located at the junction of four key streets that currently functions as a central meeting point. The removal of buses from Queen Street will allow public realm improvements that will greatly improve the quality and attractiveness of the space.

Oxpens Square will be a new civic square on the Oxpens site that could host festivals and other events. The space will be surrounded by new buildings with an urban and civic quality, which are likely to include the new joint City and County Council offices and a hotel with a conference centre (as set out later). The new square will be positioned to catch the sun and to be well connected, so that it will be well used. It should incorporate high quality materials and street furniture. The square will cover an area of approximately 2500m<sup>2</sup>.

Worcester Street car park is currently used as a surface level car park. New development should enhance the setting of Nuffield College and the Castle Site. The development of this site should accommodate a public space as part of any development; this could be linked to the opening up of the Castle Mill Stream frontage. Another option could be to open up a further stretch of the Oxford Canal that once passed through the site. Oxford Preservation Trust, Nuffield College and the County Council have commissioned a Conservation Appraisal of the wider area around the car park site to inform future development decisions.

Thames Square forms part of the plans for the redeveloped Westgate Shopping Centre. Part of the design accommodates an area for buses to turn, stop and layover.

**Policy WE5: Public spaces**

The City Council will seek the delivery of a series of public spaces in the West End in line with the principles outlined above. Development of sites on or near those identified for public spaces will be expected to help create the spaces, and proposals must not prejudice their delivery.

The incorporation of other public/semi-public spaces of a more intimate scale within schemes will be encouraged as long as buildings do not front onto these spaces at the expense of street frontages.

**Policy WE6: Frideswide Square and railway station forecourt**

Frideswide Square and the railway station forecourt will be improved to become more attractive, welcoming and better functioning spaces.

Planning permission will be granted for development that improves the capacity of the railway station as long as it is well designed, welcoming, easy to use and well connected to the existing station. It is essential that any development of the railway station improves it for passengers and creates a strong sense of arrival to Oxford.

- The City Council will continue to work with the Highways Authority to take forward the indicative designs for Frideswide Square. Central Government funding for further design work will be sought from the New Growth Points fund.
- The City Council is committed to the management, promotion and organisation of activities and cultural events in the spaces, such as the Gloucester Green markets and possible festivals in Oxpens Square.
- The City Council commits to working with Network Rail, the station operator (currently First Great Western) and the County Council to improve the railway station. Part funding has already been secured for the development of the station, including Access to Oxford funding of £6million.
- The City Council will work with the Highway Authority to find a solution which would allow scheduled coaches to be removed from Gloucester Green.

**Green spaces and water**

At present, there is relatively little publicly accessible green open space in the West End. The main existing spaces include a narrow strip of land alongside Castle Mill Stream, Oxpens Field and several treed areas, such as Paradise Square and the area around St. Thomas' Church. The West End also has the benefit of several waterways: the Thames, Castle Mill Stream, Wareham Stream and Oxford Canal that terminates just outside the area. A network of green spaces will be provided in the West End that includes pocket parks, and tree-lined streets. This would involve enhancing features that are already there and supplementing them where appropriate. Trees will be planted at key points and in particular along Oxpens Road.

Oxpens Field is the largest area of green space in the West End. The field is used for informal recreational activities such as walking, although people currently make relatively little use of the space as it has little to attract them. As part of the renaissance of the West End Oxpens Field will be configured to create a park offering a range of facilities that is attractive and accessible for existing and new users of the area. Oxpens field should be designed to work as a linking space between Grandpont Nature Park and the City centre.

Castle Mill Stream offers significant opportunities in terms of amenity, recreational and biodiversity value, but it is largely hidden at present. The renaissance of the West End provides the opportunity to transform Castle Mill Stream into an attractive streamside park, which offers informal recreation, a route through the West End, and a wildlife corridor. Castle Mill Stream already enables some wildlife, such as fish and aquatic invertebrates, to move between the north and south of the City centre; it should be enhanced, enabling new species of plants and animals (such as water voles) to colonise the area. It is important that new development should face the stream, but it should be noted that some adjoining land is in Flood Zone 3 (see Appendix X), which will affect the design of such schemes.

The Thames, which forms the southern boundary of the West End, represents one of Oxford's most important natural assets. It is of value both for recreation and in contributing to Oxford's landscape. This section of the Thames is tree lined and relatively attractive. It is, however, largely hidden and public accessibility is not obvious. Development on part of the Oxpens site will provide an opportunity to improve access to the Thames. An attractive frontage onto the river will be created that maintains much of the green, tree-lined frontage and a new bridge between Oxpens Field and Osney Mead will be provided as outlined earlier.

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**Policy WE7: Castle Mill Stream**

A streamside park will be created along Castle Mill Stream to create a route through the West End. New developments along side the stream should face the stream and implement the scheme attached as Appendix X.

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**Policy WE8: Oxpens Field**

Oxpens Field will be enhanced to create a high quality open space with areas for formal and informal play, planted gardens and a wetland nature area on the south of the park, along the Thames and Castle Mill Stream. Biodiversity will be enhanced. Flood compensation measures will be implemented on the field. Development should face onto the field.

**Policy WE9: The Thames**

Development on the Oxpens site must carefully consider its relationship to the Thames and allow for pedestrian and cycle access along the river frontage and improved access to the river frontage.

Waterside development proposals should protect or create wildlife habitats along the watercourse.

- The City Council will work with the owners of land adjoining Castle Mill Stream to implement an attractive, publicly accessible, streamside park.
- The City Council will manage Oxpens Field as a key area of open space for recreation.
- The City Council and River Thames Alliance will pursue the possibility of a waterways partnership to improve recreation management along the Thames.

Insert **map X** to summarise chapter

# A HIGH QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

A high quality public realm is only one aspect of creating a high quality environment. The standard of design and architecture is also fundamental to the West End's renaissance. Good design of the public realm and buildings can attract people, investment and activity to a place. This is a 21<sup>st</sup> century renaissance, and the building style should be contemporary. However the existing character of the area should be built upon and the historic buildings and street patterns used as a basis for new design. Developers should be conscious that we are adding a new layer of history.

## Historic environment

There is a great deal of historic interest contained within the West End. Often, this has not been dealt with sensitively. It is important to understand the historic qualities of the West End as it is redeveloped. The key is to ensure the positive combination of new 21st-century development with the older, historic features. Many historic buildings and street patterns remain in the area and provide a valuable prompt towards what should be developed. The visual impact of new development could add a contemporary element to views of Oxford's historic skyline and existing historic buildings, without destroying their nature. The areas historic interest should not be seen as a negative constraint on development; rather it should be seen as a positive and valuable opportunity to root new development in the historic fabric of a long-established part of Oxford. The origins of the area, and its proximity to Oxford's historic core, must be remembered as new development takes place. The City Council's Conservation Team has produced a study which sets out details of the historic qualities of the West End (see background paper X). The whole of the West End lies within the City Centre Archaeological Area; an archaeological assessment will be required for alongside a planning application for any scheme that would involve significant breaking of the ground in the West End.

### Policy WE10: Historic environment

New development should respect the character and setting of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and buildings of local interest. It should enhance existing local interest. Applicants should demonstrate in their Design and Access Statement (see Appendix X) that new development has been designed with an understanding of the area's heritage, street patterns, views, and important buildings.

## Design and Construction

Much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century development in the West End is of low quality. It is key to the renaissance of the area that design should be carefully considered in all new developments. Not all new developments should strive to be landmark buildings; it is important to design all buildings carefully to relate to their setting and to the public spaces they frame.

To promote a high standard of design, a Design Code has been produced to set a framework for designing, developing and building in the West End. The Design Code presents the aspirations and requirements for the new buildings and spaces; it is a tool for describing the kind of place the West End should become. The Design Code sets limits that do not impose style but provide a framework within which to reflect the essential qualities of good urban places. The guidelines are intended to stimulate innovation and quality. The Design Code is an important part of the AAP and is set out at Appendix X.

**Policy WE11: Design Code**

Planning permission will only be granted for new developments that follow the framework set out in the Design code.

There is a variety of styles in the West End, and it is an ideal location for innovative, distinctive and high quality architecture. Appendix X includes a template for the Design and Access Statements that must be submitted with planning applications. Applicants should use the template to set out the design approach and reasoning, stating how local context has been taken into account, why particular materials have been specified and how the requirements of the Design Code are met. A Design Review Panel has been set up to advise on proposals for larger and more sensitive sites or where specialist advice is required in the West End. Their advice should be sought at the pre-application stage.

The quality of the architecture and buildings developed in the West End is not just about style and statement; it also depends on the standards of construction employed.

Buildings should be designed to have the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the occupants. This can mean, for example, designing multi-use buildings with different uses on different floors of the building. Buildings that can accommodate different uses on different floors will be particularly appropriate in the West End. Active uses should be on the ground floor next to the public space, and less active uses such as residential accommodation or offices should be on the floors above (and to the rear). Even if the initial occupier does not require it, it ensures the longevity of the building to have the ground floor built with higher ceilings (approximately 3.5 metres) than the upper floors to allow the ground floor to be used for a greater variety of uses. This is particularly relevant in the main streets where there is a need for active uses and where there is most likely to be change in uses over time.

Houses designed so that they can be easily adapted (for example through house extensions or conversion to compatible uses such as live-work units) have a longer lifespan. This type of adaptable house design will be encouraged.

Buildings and public spaces must meet the needs of everyone, especially those with pushchairs, people with disabilities and the elderly. The City Council will continue to require at least 15% of all new market houses to be built to "Lifetime Homes" standard, or their equivalent, as set out in the Local Plan policy. The Lifetime Homes standard is produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and sets out criteria for designing residential units to be easily and cheaply adaptable should the occupants develop disabilities through accident, illness or old age.

One way to promote quality and sustainability is to use Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) (which includes off-site manufacturing). This can improve quality, minimise waste and reduce the number of accidents during the build. It allows the site to be prepared while the building is done elsewhere in a factory. Developers in the West End should actively consider the use of MMC, which would reduce their costs and enable quick, clean construction, minimising any disruption caused in this busy area of the City centre.

**Policy WE12: Design and construction**

High quality architecture will be expected in all new development. It should be demonstrated in planning applications that buildings are designed to be flexible and long lasting.

A Design and Access Statement is required to be submitted with all planning applications. A template that **should** be followed is attached as Appendix X.

On each site comprising residential development, 15% of all new market houses must be built to “Lifetime Homes” standard, or their equivalent.

- The City Council will continue to facilitate meetings of the West End Design Review Panel when appropriate.

**Resource efficiency**

The City Council requires new developments to use energy, water and materials efficiently and all large developments to incorporate renewable energy technologies as one way of addressing climate change on a local level. The re-use and responsible use of construction materials, energy-efficient systems and technologies can improve living and working conditions and reduce building running costs. There are several specific requirements for new developments (of 10 or more dwellings or non-residential developments of 2,000m<sup>2</sup>), including the generation of at least 20% of energy used from on-site renewable sources. The Local Plan and Natural Resource Impact Analysis Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provide more detail on these requirements. The City Council has also signed up to the manifesto produced by EcoSE (a partnership for better buildings in the South East), which includes a commitment to the EcoHomes “excellent” standard (which may become level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Homes).

A project has identified that there are potentially many benefits to a community sustainable energy scheme for the West End. The scheme will link developments to an area-wide combined heating, cooling and electricity network. The generation and distribution of heat and cooling on a district basis offers important efficiency savings in terms of carbon dioxide emissions and also in terms of floorspace and plant requirements for each building. A further phase of the project will design the scheme and is likely to involve the setting up of an Energy Services Company (ESCO).

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**Policy WE13: Resource efficiency**

Planning permission will only be granted for new development that complies with the requirements of the NRA.

A Community Energy Scheme will be delivered in the West End. Developments in the West End will be required to connect to the scheme where practicable. Development in the West End that connects to the Community Energy Scheme will be able to count this contribution towards their on site renewable energy requirements.

- The City Council will work with an Energy Services Company (ESCO) to develop and run a Community Energy Scheme.
- The City and County Councils are committed to ensuring the new joint City and County offices are connected to the community energy scheme (if practicable).

## **Flooding**

The River Thames and other local waterways add diversity and interest to the West End. These waterways offer opportunities in terms of the quality of the open space and the outlook of buildings. However in Oxford flood risk will always be an issue that will need to be carefully dealt with.

Flood risk in the West End will be greater for future generations because of the impact of climate change. Development in the West End will need to respect this natural risk and show imagination in its response. Flood risk must not be made worse – now or in the future – as a result of new development in the West End.

The City Council has completed its Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (see Appendix x), which provides a starting point to develop options for balancing the management of flood risk with development proposals.

Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) will be required for all developments in flood risk zones 3 and 2, and for any developments of 1 hectare or over in flood risk zone 1. The FRA should identify and assess the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the development, demonstrate how these flood risks will be managed taking climate change into account. Certain developments are less vulnerable to flood risk and may be more suitable in areas at risk of flooding. Where there are variations in flood risk across a site, more vulnerable uses should be directed to parts of this site at less risk of flooding. The lower floors of buildings in areas at medium and high probability for flooding should also be reserved for less vulnerable uses. More vulnerable uses may be appropriate on the upper floors provided safe access can be provided. Where there is a low probability of limited shallow depth water, the use of flood resilient buildings may be an acceptable way to reduce the consequences of flooding. More detailed guidance is given in Planning Policy Statement 25: Planning and Flood Risk.

Most developments involve the creation of impermeable surfaces that can increase the rate of surface water run-off and flood risk. In order to avoid this problem the surface water drainage system for new development should be such that the volume and peaks flow rates of surface water leaving the developed site will be no greater than the rate prior to the proposed developments, unless specific compensating measures can be provided off site. Developments in the West End are expected to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems where practicable to limit the rate of run-off or preferably reduce the existing rate. Some measures designed to reduce water demand, such as rain water harvesting, may also help to reduce flood risk.

### **Policy WE14: Flooding**

Planning permission will not be granted for any development except water compatible uses and essential infrastructure in the areas of highest flood risk (Flood Zone 3B).

Development on sites in any area of flood risk must include a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and to implement the necessary mitigation measures. All other developments of over 1 hectare will also be required to carry out an FRA.

Developments in the West End should use sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs), where practicable. The map in Appendix x shows areas of flood risk.

- The City Council will support the Environment Agency in continuing to seek possible flood alleviation measures for Oxford.

## **A STRONG AND BALANCED COMMUNITY**

The West End is a very sustainable location for residential development. Being located in the heart of Oxford, it offers the opportunity for City centre living, where people can walk or cycle to work, shop, socialise and catch public transport. The provision of new housing will form a vital part of the renaissance of the West End. It is anticipated that the West End will eventually accommodate approximately 600-800 new dwellings, but it will not be allowed to become a dormitory area.

As a mixed-use City centre area, the West End already contains much housing and a variety of housing types. Some new housing at the Castle and Brewery sites has proved very popular. New housing should help to strengthen the existing community and help support more facilities that bring benefits to the community as a whole.

Creating a strong and balanced community will be key to the success of the West End. The West End should be a desirable place to live with a happy, settled and mixed community.

### **Housing mix**

In recent years, new residential developments in Oxford, especially the City centre, have often comprised mainly 1 and 2 bed flats. While City centre sites often suit to higher-density accommodation, it is appropriate to ensure a balanced and mixed community by requiring some larger dwellings suitable for families in the West End. This will help to attract families, who are likely to stay longer in the area and to create a stable community. The residential density should be high enough to make efficient use land in this City centre location, while not precluding the development of town houses or neglecting the need for appropriate levels of amenity space.

The City Council will refuse planning permission for residential development that does not help achieve an appropriate mix of dwelling types as set out in the policy below. This mix will equally be applied to the affordable housing element of a residential development. The need for a mix of sizes of affordable housing units mirrors the overall pattern. It will be unacceptable for a scheme to meet the mix requirement but then allocate only smaller units as the affordable element.

There should be a reasonable mix of dwelling sizes in each new development. However, it is clear that some sites will lend themselves more easily to the development of town houses than others (for example it will be difficult to provide houses where the residential element of a mixed-use development is on the upper floors of a building). The policy below indicates those sites, which, if they come forward with housing development as part of their scheme, must include a high proportion of town housing. Should these sites come forward for development early in the period, they should not be proposed solely for flats, as this would limit the opportunities for houses in the rest of the period.

Residential development in the West End is an opportunity for providing car-free developments, as so many amenities and facilities will be located in the area. It will be appropriate for smaller units to be car-free whilst larger dwellings will be able to have one parking space (see Appendix X on parking standards). Car clubs are a way of allowing people to have access to a car even if they do not own it themselves.

**Policy WE15: Housing mix**

Across the West End, the overall balance of the different sized homes (new build) to be achieved should be:

- Not more than 65% flats (at least half of the flats should have 2 bedrooms); and
- Not less than 35% town houses of 3, 4, and 5 bedrooms.

This mix applies equally to the market and affordable elements of residential development and must be applied as far as appropriate on all sites.

If the following sites come forward for housing, at least 50% of the units provided should be town houses: Oxpens site, the remainder of the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College site, Becket Street Car Park

- The City Council will work with car club providers to try and ensure a car club is set up in Oxford, by liaising with the Highway Authority to identify possible locations for on street spaces.

**Affordable housing**

Affordable housing is an important element of creating a mixed and balanced community. Oxford's Housing Requirement Study (Fordham Research, 2004) identified a "huge need" for affordable housing in Oxford. The redevelopment of the West End offers an important opportunity to help meet some of this need in a highly sustainable location.

The Oxford Local Plan requires generally a minimum of 50% of new residential development to be affordable. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Affordable Housing provides more detail on how the Local Plan policies will be implemented. The tenure mix that best meets local need, as set out in the SPD, is 80% social rented and 20% shared ownership.

The threshold for the Affordable Housing policy in the Local Plan will not apply in the West End. This is because of the cumulative effect of many development sites in one locality. Instead, all proposals that include residential development will be expected to provide affordable housing.

The West End is identified as a strategic site in the Regional Housing Strategy (South East Regional Housing Board). This indicates that it is a key area in the region for delivery of affordable housing and therefore Housing Corporation investment (Social Housing Grant) is expected to be available.

**Policy WE16: Affordable Housing**

The City Council will seek the provision of generally a minimum of 50% affordable housing on all developments with an element of housing within the West End. This should be in the ratio of 80% social rented and 20% shared ownership.

If it can be demonstrated by evidence that this makes a site unviable, developers and the City Council will work through the cascade approach in the following order until a scheme is made viable:

- i) Reducing the percentage of affordable housing provided (to a minimum of 40%) by reducing the shared ownership element only.
- ii) At 40% affordable housing, alter the tenure split provided by increasing the level of shared ownership incrementally up to 20% of affordable units.
- iii) Make affordable housing provision on another site at (at the 50% level).

Some residential areas of the West End currently contain mainly affordable housing. Some of this stock has become dated and may not best serve the needs of the occupiers; it should be improved and modernised where possible. In some cases redevelopment may be the only option. Where there is a proposal to redevelop existing affordable housing, the City Council will expect at least the same number of affordable housing units as a result, as before the scheme.

- The City Council and West End Partnership will seek to ensure that the West End continues to be identified as a Strategic Site in the Regional Housing Strategy.
- The City Council will continue to work with the Housing Corporation to seek Social Housing Grant (SHG) towards the cost of delivering affordable housing within the West End.
- The City Council will work with the Registered Social Landlords to improve the quality of the living environment for existing tenants in the West End.

### **Affordable housing from commercial development**

Commercial development should not worsen the existing housing situation by encouraging workers in housing need to move to Oxford. Such development should contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing in Oxford. The Adopted Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD explains how affordable housing from commercial development should be provided. This should mean building homes on site or making a financial contribution that reflects the cost of providing the number, types and sizes of dwellings required. This could be outside the West End if it is difficult to identify suitable sites for family housing. This policy does not apply to retail developments or non-profit-making public-sector projects.

It will be important to ensure that commercial development is not hindered in the West End. If it proves not to be viable to meet the target of affordable housing considered to be equivalent of 1-5% of staff employed, it may be necessary to reduce this contribution from commercial developments to meet the other objectives of the West End project.

#### **Policy WE17: Affordable housing from commercial development**

Planning permission will only be granted for commercial development where the scheme provides the number of affordable homes to meet the additional demand created. This is considered to be equivalent to between 1 and 5% of staff employed.

### **Hidden parts of the community**

Another important element of the community in the West End is evident from the number of facilities and services provided by the various health and social service providers. These include the several hostels and drop in centres already located in the West End catering for people who are sometimes hidden. There may be future proposals for similar or linked facilities in the West End (for example a wet garden for the use of street drinkers). It is important that these vital services are located in the right places in terms of allowing users access to the services and in terms of their relationship to neighbouring uses.

- The City Council will continue to work with its partner agencies such as the Primary Care Trust (PCT), homeless person and specialist alcohol services, Thames Valley Police, Benefits Agency, Probation Service, social and health care services and private businesses to find creative and progressive solutions to the varied housing, health and social problems faced by some members of our community.

### **Student accommodation**

The West End is suitable for some additional student accommodation as it is near many of the University of Oxford colleges. Purpose-built student accommodation would enable more students to live in halls of residences, which would reduce the pressure for private rented housing, making more family homes available.

However, as the West End is identified as a sustainable location for housing and there is a desire to create a mixed and balanced community, it is vital that the amount of student accommodation should not jeopardise these objectives.

A survey of the University of Oxford colleges was carried out to identify demand for new student accommodation. This and an analysis of available sites show that the total number of new student units in the West End should not exceed 350. This level would equate to around half the number of residential units expected in the West End (between 600 and 800). To ensure a balanced community, the amount of student accommodation should remain at less than half the number of residential units provided.

Non-self-contained student accommodation is not required to provide affordable housing. However if student accommodation is self-contained (i.e. it has its own kitchen area and bathroom) the affordable housing policy will apply.

#### **Policy WE18: Student Accommodation**

Planning permission will be granted for the development of purpose-built (non-speculative) student accommodation on Speedwell House and the St Aldates/Queen Street sites.

Planning permission will not be granted for student accommodation on other sites if it would result in more than 350 new units in the West End or more than half the number of new residential units that have been permitted in the West End. The base date for this policy is April 2007.

- The City Council will continue to monitor the quantity of student accommodation, and will work with the University of Oxford and the Colleges to minimise the impact of students on the family housing market.

### **Amenities to support new housing**

New housing in the West End will be close to a whole range of City centre amenities. It is important that plans for large increases in housing take into account the need for local, supporting amenities. Amenities such as increased school capacity, local open space and play facilities are vital.

The Primary Care Trust are looking to provide new City centre health care facilities in the West End. Should such proposals come forward, they would be encouraged at the appropriate scale and location. It is important that these facilities be located adjacent to a major bus route to facilitate easy access. Appropriate sites would include Oxpens, the remainder of the College site and Worcester Street Car Park sites.

The Police are looking to relocate their main facilities to another location outside the City centre. If this does become the case, it would be important to maintain some form of police presence in the City centre. The West End would provide an opportunity to do this, and this could be linked to the new City and County offices on Oxpens.

Other amenities that would help support the local community would include, for example, small, local convenience stores, children's nurseries and schools; these facilities will be encouraged in the appropriate locations.

Where proposals come forward which include the loss of one of these supporting facilities, the City Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no loss of amenity to the West End community.

**Policy WE19: Amenities to support new housing**

Planning permission will be granted for amenities of the appropriate size and scale to support the local community of the West End.

Planning permission will be granted for a new Primary Care Trust City centre healthcare facility within the West End at the appropriate scale and location.

## A VIBRANT AND SUCCESSFUL WEST END

The renaissance of the West End must not be dominated by any single land use. New housing is important. But the opportunity must be taken to provide additional space for business growth, to greatly enhance the shopping opportunities and to provide new leisure, community and tourist facilities.

The West End needs to attract visitors, employees and businesses. Development in the West End will support the knowledge economy that is so vital to Oxford's reputation and future prosperity. New attractions and community facilities will ensure the area enhances the attractiveness of Oxford for residents and visitors. The area already contains the majority of the City centre bars, cafés and restaurants. It is not proposed to create many new ones, but their environment will become more attractive. The main focus of new retailing in the area will be the Westgate Shopping Centre and the St. Aldate's/Queen Street site. This will strengthen Oxford's position as a sub-regional retail destination, and reinforce other attractions in the City centre.

### **Creating activity and a mix of uses**

It is important to encourage activity at street level to help achieve the vibrancy that is desired in the West End. Street level activity can be encouraged through the design of the buildings for example by introducing windows and particularly doors at street level. Further detail on this aspect is included in the Design Code.

The uses that are located in a building also have an effect on the level of activity created. A development or building that contains a variety of uses is much more likely to create street level activity throughout the day and evening than one which is single-use only. There are also particular uses that inherently bring with them more activity; cultural uses and attractions are very useful to add vibrancy and activity to a mixed-use scheme.

### **Policy WE20: Mixed Uses**

Planning permission will only be granted for the development of sites of 0.2 hectares or greater that incorporate more than one use.

The City centre is an excellent location for new offices, being accessible for staff and visitors by walking and cycling and public transport. Employment uses such as offices will help to create a mixed-use area, and bring important day-time activity.

In Oxford, good-quality modern office space is in demand (Oxford Employment Land Study, March 2006). Apart from the Oxford Business Park, there are relatively few modern office developments in Oxford. While the City centre has a reasonable amount of office accommodation, it is mainly older, second-hand space in only a fair condition. The West End offers a rare opportunity to provide some new office accommodation, in modern and flexible spaces. New office accommodation would be most appropriate on the frontages of main routes (especially on the upper floors), in particular along Oxpens Road, Hythe Bridge Street, Park End Street and Frideswide Square. It is not intended that office development should dominate these streets, simply that offices are one of several uses that would be suitable here. The Employment Land Study suggested a need for about 15,000m<sup>2</sup> of new office floorspace in the West End. This demand is likely to be mainly for smaller office units, providing good-quality, modern space, with few units over 900m<sup>2</sup>.

Significant demand also exists for research and development floorspace. Oxford's two universities are the driving forces behind the research and development

industries. The Employment Land Study suggests that maintaining a high level of research and development is essential to the future economic success of Oxford and also identifies a strong need for start-up units across Oxford. These are small units with shared services, on-site support and short flexible leases, and often specialist space including laboratories. This type of employment use exploits Oxford's strengths, and creates jobs that can be filled from the existing population. Locating some of these units in the West End has some advantages as it is close to many colleges and will also help to create a viable mix of uses.

#### **Policy WE21: Office Accommodation**

Planning permission will be granted for about 15,000m<sup>2</sup> of additional office floorspace in the West End.

There may be opportunities for office developments that take the total office floorspace above 15,000m<sup>2</sup>, but these should have an identified end user. Planning permission will not be granted for speculative office developments that would in total exceed this figure.

- The City and County Council's Economic Development Officers will continue to work to strengthen links with the business community.

#### **Public Sector Offices**

The City Council and County Council operate from various offices across the City centre. There is an opportunity for the City and County Councils to join offices, which could help to ensure efficient use of land and working practices. Current estimates are that they would need floorspace of about 20,000m<sup>2</sup>. Several of the existing sites could then be released for other development.

The Oxpens site has been identified for the new joint offices. Location of well-designed offices on the Oxpens site would act as a catalyst for other new development of high quality. It would show confidence in the area and would start to draw people and activity to the Oxpens site. It would also help to support the new bus loop along Oxpens Road.

Other public-sector offices and headquarters could also locate in the West End.

#### **Policy WE22: Public sector offices**

Planning permission will be granted for new joint City and County Council offices on the Oxpens site. A limited amount of floorspace for other public sector offices will be supported within the West End.

- The City and County Councils will continue to pursue the location of new joint offices on the Oxpens site.

#### **Retail**

The West End area includes a number of Oxford's key shopping streets. Policies in the adopted Local Plan identify areas of primary and secondary retail frontage, in which percentages of retail are maintained at certain levels. These are still relevant to the West End and may be extended to include the new shopping areas in the Westgate Centre and St. Aldate's/Queen Street in a future review of the Proposals Map. The Retail Needs Study 2007 has identified a Primary Shopping Area, and new City centre retail should focus on this area.

The Retail Needs Study identified a need for Oxford to expand its retail facilities. Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre, which will provide 34,000m<sup>2</sup> of additional retail floorspace comprising 60 additional units. This will enhance Oxford's shopping scene and provide much employment.

The St Aldate's/Queen Street site will create a further opportunity for about 3,000m<sup>2</sup> of additional retail floorspace with mixed-use development on the upper floors. This development should be complementary to the Westgate shopping centre. Development will take place behind the existing properties on the street frontages, and be accessed from several points to enable pedestrian movement through the site.

The development of the Westgate Shopping Centre, together with enhanced retail provision on the St Aldates/Queen Street Site, will meet most of the City wide comparison retail need as identified in the period to 2016. However, there is a limited amount of additional need. Much of this will be accommodated outside the West End. However, there is the potential opportunity for some new comparison floorspace in the West End. The choice of site is important and should positively enhance the Primary Shopping Area and should not adversely impact on the vitality and viability of existing retail frontages or allocated sites, especially the High Street, Broad Street and the Covered Market. There is a need for only a limited amount of additional convenience (food) shopping, which is likely to be met by expansion of existing stores or small new stores in the established City or District centres.

Outside of these areas, replacement of existing retail units will be acceptable, such as the retail uses along Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street and New Road. However, there is little opportunity for additional retail floorspace. Some exception will have to be made, as set out in the policy, as it is anticipated and desirable that new cultural attractions such as galleries and interactive museums will have ancillary retail space, and new local stores that support housing will be desirable.

**Policy WE23: Retail**

Planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment of the St Aldates/Queen Street site for retail development on the ground floor with mixed use development on the upper floors.

Planning permission will be granted for an element of new retail floorspace on the County Hall site or on the frontages of other sites that adjoin the City-centre primary retail area. Outside of these areas, planning permission will not be granted for additional retail floorspace except for small-scale local shops, facilities ancillary to cultural attractions such as galleries and new interactive museums, or facilities that enhance the cultural offer in their own right.

Planning permission will only be granted for a small amount of new convenience (food) retail use in the West End if it does not exceed Oxford's total additional need, and only if it is in the Primary Shopping Area.

**Cultural activity**

Increasing the variety of attractions for visitors and local residents is a key objective of the renaissance project. Facilities that add diversity to the cultural scene, including cultural attractions, and cultural employment uses such as artists' studios and exhibition areas, will be encouraged in the appropriate locations. New cultural

attractions, street performances and activities in accessible and visible locations will contribute to the vibrancy of the West End.

There are many arts and performance schools in Oxford, teaching and training in the arts. However, Oxford has few facilities for those wishing to work in these professions. At present, once students have qualified they have to move out of Oxford to find adequate workspace. Studios, workspaces and galleries would assist people in creative professions to stay in Oxford. These kinds of uses at ground level encourage day and evening activity, which enlivens the street scene.

The cinema on George Street is an important use that adds to the cultural offer of the West End in an appropriate location. However redevelopment of the site would offer several benefits: an opportunity to improve the facilities; to create more street level activity along the George Street and Gloucester Green frontages; and to improve the entrance to the square. The redevelopment of the cinema on its existing site is encouraged.

There is some private-sector backing for two new attractions: a hands-on cultural centre for science (Science Oxford) and a Story Museum (for children's literature). Both projects are seeking to locate in the West End. Science Oxford would offer flexible exhibition space, performance space and a hands-on zone. The Story Museum would draw on the rich heritage of children's storytelling in Oxford, featuring exhibitions, audio-visual presentations and unique archives. The development of these projects in the West End is encouraged.

Developers should consider including cultural uses to attract people to a site, to create activity at street level, and as a means to fulfil the mix of uses policy.

#### **Policy WE24: Cultural Attractions**

Planning permission will be granted for the creation of new facilities that will add diversity to the cultural scene, such as cultural attractions, galleries and museums.

- The City Council will support work to promote the arts in Oxford, for example through Oxford Inspires.
- There is potential for various festivals and cultural events to take place in the West End, to enliven the area and build on the cultural diversity.

#### **Supporting new attractions- visitor coaches**

Oxford is a world-renowned tourist destination; it is the sixth most visited city in the UK by international visitors. It is estimated that 32% of Oxford's visitors travel by coach. Arrangements for coach arrivals are not welcoming or convenient for the visitor or for residents and other users of the City centre. The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK and the Oxford and District Coach Operators Associations state that drop-off and standing arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Currently, coaches park on the Oxpens site. The Oxpens site is a key catalyst in the renaissance of the West End; the relocation of coach parking from the site is essential to the masterplanning of the site.

Coaches do not need to park in the City centre. However, they will need facilities to drop-off and pick-up passengers safely in locations where they can easily get into the historic core. A drop-off and pick-up point will be provided which will provide a welcome to tourists in the City centre with visitor information. Coaches would park at a park-and-ride site; Redbridge would be most suitable if the drop off is south of the

City centre. In the north the alternatives may be at Pear Tree and the Northern Gateway.

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#### **Policy WE25: Visitor coach parking**

Planning permission will be granted for development of the part of the Oxpens site currently used for visitor coach parking. Visitor coach parking will be provided at a Park and Ride site. Suitable provision should be made for visitor coaches to drop-off and pick-up.

- The City and County Councils will continue to work together to implement a new solution for visitor coaches.

#### **Hotel accommodation**

While the quantity and quality of hotel accommodation in Oxford has recently increased, some of it is in out-of-centre locations and there is not much accommodation in the City centre. In particular the lack of quality branded hotels has been highlighted, and the popularity of the new hotel at the Castle suggests a strong demand. There is also a shortage of mid-range hotel accommodation in the City centre. There should be increased provision of hotel accommodation in the West End.

The Oxpens site is a good location for a large hotel. The size of the site lends itself to large development, and a 4 or 5 star hotel (with approximately 150 bedrooms) would also help create the catalyst effect needed to stimulate the renaissance of this corner of the West End. A possible new multi-functional conference space, providing accommodation for business tourists, as well as other visitors may be incorporated alongside the hotel.

The Royal Oxford Hotel could be replaced as part of the redevelopment of the Island site (Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street), which is one of the key redevelopment sites of the West End.

#### **Policy WE26: Hotel accommodation**

Planning permission will be granted for the development of new hotel accommodation in the West End which strengthens or diversifies the range on offer.

Planning permission will be granted for a new 4 or 5 star hotel on the Oxpens site.

#### **Conference facility**

The demand for conference facilities in Oxford exceeds supply by 40%. A market feasibility study (Sept 2005) found that existing local facilities are limited to the 100-200 and 200-500 delegate segments of the market, and that there is demand for a larger purpose-built conference centre for 500-800 delegates (which would equate to around 5,300m<sup>2</sup>). The West End offers an opportunity for the development of a top-of-the-range conference centre. The most suitable site for development is Oxpens, due to the need for a large building, and it will help attract people to this part of the West End.

Studies have investigated the potential for a concert hall. A lack of venues of around 400-600 capacity has been identified. A large music/performing arts venue would probably not be commercially viable unless it was part of a mixed-use development with more commercial conference activities. The conference centre should be designed to be a flexible space to ensure it can be used for a range of other activities, including concerts.

**Policy WE27: Conference facility**

Planning permission will be granted for a flexible conference centre facility on the Oxpens site to meet some of the need for conference space, concerts and other events.

- Oxford City Council will continue to support the Destination Oxford conference desk to promote Oxford as a centre for conferences.

**Leisure**

The main leisure facility in the West End is the ice rink, which is run by the City Council. Both the building and the plant are “life-expired” and the rink would require an almost complete re-development to bring it up to the standard of a modern facility. Oxford City Council is unable to generate extra income from the ice rink given its poor structural condition and the fact that it is too small to stage entertainment or top-level ice hockey successfully (source: Indoor Facilities Study, Oxford City Council: Jan 2006). As well as being a regional facility, the ice rink is a local facility that is particularly popular with teenagers.

A study into the options for the future for the ice rink and the ice rink site is being undertaken. One option would be to provide a better facility on another site, possibly near the ring road. There would be benefits in terms of energy efficiency and economies of scale of locating an ice rink alongside a swimming pool.

It is important that a leisure opportunity should continue to be offered in the Oxpens area. Commercial leisure facilities would be acceptable in this location. It is important that leisure facilities are designed with flexibility to meet changing tastes. One way this could be achieved is through the design of a flexible leisure space that could incorporate a range of leisure opportunities; the enhancement of Oxpens Field could be an important factor in this.

**Policy WE28: Leisure**

A leisure opportunity should continue to be provided on the Oxpens area.

- The City Council commits to addressing the future of the ice rink and to concluding the study.

**Education**

The development of significant levels of housing in the West End will inevitably lead to more demand on the local education facilities. Work is continuing with the County Council as Local Education Authority to establish the level of need for additional facilities in the West End and the wider area. The development tariff (as set for residential development) incorporates an element of funding towards meeting the additional need created.

The Oxford and Cherwell Valley College is currently located in the heart of the West End and intends to remain on the site. The college hopes to redevelop their campus providing modern facilities to meet modern needs. This will involve wholesale redevelopment but on a smaller site than that existing. The remainder of the site will become available for other uses.

Oxford University has a significant interest in the West End with several colleges and teaching facilities located in the area. There may be opportunities to extend these uses within the West End.

- The City Council will continue to work with the County Council as Local Education Authority to ensure the provision of educational facilities for new residents of the West End.

Insert **map** to summarise chapter

## DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is key that the policies and plans set out in the AAP are delivered on the ground. Policies alone will not deliver the change envisaged for the renaissance of the West End; issues of supporting infrastructure, funding and delivery are key to achieving the renaissance of the area.

To achieve a successful, sustainable place, it is essential that new development is supported by the necessary social and environmental infrastructure. To mitigate against any undesired effects of development, to achieve the planned improvements to the public realm and public space in the West End and to ensure that an attractive and functional place is created, it will be necessary to invest in new infrastructure.

### Infrastructure and Funding

#### ***Funding mechanisms***

It is expected that the West End will be developed over time by a series of different developments of differing sizes. It will not be practical for any one development to provide all the infrastructure required in the West End itself. It will be important that there is overall control of what is provided in order to ensure quality and consistency. Therefore, in most cases the City Council will take developer contributions and pool them. Once money is available, work will begin on providing listed infrastructure.

#### **Policy WE29: Pooled contributions and forward funding**

Contributions will be pooled so that the larger infrastructure requirements can be provided once adequate contributions are received.

Some projects are so important to the success of the West End that they should be funded in advance of adequate contributions being received. Where possible, these will be forward funded on the basis that funding will be reimbursed.

- The West End Partnership will investigate ways to forward fund important projects and will collect contributions that will cover the City Council's costs.

#### ***Infrastructure requirements and streamlined contributions***

In order to simplify and speed up the process for establishing developer contributions a streamlined process has been set for development in the West End. This will apply a global sum to pay for the various elements of the City Council's vision. The global sum assessed on size of the development (contribution per 100m<sup>2</sup> of non-residential development or contribution for calculated per 1/2/3/4 bedroom dwelling or unit of student accommodation). The sum will reflect the appropriate proportion that the planned development needs to make towards the pooled expenditure.

The sum is based on the citywide Planning Obligations SPD adopted April 2007. However, this has been adapted to meet the specific area requirements of the West End. In particular as the AAP has established there are particular needs in the West End for greater contributions towards the public realm and "strategic" transport improvements than there are in other parts of Oxford. For the West End development, the negotiated elements have been calculated up-front and the thresholds removed given the cumulative effect of many development sites coming forward in the West End.

**Policy WE30: Streamlined contributions**

The City Council will seek developer contributions in a streamlined way in the form of a global sum.

The amount in later years will be set out in Supplementary Planning Document. Until that time the schedule set out in Appendix X will be applied as this sets out the appropriate starting point for the global sum.

The sum will be required to be paid to the City Council prior to the commencement of development. The sum will be increased to reflect inflation at the point of application determination.

This approach may be superseded by the Planning Gain Supplement; the government has indicated that this will not be introduced any earlier than 2009.

***Other sources of funding***

To ensure all possibilities for improvements in the West End are explored, and that the highest quality of public realm, attractions and infrastructure is provided, sources of funding other than developer contributions are also pursued.

- ◆ For transport improvements, funding through the current and future Local Transport Plans may be possible. Some funding is already expected from the Access to Oxford package secured by the Highway Authority for improvements to the railway station and forecourt.
- ◆ It is anticipated that Social Housing Grant from the Housing Corporation will be available towards the provision of affordable housing.
- ◆ Money for improvements to Carfax and Speedwell Street may come from the Business Improvement District funding.
- ◆ Money may be available from New Growth Points funding to help with the delivery of new housing.
- **The West End Partnership commits to pursuing other sources of funding to supplement developer contributions and pay for the infrastructure projects required to support the West End renaissance.**

**Delivery*****Responsibilities***

The West End Partnership is firmly established and has been pivotal in driving forward the concept of the West End renaissance thus far. The Partnership, working with its Steering Group members, will continue to work towards the aims in this document to deliver the vision on the ground.

The City and County Councils will have important roles to play in the delivery of the West End renaissance. Both authorities are significant landowners in the area and are committed to using their land holdings for the wider benefit of the area. Both authorities also have additional roles in the delivery of the vision, the County Council as the Highway Authority, and the City Council in its capacity as Local Planning Authority. Other functions of both the City and County Councils will also be important in the delivery stage. As set out below, procedures have been put in place to ensure that the planning process in particular, operates in as smooth and timely manner as possible.

Other public bodies (including those identified in the AAP) also have important roles to play. Many of these bodies are already part of the West End Steering Group and

contact has been made with others who will be able to help deliver the vision for the West End.

The private sector will be instrumental in bringing about new development on the various sites in the West End. The AAP will frame proposals for individual sites to ensure that they work together as a whole for the benefit of the wider area.

Stakeholder involvement has been key in developing the AAP and this will continue to be built on with the Partnership facilitating further involvement and consultation on future aspects of the West End project. It is important that the community (including existing and new residents and users of the area) continues to have an input into the plans for the future of their area.

### ***Pre-application advice***

The City Council (as the Local Planning Authority) will expect applicants to take part in pre-application discussions to ensure that when planning applications are submitted, they stand the best chance of being approved. A project management protocol has been produced for the West End following consultation with the development industry, for major developments. This seeks to ensure that the project management and resourcing of these applications by both the City Council and developer can be agreed at the outset.

### ***Supporting information for planning applications***

In order to demonstrate the suitability of individual proposals, applicants will be required to submit sufficient supporting information to enable the impact of the proposals to be fully considered. The City Council will require the following supporting information to be submitted alongside planning applications, where appropriate:

1. Details of the type and quantity of proposed uses.
2. Details of how the biodiversity of the area will be enhanced.
3. Which residential units have been built to be adaptable dwellings.
4. A Natural Resource Impact Analysis (NRIA) (following guidance set out in the NRIA Supplementary Planning Document).
5. A Flood Risk Assessment.
6. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan including details of access/restriction arrangements for vehicles and non-car modes and the parking strategy to be employed (See Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans Supplementary Planning Document).
7. Where retail uses are proposed outside the Primary Shopping Area but within the Area Action Plan boundary (and not allocated in this Plan), an assessment of need and a sequential test of the proposed location will be needed.
8. A Design and Access Statement to show how urban design principles have been addressed and how development has responded to a detailed analysis of the local context and the Design Code. The template provided at Appendix X is to be used.
9. Details of the number, tenure type, mix of housing types and sizes of the market and affordable housing.
10. Draft heads of terms for the legal agreement using the standard agreements set out in the Affordable Housing and Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Documents.
11. Details of how proposals conserve and enhance the City's heritage including any impacts on the conservation area, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.
12. Secured by Design statement.

***Other considerations***

Listed building consent may be required to undertake any alteration or development of a listed building. Conservation area consent may be required to undertake any kind of development or demolition in, or development that affects a conservation area. There may also be other forms of approvals or license that need to be applied for; for example premises licenses for the sale of alcohol or the provision of entertainment may be required. The City Council will be able to provide help and advice in such circumstances.

***Compulsory purchase powers***

The strength of the West End Partnership will help to ensure that all interested parties are signed up to the vision and aims of the West End renaissance. It is not therefore envisaged that there will be a need to rely on compulsory purchases to deliver the vision. However, the City Council will use its compulsory purchase powers should this become necessary.

**Policy WE30: Compulsory Purchase Powers**

The City Council will use its compulsory purchase powers, where applicable, to bring forward the renaissance of the West End as set out in this Area Action Plan.

## **Appendix – Sites and appropriate uses**

The AAP has been written to address the West End as a whole instead of considering a series of individual sites. However it is recognised that a simple quick reference guide to the identified development sites and their appropriate uses would be beneficial.

In line with Policy WE... the City Council will require all developments on sites of 0.2 hectares or more to comprise more than one use.

The following categories have been used to indicate appropriate uses:

P – Priority use. This indicates the main use or uses for the site

O – Other appropriate use. This indicates other uses that would be appropriate

M – Minor element. This indicates other uses that would be appropriate as a minor element of a scheme.

It is important to recognise that the list of sites is not exhaustive. As the renaissance of the West End builds up momentum it is anticipated that more sites will come forward for development as landowners and developers grasp the potential of this project.

	Town Houses	Flats	Public space	Community energy	Student accomm.	Amenities for housing	Offices	Public offices	Retail	Food and Drink	Museums	Arts/other cultural uses	Hotels	Conference	Leisure	Education	Transport
1. Oxford Railway Station			S														P
2. Island site (Park End St/Hythe Bridge St)		S				S	S		M	S	S		S				
3. Worcester Street Car Park		S	P				S		S	S	S					S	
4. Oxpens	P	M	P	P		S	S	P		M	S		P	P	P		
5. Oxford and Cherwell Valley College			S													P	
6. OCVV remainder	P	M				S	M										
7. Westgate Shopping Centre		S	S						P	S							
8. Fire Station, Rewley Road	S	M		S		S	M									S	
9. Odeon Cinema, George Street									M	M		P					
10. Becket Street Car Park	P	M					M						S				P
11. Osney Warehouse, Osney Lane	P																
12. Cooper Callas Site, Paradise Street		S					S			S		S					
13. St Aldate's / Queen Street		S			S		S		P	S							
14. Albion Place and Magistrates' Courts		S					S				S					S	
15. Telephone Exchange, Speedwell Street	S	S					S				S						
16. Police Station, St Aldate's																	
17. Beaver House, Hythe Bridge Street							P										
18. George Street Mews																	
19. New Theatre, George Street												P					
20. Ocean and Collins, Hythe Bridge Street										S	S						
21. Macclesfield House, New Road		S				S	S			S						S	
22. County Hall, New Road		S					M		P	S	S						
23. Town Hall, St. Aldates							S			S		S		P			
24. Nursery, Osney Lane	S	S				S											
25. Speedwell House, Speedwell Street		S			S												

P – Priority use; S – Secondary use; M – Minor element