

**Report of:** Head of Environmental Development  
**To:** City Executive Board  
**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010

**Item No:**

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**Title of Report:** An Additional Licensing Scheme  
for HMOs in Oxford

## **Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:** This report contains the proposed additional licensing scheme for HMOs in Oxford.

**Key decision:** Yes  
**Executive Lead Member** Councillor Joe McManners  
**Report approved by:** Tim Sadler  
**Finance:** Sarah Fogden  
**Legal:** Jeremy Franklin  
**Policy Framework:** More housing, better housing for all  
**Recommendation(s):**

That the City Executive Board:

1. Designates the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 in relation to every class of HMO, but only including those section 257 HMOs that are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords.
2. Adopts an annual licensing system, with a requirement that an inspection is carried out before the first licence is issued.
3. Approves the proposed risk-based phased approach to the licensing scheme as set out in paragraphs 32 - 34.
4. Approves the reinspection criteria defined in paragraph 42.
5. Agrees that the proposed licence fees in table 4, the penalty clauses in table 5 and the fee reductions in table 6 should be submitted to the General Purposes Licensing Committee for approval.
6. Approves the proposed core resource levels as set out in table 8 and the proposed flexible approach to resourcing the scheme to meet peak demand periods.
7. Agrees that the additional licensing scheme designation will come into force on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010, subject to the approval of the budget framework by Full Council.

## **Overview**

1. Oxford City Council first considered Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to be a priority in 1990 when a specialised team was established to tackle the issues caused by problem premises.
2. Since then the Council has used all the available legislative powers to regulate HMOs, introducing a Registration Scheme in East Oxford in 1999 and latterly implementing the national requirement for mandatory licensing of larger three storey HMOs with five or more occupants.
3. Recent changes in legislation have provided the Council with the option to increase its regulatory powers over HMOs. An additional licensing scheme can now be introduced under section 56 of the Housing Act 2004 without the need for approval from the Government.
4. However, introducing an additional licensing scheme is not a decision to be taken lightly by the Council. The conditions that must be satisfied are contained in sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004 and are further amplified in guidance issued in February 2010 by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG).
5. The guidance makes it clear that additional licensing is not just another tool in the toolbox and that it should only be seen as an option to use when there are real problems with HMOs that have not been solved by using other available powers and a variety of approaches.
6. This is reflected in the low numbers of discretionary licensing schemes that currently exist for HMOs. Only five additional licensing schemes are in existence in England, along with a further fifteen selective licensing schemes, which are designed to deal with areas of low demand that are blighted by anti-social behaviour.
7. This report will examine the case for introducing an additional licensing scheme for HMOs in Oxford and make recommendations for a proposed scheme.

## **Legal Background**

8. Sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004 place requirements upon a local authority that is considering introducing discretionary licensing powers and the local authority must:
  - consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise, or to be likely to give rise, to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public
  - have regard to any information regarding the extent to which any codes of practice approved under section 233 have been complied with by

persons managing HMOs in the area in question (these codes relate to University managed accommodation)

- consider whether there are any other courses of action available to them (of whatever nature) that might provide an effective method of dealing with the problem or problems in question,
- that making the designation will significantly assist them to deal with the problem or problems (whether or not they take any other course of action as well)
- consult persons likely to be affected by the designation for a period of not less than ten weeks.

9. The CLG guidance states that examples of properties being managed sufficiently ineffectively, and as a result having a detrimental affect on a local area, include:

- Those whose external condition and curtilage (including yards and gardens) adversely impact upon the general character and amenity of the area in which they are located.
- Those whose internal condition, such as poor amenities, overcrowding etc, adversely impact upon the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers and the landlords of these properties are failing to take appropriate steps to address the issues.
- Those where there is a significant and persistent problem of anti social behaviour affecting other residents and/or the local community and the landlords of the HMOs are not taking reasonable and lawful steps to eliminate or reduce the problems.
- Those where the lack of management or poor management skills or practices are otherwise adversely impacting upon the welfare, health or safety of residents and/or impacting upon the wider community.

10. In addition to the requirements contained in sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004, the CLG guidance states that the following conditions must also be met before introducing an additional licensing scheme:

- Whenever considering whether to make an additional or selective licensing designation local authorities must also ensure that the exercise of the power is consistent with their overall housing strategy
- The local authority should seek to adopt a co-ordinated approach in connection with dealing with homelessness, empty properties and anti-social behaviour affecting the private rented sector as regards combining licensing with other action taken by them or others
- The local authority should consider whether there are any other

courses of action available to them (of whatever nature) that might provide an effective method of achieving with the objective or objectives that the designation would be intended to achieve, and consider that making the designation will significantly assist them to achieve the objective or objectives (whether or not they take any other course of action as well)

- Other courses of action that a local authority might instead consider (as an alternative to, or in addition to, additional licensing) include voluntary measures such as landlord accreditation.
- Local Authorities may also wish to consider using other tools available under the Housing Act 2004 such as Interim Management Orders for non-licensable HMOs.

11. Consideration of these issues is provided in the report entitled “Additional Licensing for Oxford – making the case” which is attached as appendix 1.

## **Consultation**

12. The consultation process took place from the 9<sup>th</sup> April until the 21<sup>st</sup> June and an extension until the 25<sup>th</sup> June was agreed by the Board Member following representations from a number of landlords. The details of the consultation are contained in the report attached as appendix 1 but it is worth referring to the results in the main report as they give a flavour of the issues generated by HMOs in Oxford.

13. The most authoritative consultation was that provided by the Talkback results which surveys a representative sample of Oxford residents. Some of the most striking findings are listed below:

- Almost all (99%) residents told us that they think landlords have a responsibility to ensure that their properties are managed well.
- When asked whether additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs, 78% agreed that it would.
- In terms of problems with HMOs over the last four years, poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens (76%) was the most common problem. A similar proportion (71%) had also had problems with dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs.
- Poor external appearance HMOs and their gardens was a problem more common amongst owner occupiers, with 79% saying they had experienced a problem in comparison to 60% of social housing tenants.
- Overall 91% of respondents agreed with Oxford City Council’s proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs

14. However, none of the Talkback respondents were landlords or agents and their views were virtually the opposite of those expressed by local residents. For example, of the 52 landlords and agents who responded, 90% were against the proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs. In addition most landlords did not consider that their responsibilities should extend to dealing with the antisocial effects of their tenants. It was also clear from their comments that many landlords intend to pass on the costs of the scheme to their tenants.

## **The proposed additional licensing scheme for Oxford**

### **Which types of HMO should the scheme cover?**

15. The CLG guidance also states that the local authority must define the types of HMO to be included in the designation, for example the number of storeys, or the number of occupants.

16. It is clear from the report attached as appendix 1 that significant problems have been experienced in every class of HMO in Oxford. However, there is one class of HMO called a section 257 HMO that the CLG guidance makes specific reference to and which requires consideration.

17. A section 257 HMO is a building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one-third of the flats are let on short-term tenancies. The guidance states that it would not usually be appropriate for a Council to adopt a scheme that covered all section 257 HMOs in its area because the legislation is not concerned with regulating owner-occupied properties, even if their management is problematic.

18. The guidance states that additional licensing schemes should therefore only apply to section 257 HMOs that are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords, or where a significant proportion of what would otherwise be owner occupied flats have been let by the owners.

19. It is therefore recommended that the Council licences every HMO but only including those section 257 HMOs that are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords.

### **Annual licensing**

20. The maximum period that a HMO licence can be issued is five years and to date the majority of the mandatory licences have been charged for and issued on a five yearly basis.

21. The problem for the Council with this system has been that the majority of the mandatory licence applications were received in the first two years of the scheme and so the licence fee income has declined significantly and no longer covers the staffing costs for providing the licensing service. As there is a commitment that the additional licensing scheme will be self financing, the

licensing system must be structured so that its costs are covered by the fees received for providing the service.

22. It is anticipated that an annual licence will have the benefit of improving compliance. It will result in more regular checks of items such as gas safety certificates and the licence holder will be aware that problems with poor management in the previous 12 months will result in closer scrutiny of their renewal, with the potential for a re-inspection and the additional costs that may be incurred.

23. For landlords and managing agents the benefit will be the spreading of the cost of a licence. It is anticipated that there will be many landlords who will have to licence multiple properties and some portfolio landlords are known to operate in excess of 100 properties. Whilst paying a one off fee for a five year licence may reduce the need for multiple annual applications, it may also be prohibitively expensive for some landlords.

24. It should be noted from the consultation results, that the comments from landlords were largely negative regarding annual licensing.

### **Primary inspection commitment**

25. One of the successes of mandatory licensing has been the improvement in property conditions following inspections and follow up visits by officers. It is proposed that every HMO will be inspected prior to the issue of a licence and this stance has received strong support from members. The benefits of this are:

- Unsafe properties are not given a licence
- Appropriate property based conditions can be added to licences to secure required improvements
- A clear judgement can be made on the likely future reinspection requirement
- The validity of the scheme is enhanced for landlords, tenants and the general public

26. The disadvantages of inspecting every property are:

- Increased staffing costs
- The licensing system is much slower
- Visits to compliant premises can be viewed as unnecessary

27. Whilst some authorities issue a licence without visiting and follow up compliance prior to the expiry of the licence, we believe that carrying out an inspection prior to the issue of a licence has far more benefits. The public expectation of a licence is that it provides official recognition that certain standards have been met and carrying out an inspection will satisfy this expectation.

## **Phasing of the workload**

28. Based on previous experience with the mandatory licensing scheme we have calculated that there will be a drop off rate of approximately 20% from the expected total. This is due to landlords taking properties out of use, changing the tenure, selling them, leaving them vacant, actively avoiding licensing etc. The original figure based on the 2005 House Condition Survey was that there were 5069 HMOs in Oxford. Following the near completion of the mandatory licensable stock the estimate is that there are now 4369 HMOs left and so a drop out rate of 20% gives a figure of 3495. This is the figure that the calculations have been based upon.

29. In 2008 there was a bid for additional licensing for all the remaining 3 storey properties and the 2 storey houses with 5 or more occupants. The estimate was that there would be 1000 properties covered by this scheme.

30. The remaining 2495 are therefore assumed to be smaller 3/4 person HMOs and other types of HMOs e.g. poorly converted flats.

31. It is not realistic to licence every HMO in the first year because of the large number of properties involved and the requirement to carry out an inspection before issuing a licence. Due to the considerable volume of inspections required it is proposed that a risk based approach is taken, where different categories of HMO are licensed in stages.

32. Those properties considered to be the highest risk are the remaining three or more storey HMOs and the larger two storey properties containing five or more people. The first stage will be to licence these properties and the three storey properties will be completed within 12 months of the start of the scheme.

33. At the same time it is proposed to deal with those HMOs where there is ongoing enforcement action or there have been problems in the recent past that have resulted in formal action being taken. Dealing with these properties can be defined as dealing with the worst first and this will demonstrate to the public and to the rented sector that the Council is prioritising its resources where they are most needed.

34. Once these phases are nearing completion the licensing of the smaller three and four person HMOs can be commenced along with the poorly converted self contained flats.

35. By the end of the 2013/2014 year it is anticipated that 89% of HMOs will have been licensed.

36. The primary inspection workflow over the five year period of the scheme has been calculated and is included in table 1 below:

Table 1

New Applications	Nov 10 Mar 11	Apr 11 Mar 12	Apr 12 Mar 13	Apr 13 Mar 14	Apr 14 Mar 15	Apr 15 Oct 16
Mandatory	10	25	20	12	12	10
3 Storey	60	190	25	15	5	5
2 Storey with 5 or more	100	505	50	20	15	10
2 Storey with 3+ & others	60	590	815	700	270	60
Totals	230	1310	910	747	302	85

### Reinspection commitment

37. With an annual licensing system there will be an increasing number of premises that require renewal every year. See table 2 below. It is not proposed to reinspect every property when the licence is renewed, but to carry out reinspections using a risk based approach. It is anticipated that approximately 10% of premises will receive a reinspection per year.

38. It is also proposed to bring the mandatory licensable properties in line with the additional licensing scheme and renew their licences on an annual basis when they fall due.

Table 2

Renewals	Apr 11 Mar 12	Apr 12 Mar 13	Apr 13 Mar 14	Apr 14 Mar 15	Apr 15 Oct 16
Mandatory	199	379	485	560	658
3 Storey	60	250	275	290	295
2 Storey with 5 or more	100	605	655	675	690
2 Storey with 3+ & others	60	660	1465	2165	2435
Totals	419	1894	2880	3690	4078

39. Once the primary inspection has been carried out the Council will have made an assessment of the condition of the property and where necessary additional property based improvements will have been added to the licence requirements.

40. Where these additional property requirements are considered significant to securing necessary improvements e.g. installing a separate w.c., replacing windows etc. a reinspection will be needed to ensure that the works have been carried out.

41. In addition there will be those premises where there have been problems in the year, for example with rubbish, anti-social behaviour or tenants



concerned about property conditions and these can be used as triggers for considering whether a reinspection is required.

42. The following criteria are recommended as triggers for consideration of a reinspection:

- If formal action is being pursued against a licence holder, either at the premises concerned or at another address they own or manage
- When a legal notice has been served under any relevant legislation
- Where three or more service requests have been received regarding problems at a premises and at least one was found to be justified
- Where another Council service or external agency has formally flagged an address as a cause for concern
- Where there are concerns about the confidence in management of a licence holder, for example failing to co-operate with requests for access or information, etc.

### **Staffing implications**

43. The proposed scheme will have a significant impact on resource requirements. The scale of the undertaking is considerable and far greater than any other local authority in the country has carried out to date. The commitment to inspect every property prior to issuing a licence and then reinspecting an estimated 10% of these properties gives the following inspection requirement:

Table 3

Inspections	Nov 10 Mar 11	Apr 11 Mar 12	Apr 12 Mar 13	Apr 13 Mar 14	Apr 14 Mar 15	Apr 15 Oct 16
	230	1352	1099	1035	671	493

44. From experience with the mandatory scheme and benchmarking with other local authorities the maximum expected number of completed HMO inspections per officer per year is 100. This is an ambitious figure. For example, prior to the introduction of mandatory licensing the Audit Commission's suggested target for improving HMOs was 30 per officer per year.

45. There will be enforcement actions that result from implementing the scheme which will affect productivity. The two storey properties have been the main focus for enforcement action for poor conditions in recent years, as many of the three storey properties had been subject to interventions prior to the introduction of mandatory licensing. Investigating offences and preparing prosecutions is very time consuming and a typical case for poor conditions will take the equivalent of four working days to investigate and prepare a file.

46. We have estimated that in the peak years of 2011-2014 a substantial additional resource requirement will be needed to deliver the programme, with up to eleven field staff and two managers required to carry out the required

inspections. However, there is a need to match the resources to the workload to ensure that costs are contained and covered by the fee income. It is clearly advantageous to adopt a flexible employment approach to cope with such a large resource commitment and it is proposed to employ a core resource of eight field staff and two managers and use temporary contracted resources during times of peak demand to manage work flows. This was the model successfully used to deal with mandatory HMO licensing. It would also reduce the exposure to the risks identified of overestimating or underestimating the numbers of licensable HMOs.

47. There is also a need to increase the resource providing support handling the applications, entering data and carrying out checks. Our experience with mandatory licensing has been that 90% of the applications received are incomplete and require further work. The main reasons for this are that the application form is necessarily lengthy as a lot of information is required and that applications are being made reluctantly, rather than actively seeking out an official permission for personal gain, such as a Taxi licence.

48. A more efficient front end will be created to help deal with the applications. Applying for a HMO licence is one of the activities covered by the European Services Directive and an online application facility is being made available on the Council's website. The experience with mandatory licensing has meant that the Uniform database has been developed to produce letters and hold a library of licence conditions and email communication can speed up information exchange. However, there will still be a certain amount of manual processing and a substantial number of telephone calls to chase up information will be required.

49. At present this role is carried out by a single FTE post and it has been estimated that even with improved front end efficiencies the resources required to deal with the workflow will have to increase threefold. It should be noted that in the peak year of 2006/7 the single FTE post dealt with 282 applications and the proposed workflows are in excess of ten times this number. As with the inspection resource, adopting a flexible employment approach will be key to successfully processing applications and controlling the risks identified with receiving too many applications.

50. An additional complication is an anticipation that service requests from residents and tenants will increase once the scheme gets underway and expectations rise. The resources needed for dealing with service requests are not funded through the licence fee. This will require additional resources to be directed towards the Environmental Control service that deals with the reactive workload of the Environmental Development service. An estimated rise of 20% in service requests in a year could result in approximately 600 additional service requests.

51. The authority then has a further duty under the Housing Act 2004 to inspect every licensed property under the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS), for Category 1 hazards, within five years of the licence application being received. This is another activity that is not funded through

the licensing fee and which adds an enforcement burden that must be met. It is sometimes, although not always, possible for the licensing inspection to also cover the HHSRS inspection for category 1 hazards.

52. It is proposed to use the existing resources within the base budget of the Environmental Development service to cover both these unfunded work areas.

### **Proposed fee structure**

53. Members have made it clear that the costs of the scheme must be covered by the fee and that the Council Taxpayer will not be asked to provide any funding.

54. The cost of dealing with the initial application and carrying out the primary inspection, which will be carried out for every premises, are the highest cost activities that must be covered by the fee. It is proposed that this cost is reflected in a higher first year fee and that subsequent annual renewals are much lower, to reflect the smaller amount of time spent processing the licence.

55. The proposed fees are as follows:

Table 4

Initial application fee for a 3 storey HMO and 2 storey HMOs with 5 occupants	£470 + £20 for each additional room
Initial application fee for 2 storey HMO with 3 or 4 occupants	£362
Annual renewal fee for 3 storey HMO and 2 storey HMOs with 5 or more occupants	£172
Annual renewal application fee for 2 storey HMO with 3 or 4 occupants	£150

56. One of the complaints from good landlords regarding the mandatory licensing scheme has been the perceived unfairness of the current fee structure. The main issue has been that some landlords who delayed their applications and had to be chased for their fees were given licence periods the same as those who applied early and thereby gained from their delaying tactics. This has now been addressed for mandatory licences by issuing shorter licence periods based on the start of the programme. It is proposed that the same approach should be taken for additional licensing, so there is no benefit accrued by delaying an application.

57. There has also been considerable effort put in by the Residential Safety Team to try and track down potentially licensable three storey properties. This has involved analysis of available databases, examination of properties using Google Earth and street inspections. Unfortunately the definition of a mandatory HMO has left some room for less scrupulous landlords to claim

that their properties are not licensable because less than five people live at an address and the returns from checking over 300 properties were very low. The high costs of this type of activity should be reflected in the fees.

58. The consultation results indicate that 88% of respondents are in favour of a fee structure that penalises bad landlords.

59. It is proposed that the following penalty clauses are added to the fee structure:

Table 5

<b>Penalty Clauses</b>	<b>Proposed fee</b>
In the event of property being found by officers surveying for HMOs a finders fee will be added unless the landlord is able to demonstrate that they became the owner of the HMO within the previous 12 weeks	£163
Penalty fee to be added following second letter sent chasing licence application (this may be in addition to fees above)	£35
Fee to be applied in the event of a reinspection being required during the renewal process as a result of poor management for a 3 storey HMO and 2 storey HMOs with 5 or more occupants	£130
Fee to be applied in the event of a reinspection being required during the renewal process as a result of poor management for a 2 storey HMO with 3 or 4 occupants	£86
Missed appointments charge during inspection process	£86

60. In addition to penalty clauses for bad landlords, there should be incentives for good landlords and encouragement for portfolio holders to apply. The following proposals are recommended:

Table 6

Accredited Landlords	A fee reduction of 10%
Multiple Applications - If you own or manage more than one licensable HMO, you are entitled to the following reductions per property for the initial application	2-19 properties: £20 20 or more properties: £30

### **Proposed licence conditions and how they will work**

61. At present a HMO licence contains mandatory conditions and property specific conditions relating to necessary improvements such as installing additional facilities or carrying out repairs within a specified time frame.

62. It is proposed to use the licence as a vehicle for improving the management of the property to respond to concerns from local residents about the appearance of HMOs and the behaviour of their tenants. Every HMO licence will specify the number and type of waste receptacles required

for the number of tenants permitted to occupy the premises. It is not intended that a landlord would be prosecuted for a single offence of failing to provide sufficient receptacles in accordance with the licence, unless there were repeated rubbish problems at an address and a clear unwillingness to comply. However, action would be far more likely in the event of there being a number of breaches of licence conditions discovered, particularly where complaints had been received about the condition of a property.

63. We will also introduce a condition requiring that the landlord agrees to take reasonable steps to minimise any nuisance, alarm, harassment or distress that may be caused to neighbours by the way the property is used and cooperate with the Council and other agencies in solving anti-social behaviour problems caused by the tenants. The intention is not that a landlord would be taken to court if a noisy party occurred at one of their properties, as the Council already has powers to deal with such problems. However, if there were repeated problems at an address and the landlord refused reasonable requests to become involved and take practical steps to prevent or reduce anti social behaviour, then this would be considered a breach of this condition.

64. In addition there is also an opportunity to improve energy efficiency within a substantial part of the housing stock and play a role in reducing carbon emissions in the local area. A condition will be attached to every HMO licence requiring thermal insulation to the current Building regulation standard, that energy efficient light bulbs are progressively installed throughout every HMO and that only A rated appliances should be supplied as replacements for electrical appliances.

### **Delivering the programme**

65. The key milestones for delivering the scheme are detailed below:

Table 7

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
1	Consultation	21 June 2010
2	CEB approval	22 July 2010
3	Legal notification & promotion of scheme	25 October 2010
4	Initial recruitment of staff to deliver phase 1	25 October 2010
5	Commence scheme	25 October 2010 to 23 October 2015
6	Phase 1 – larger HMOs & problem premises	25 October 2010 to 31 March 2012
7	Recruitment of staff to deliver phase 2	1 April 2011
8	Phase 2 – smaller HMOs	31 March 2014
9	Completion	23 October 2015

### **Financial implications of the scheme**

66. The financial implications of the proposed scheme are substantial and there are three clear work areas that will be affected by the scheme; the

licensing activities, dealing with service requests and addressing the duty to carry out an HHSRS assessment.

67. There is a clear need for additional resources to deliver a licensing scheme of this size. Given the estimated workflows it is possible that there will be a need for up to sixteen additional staff to process applications and carry out the necessary property inspections. In the lead up to the implementation of the scheme we will explore resourcing options other than permanent employment to ensure value for money and reduce risks around employment and severance. We will also consider redeployment of existing staff from within the service and across the Council from lower priority work.

68. It is proposed that a core team is employed and that flexible employment procedures are adopted to deal with any additional resource need. This will have the added benefit of reducing the risks identified of overestimating or underestimating the number of applications. The maximum annual cost for the core resource requirement during the peak periods are provided below:

Table 8

	Scale Point	Posts	Full Salary costs per post	Total cost
Team Leader	44	2	47587	95174
HMO Enforcement Officer	34	8	36506	292048
Licensing Support Officer	24	3	26449	79347
Supplies & Services e.g. Uniform licences, mobile phones, stationery etc.				13094
Transport				2750
<b>Total</b>				<b>482413</b>

69. Should eleven staff be employed the financial implications are included in table 9 below. However it is anticipated that a more flexible resourcing approach will be taken to ensure that inspection requirements are met:

Table 9

	Scale Point	Posts	Full Salary costs per post	Total cost
Team Leader	44	2	47587	95174
HMO Enforcement Officer	34	11	36506	401566
Licensing Support Officer	24	3	26449	79347
Supplies & Services e.g. Uniform licences, mobile phones, stationery etc.				13094
Transport				2750
<b>Total</b>				<b>591931</b>

70. The calculated income flows are included below as table 10. Due to the need to contain costs and reduce the Council's exposure to financial risk a recommended 10% contingency sum has been included in the figures. The estimated income covers the core resourcing costs that will be required from April 2011 onwards and provides headroom for engaging temporary resources as required.

Table 10

Estimated income	Nov 10 Mar 11	Apr 11 Mar 12	Apr 12 Mar 13	Apr 13 Mar 14	Apr 14 Mar 15	Apr 15 Oct 16
New applications	103016	584644	353551	288343	130965	35607
Renewals	0	73057	321817	479389	607980	671023
Total	103016	657701	675368	767732	738946	706631
Less 10% contingency	92714	591931	607831	690959	665051	635967

71. Finance have stated that the proposed scheme is a change to the budget framework and therefore it requires the approval of Full Council. Whilst this does not have any impact on making the designation under the Housing Act 2004, which is a separate legal matter, approval of the financial aspects of the scheme will be required before it commences. This is a procedural matter that will be dealt with before the proposed commencement date of 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

72. The existing staffing resource in Environmental Development will be needed to cover the service requests and the HHSRS commitment.

### **Risk**

73. A risk assessment of this report and the recommendations are set out in appendix two.

74. The principle risks are:

- A legal challenge to the decision to introduce additional licensing may occur because the majority of landlords are against the scheme. It is possible that the scale of the proposal may attract interest from national groups wishing to oppose the scheme to try and deter other local authorities from declaring the whole of their area for additional licensing. Our opinion is that the case has been made for additional licensing and we can defend the decision to introduce the designation.
- That insufficient income is received due to an over estimation of the number of HMOs in the city or the reluctance of landlords to licence their properties. The data on HMOs is not exact which is why there is a 20% margin built into the estimated numbers. It will be difficult to deal with large numbers of landlords who are reluctant to licence their properties and adopt a wait and see approach. Staff resource would be

required to seek out properties and actively enforce the licensing requirements. The flexible approach to resourcing the scheme would mitigate this risk and the fee structure will encourage applications to be made on a timely basis.

- That there has been an underestimation in the numbers of HMOs in the city and that the licensing service is unable to cope with higher than expected volumes of applications. The flexible approach to resourcing the scheme will mitigate against this risk.
- There is a risk that public expectations may become too high and create a belief that the scheme will solve every problem related to HMOs. If expectations are too high then there will be a widespread disappointment with the scheme and the perception may well be that it has failed even if it delivers everything that was planned. A communications plan is being developed with the Policy, Culture and Communications service to ensure a clear message is broadcast regarding what the scheme aims to deliver.

### **Climate Change/Environmental Impact**

75. The environmental impact of the scheme will be positive as it will result in the improvement of over 4000 properties by 2016. Private rented accommodation contains 38.6% of the least energy efficient homes and HMOs are a substantial part of that sector. In addition the buildings forming HMOs are generally older and therefore less energy efficient, with 46.2% dating from before 1919 compared with 25.8% of all dwellings in Oxford.

76. The combination of structural improvements with increased energy efficiency measures required by the licensing process will result in a reduction in carbon use that will help towards NI 186 per capita CO2 reductions in the area.

### **Equalities impact**

77. An equalities impact assessment is attached at appendix three.

### **Legal implications**

78. It has already been highlighted that as this is a precedent-setting scheme it is possible that the Council may face a legal challenge regarding its decision.

79. The Council has to follow the legal requirements placed upon it under the Housing Act 2004 and the associated regulations whilst implementing the scheme. These requirements have been examined by Legal and Democratic Services and the Council is satisfied that it has complied with all the requirements set out in Sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004.



80. Once an additional licensing scheme has been approved there are specific requirements to issue notices to publicise the scheme and ensure landlords are made aware of it and a scheme cannot come into force any earlier than three months after the date on which the designation is confirmed.

81. There is a requirement that the Council must from time to time review the operation of any designation made by them and if following a review they consider it appropriate to do so, the Council may revoke the designation.

### **Recommendations**

82. That the City Executive Board:

1. Designates the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 in relation to every class of HMO, but only including those section 257 HMOs that are mainly or wholly tenanted, including those with resident landlords.
2. Adopts an annual licensing system, with a requirement that an inspection is carried out before the first licence is issued.
3. Approves the proposed risk-based phased approach to the licensing scheme as set out in paragraphs 32 - 34.
4. Approves the reinspection criteria defined in paragraph 42.
5. Approves the proposed core resource levels as set out in table 8 and the proposed flexible approach to resourcing the scheme to meet peak demand periods.
6. Agrees that the proposed licence fees in table 4, the penalty clauses in table 5 and the reductions in table 6 should be submitted to the General Purposes Licensing Committee for approval.
7. Agrees that the additional licensing scheme designation will come into force on the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2010, subject to the approval of the budget framework by Full Council.

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List of appendices

Appendix 1 – Additional licensing – making the case for Oxford  
Appendix 2 – Risk Register  
Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

## **Additional Licensing – Making the case for Oxford**



Supporting information for the report to the City Executive Board

# 1. Introduction

## Oxford: Spires and HMOs

The 'City of Dreaming Spires' is famous the world over. With the ancient University at its heart, contemporary Oxford is a densely packed urban space covering 17.6 sq miles and is home to around 149,300 people who live in 57,843 dwellings (CLG, 2008/2009).

The City of Oxford, in marked contrast to other parts of Oxfordshire, is ethnically and culturally diverse but it is also, because of its large student population, youthful and mobile.

Oxford is unique in terms of Britain's cities because it has a population with:

- the highest proportion of 20 – 24 year-olds
- the largest number of 16 – 24 year-olds
- and these young people are mainly students.

The annual student intake reinforces the diversity of the city as well as bringing continual renewal. This combination of diversity, youth, and freshness means that Oxford is always in a state of flux and development. This vibrancy generates a large service economy that creates its own consequences.

The city faces, in particular, an affordable housing crisis arising from population pressures within a restricted area. The land supply is subject to:

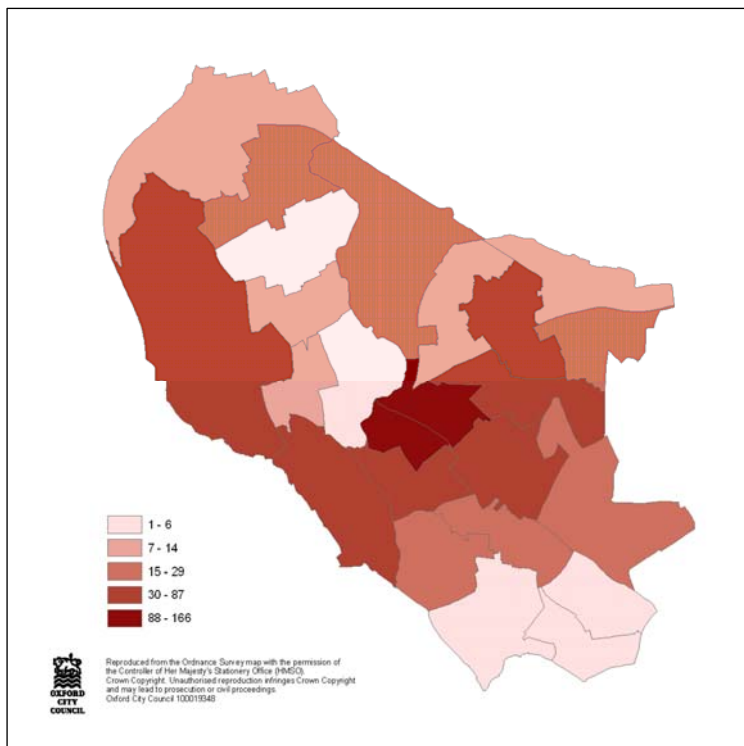
- tight physical boundaries. The city is defined by its ring road. This is both a physical and political boundary to further development.
- risk of flooding in many areas. These include areas already used for housing but in which further housing development is unwise.
- the need to protect and enhance natural and historic environments. The development of housing is restricted by conservation constraints.

This crisis exhibits in many ways; one marked effect being the continued rise in the HMO stock year on year.

Additional Licensing will help alleviate the housing situation by setting and maintaining minimum standards across the city in the most vulnerable sector of Oxford's private rental market.

## 2. Additional Licensing for the City

We are aiming to introduce additional licensing throughout the City of Oxford. We propose a reduction of the thresholds for size and occupancy at which an HMO requires a licence so that each HMO as defined by the Housing Act 2004 would be included.



**Map 1: Distribution of HMOs in Oxford**

This would mean that in addition to the just over 600 existing HMOs licenced in the city under the mandatory scheme, there would be an estimated further 4500 subject to additional licensing. The current spread of these HMOs across the city can be seen in Map 1. It is clear that HMOs are not restricted to one particular area of the city and the issues regarding them are found citywide.

The licensing of every HMO in the city will ensure that accommodation standards in the city will improve, and will also give the Council valuable information about the housing stock within the city.

### Population and Urban Density

Approximately 149,300 people live in Oxford from the mid-year estimate in 2009. The city has a large number of young people living within it, with almost 17% of the population being between 20 - 24 years old. There is a larger percentage of 15 – 24 year-olds in Oxford at 25%, than in England as a whole where the figure is only 13%. (ONS 2009)

However, the number of people in retirement is below national levels. In Oxford, approximately 15% are of retirement age compared to over 22% in England as a whole.

The urban nature of the city is reflected in the high levels of housing density. The 2006 Regional Housing Strategy sought a minimum of 40 dwellings per hectare in this region and this requirement formed the basis of guidance to the local planning authority. Oxford currently achieves around 90 dwellings per hectare.

The most recent Regional Housing Strategy of 2008-2011 did not re-iterate this requirement instead emphasising the need for affordable housing, the Decent Homes standard, supporting vulnerable people and the provision of accommodation for travellers and gypsies.

## **Economic Activities**

Although the unemployment rate for Oxford has increased in recent years in line with national trends, at the current rate of 5.2% it remains less than the national average of 7.4%. The draw of Oxford in terms of the number of jobs that it supports is still an important factor in the city's economy.

The Oxford City Futures study of 2004 confirmed that the Oxford economy is a diverse economy with a mix of competitive businesses. It compares well with the rest of Oxfordshire, the South East Region, and England as a whole, with most economic indicators. Although employment in manufacturing has declined in recent years, this is more than offset by the creation of new businesses which have a higher than normal survival rate. The study took into account a 15 year time frame and identified five sectors as being key to Oxford's future economic health :- education, retail, health, high technology businesses, and tourism. Manufacturing and distribution activity are acknowledged as playing an important role as they help to sustain diversity of employment opportunity.

However, Oxford also has a relatively high level of economic inactivity. This is not related to retirement; it is mostly due to the large student population.

## **Students**

Oxford has the highest number of students as a proportion of the local population of any place in the South East region and the second highest in the country after Cambridge.

There are 39 independent and self-governing Colleges or Halls within the University of Oxford. All but two of these admit students for both undergraduate and graduate degrees. Mostly the colleges provide accommodation for a student's first year but generally expect them to find a place to live for the remainder of their course.

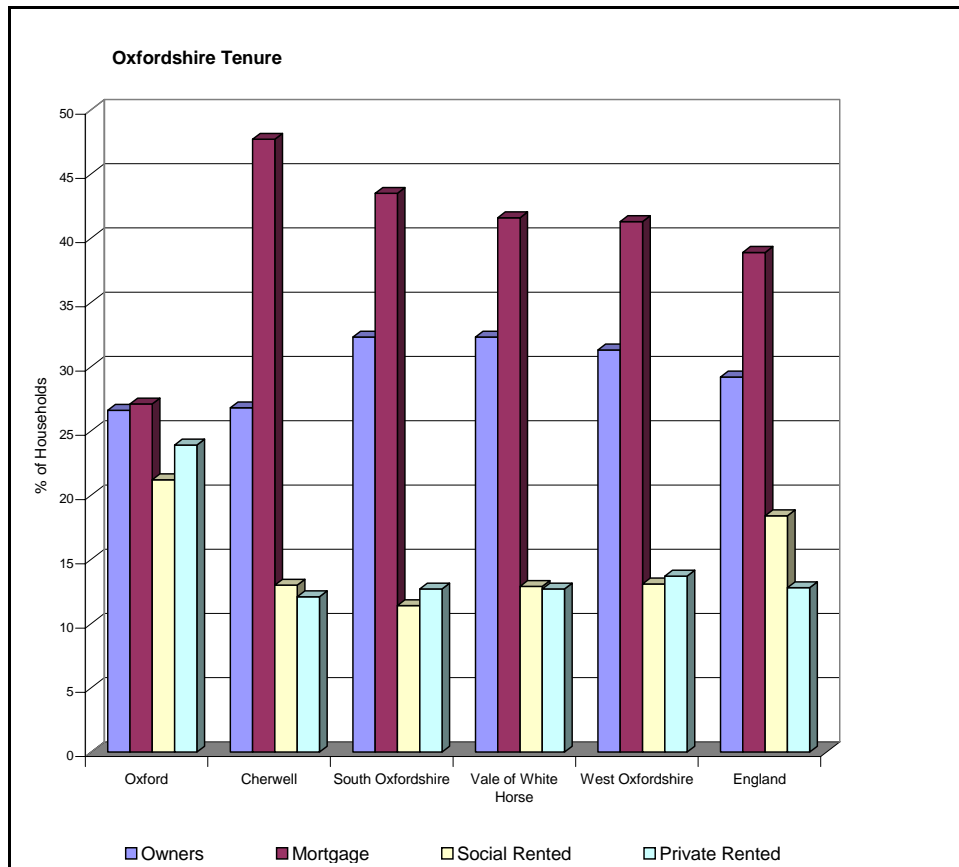
A similar situation with respect to student accommodation exists at Oxford Brookes University whose campus is situated on the eastern side of the city.

Overall, there are in excess of 38,000 students enrolled each year in Oxford with over 21,000 of these being undergraduates. This transient population is highly significant and brings unique pressures to the housing market of the city.

## **Housing**

Home ownership is the majority tenure in Oxford with 65.9% of homes being owner occupied. It is, however, well below the English average. Renting – particularly private renting – is above average with 26% of the stock being rented from a private landlord. Graph 1 below demonstrates this phenomenon in relation to England and the other Oxfordshire district council areas.

**Graph 1: Tenure breakdown showing outright owners and owners with mortgages**



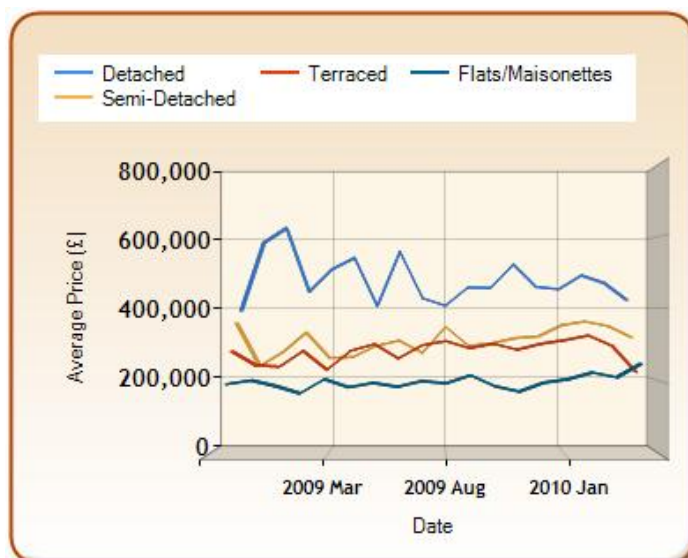
Source Census 2001 ([www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk))

Higher density house types (that is, flats and terraces) are more prevalent in the City than in Oxfordshire as a whole and are well above the average for England and Wales. It is in such properties that HMOs dominate. These comparisons are based on Census figures, but as the total stock has only increased by around 5% since 2001, this position will not have changed significantly.

## Prices and Affordability

In Oxford the average house price over the two year period from December 2007 to December 2009 fell slightly from £333,410 to £295,358 though there are signs that house prices have begun to recover in 2010 (Land Registry for England and Wales).

Average price of all properties sold in Oxford each month



This situation is in line with the national trend as the recession is inextricably linked to the housing market as mortgages are more difficult to obtain and unemployment levels rise. However, the local imbalance between housing supply and demand continues and The Centre for Economics and Business Research had forecast an average annual growth of 6.76% per year until 2020 though the unpredicted recession has meant that currently this figure cannot be substantiated.

## House Price Growth

Overall, house prices have risen by up to 180% in Oxford in the ten years from 1999 to 2009 which is a notable drop on the previous figure of 282% in Oxford in the ten years from 1997 to 2007.

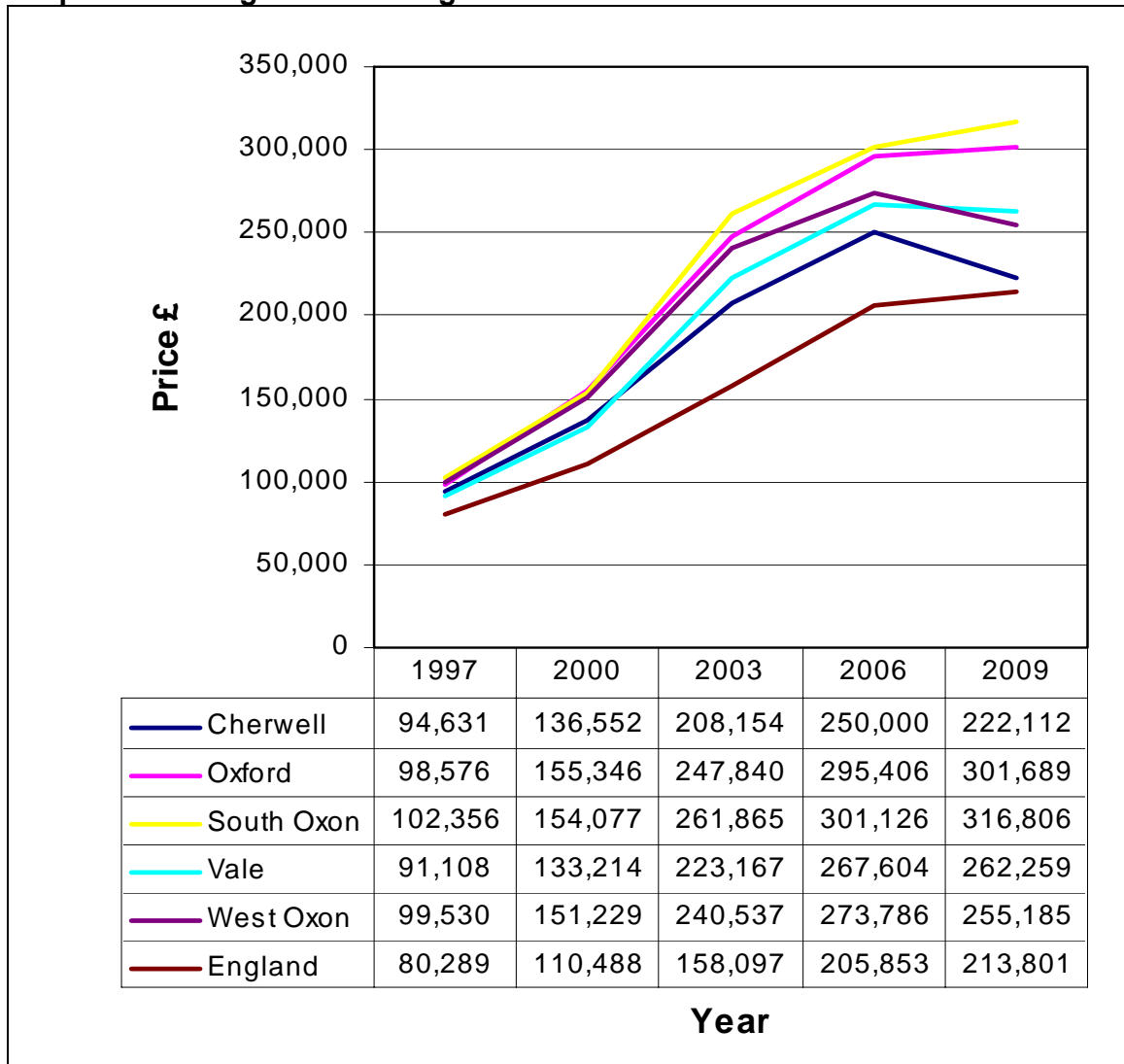
However, getting a 'foot on the housing ladder' in Oxford is still expensive. According to the housing charity Shelter earnings of £56,846 per year are required to buy an average-priced house in Oxford. The median house price in Oxford (May 2009) is £247,875, which is still around 8 times the median income. (Land Registry from UpMyStreet.com)

Median selling price for all Properties

	May 2006	May 2007	May 2008	May 2009
Oxford	£265,000	£297,437	£258,687	£247,875
Oxfordshire	£220,581	£243,381	£247,901	£212,872

The limited supply of dwellings coming on to the market and the lack of sufficient new building do somewhat combat the effect of a weakened economy. Rising demand can sustain the higher than the national average house prices in the city and keep the demand for rented property high.

**Graph: 2: Average Price Changes 1997 to 2009**



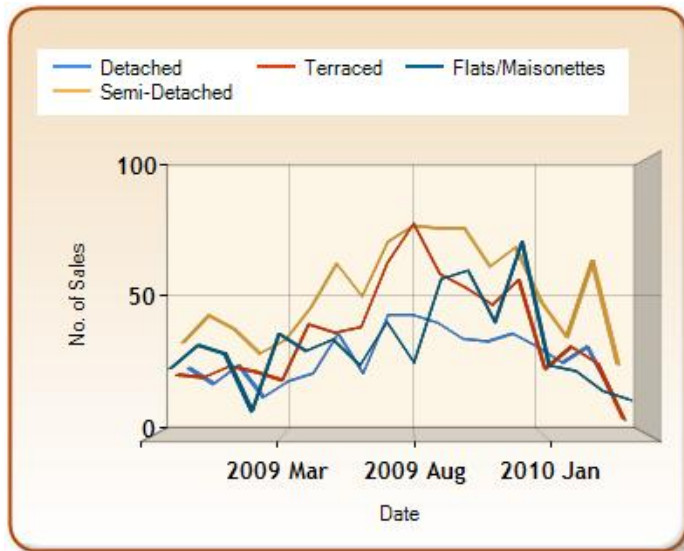
**Source: CLG Live tables on housing market and house prices, based on Land Registry data**

Most housing on the market is unaffordable to households with a single income. Even for households with two incomes, Oxford prices are excessive. The smaller dwellings and bottom end dwellings (such as larger properties able to be turned into HMOs) make ideal rental properties and are therefore sought after by landlords and developers. Would-be owner-occupiers are being priced out of the market by the investment sector making it even more difficult for local buyers to get on the property ladder.

Like most of Oxfordshire and the South East, Oxford experienced growth in property prices from 1997 onwards, with prices reaching a peak around 2007/8.

Although the current economic climate has meant that both prices and the volume of sales have slowed down from recent Land Registry figures during the last quarter of 2010 the house prices in Oxford increased at a higher rate than in Greater London, increased by 8 times that of the rest of the country and are on average £100,000 more expensive than the average UK property.





## Total number of all properties sold in Oxford each month by property type

## Rental Market and Buy-to-Let

### Buoyancy of the Market

The Oxford rental market, including the HMO sector, remains a buoyant, vibrant and growing element of the city's economy. The recent recession and the increase in re-possession have led to an increase in the number seeking privately rented accommodation rather than a decrease.

Oxford has been identified and promoted as the best place to invest in property in the United Kingdom. (April 2006, Channel 4, Kirstie and Phil: *Where Best to Invest*). The market shows no signs of slowing down, with a high demand for rental accommodation. The market has in recent years been assisted by the Buy-to-Let initiative, which was introduced by the industry in 1996 rather than by government intervention. Buy-to-Let has been a significant source of new, private-rented housing supply in the southeast as a whole. Oxford reflects this trend providing fertile ground for Buy-to-Let developments.

The experience of Mandatory Licensing reveals that there has been no overall loss of HMO stock from the rental market in Oxford. While Licensing has prompted a few landlords to withdraw, others have come into the market in equal measure and applied to licence houses previously unknown as HMOs.

Most landlords required to licence an HMO have come to realise that the expenditure they are obliged to make by the Licence Conditions amounts to a worthwhile investment. A few landlords have elected to remove their house from that market rather than make changes required by Licence Conditions. They have cited, for example, aesthetic ("fire doors will ruin a fine family house") or financial reasons. Landlords will, of course, recognise the fact of capital appreciation when considering the financial impact of licensing. As with most investments the payoff for a business (and letting houses is a business) usually comes when the asset is sold. HMO Licensing does nothing more than require basic improvements and thus adds to the value of HMO stock. The improvement of the HMO stock is a significant social and financial benefit to the general economy of the city. It maintains the buoyancy of the rental market.

Additional Licensing is expected to have a neutral impact on the overall availability of housing offered on the private rental market.

### Expected outcome on rents

Additional Licensing cannot be responsible for increases in rents because the improvements such as fire precautions ought to have been made in any case. The

only likely effect will be that the licensing fee will be passed on to tenants. As far as Mandatory Licensing is concerned this now equates to 92p per week per letting for the period of the licence based on the current licensing fee and five occupants.

From consultation with landlords and letting agents it is clear that a significant number intend to pass on the fee directly to tenants. Within the context of actual rents in the city this will be an insignificant increase.

### **Quality of Houses in Multiple Occupation**

High demand for properties has meant that some landlords can offer lower quality properties but still be confident of finding tenants.

The physical condition of the private rented stock is characterised by considerable diversity, however, the English House Condition Survey showed that the level of unfitness varied depending on the type of property. The lowest standard of accommodation was found in houses in multiple occupation (HMO) and especially the property and management standards for the larger, 'traditional' types of HMO (DETR, 1998).

Information concerning the HMO stock in the city has been built up from operational records, however, landlords and agents are most reticent to provide the Council with data unless specifically required to do so. Additional Licensing will enable the collection of more detailed and accurate information about the HMO stock. This is one of the less apparent benefits of licensing.

In May 2005, the Council published the Private Sector House Condition Survey, which comprised a physical analysis of dwellings and a short socio-economic interview of inhabitants. The Survey completed 1,256 inspections over the whole of the city in the private sector, including registered social landlord stock. It was estimated that there were 5,069 HMOs at the time of the survey.

A large proportion of HMOs were found to be in the private rented sector (77.5%) – in comparison, 26.0% of all dwellings in the city are in the private rented sector. The following are some of the main characteristics of HMOs in Oxford:

- 61.8% are shared houses
- 16.9% have no smoke detection facilities (858 HMOs).
- 61.3% only have battery-operated smoke detectors.

Generally, HMOs had higher repair costs than other dwellings. Levels of unfitness (under s604 of the Housing Act 1985) for individual units making up larger HMOs were also higher than for the City as a whole. All HMOs had the use of all basic amenities; however, a number shared facilities worse than a ratio of 1:5 (individuals). Since mandatory licensing was introduced in April 2006 the conditions set for those properties covered by the scheme has brought about an improvement in standards, particularly fire precautions and shared facilities. However, within Oxford, there are still large concentrations of the smaller houses in multiple occupation, often in a poor state of repair. The case studies in Appendix 1 show some of the issues, which are prevalent across the city. These issues have been identified in a number of ways, either through the proactive HMO licensing work or through service requests from the general public.

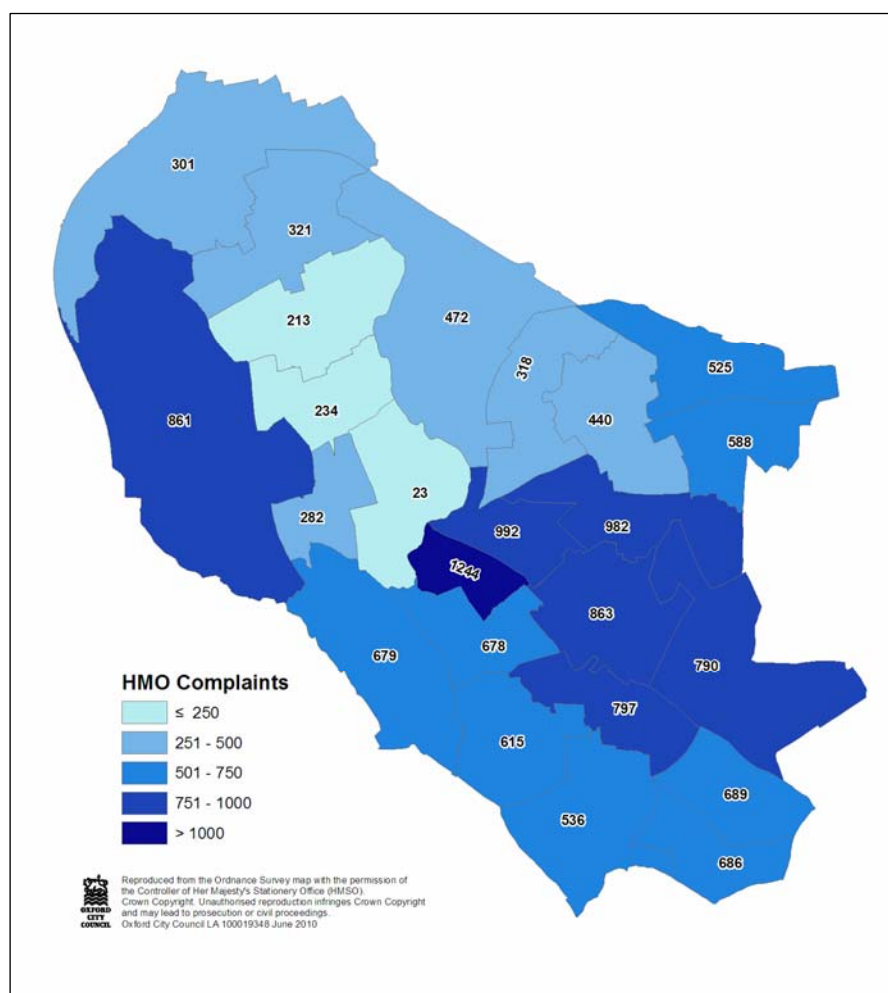
### **Service requests and Houses in Multiple Occupation**

Many landlords strive to offer safe, secure, well-maintained and well-decorated accommodation above minimum standards, with washing machines, microwave

cookers and tumble driers also provided to attract tenants. However, there is also much anecdotal evidence of tenants being forced to live in poorer standard accommodation in order to save money or be located in the 'right' area. Service requests from occupiers about such houses have identified the incidence of dampness, poor electrical and gas safety, overcrowding, and inadequate facilities.

There is a frustration regarding the dual standards, which are currently being applied to the HMO stock when dealing with service requests, with the ability to have more control over the management standards in mandatory licensable HMOs than in others.

Map 2 shows the distribution of all service requests relating to HMOs since mandatory HMO licensing was introduced. These service requests not only include complaints about conditions and poor management practices but also complaints from neighbours relating to such issues as noise and rubbish from and around HMOs. However, often HMO occupiers do not complain about conditions and poor management practices, therefore, there is a gross underreporting of the issues. The possibility of unscrupulous landlords or agents illegally evicting tenants is a very real concern for many.



Map 2: Distribution of all service requests relating to HMOs

There can be no doubt that a significant proportion of HMOs of all descriptions across the whole of the city are being managed sufficiently ineffectively that they are giving rise to problems for those occupying the HMOs and members of the public.

## **Impact of licensing on service requests**

Service requests relating to licensed HMOs are included within these figures but in our experience there are far fewer problems with licensed HMOs. That is not to say that there are no more problems once a licence is issued, but service requests can be easily investigated and suitably and speedily resolved due to the readily available information relating to the ownership and management of the property concerned. In addition there is an improved working relationship built up between such interested parties and the Environmental Development Case Officers responsible for the licensing of the properties. Efficiency and problem solving has therefore been increased and the lower incidence of complaints reflects both an improvement of standards and management where HMOs have been licensed under the mandatory scheme.

## **3. The Experience of Mandatory Licensing**

### **Development of Mandatory Licensing in Oxford**

The first applications for a licence under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 were received on 24 April 2006. Over the following four months there was a rapid increase in the flow of applications as landlords, aware of their obligations, took steps to comply. Since that period the flow of applications was steady for eighteen months but then trailed off somewhat so that, on average, about 5 applications have been received each month over the past year.

It was originally estimated that there were 800 licensable HMOs in Oxford though following extensive checks throughout the city this figure has now been reduced to just over 600, the majority of which have been found. There have been 634 applications for licences since mandatory licensing began. Of those, 25 were withdrawn before the licence was granted mainly because they were determined to be not licensable and the total figure also includes properties that have been re-licensed where ownership has changed and where changes to the licence have been made such as an increase in the numbers of occupants.

### **The Licensing Process**

In essence, the licensing process is one of consultation and involves an inspection before the Licence is granted. This is an endeavour to make the process meaningful to all parties and not merely a paper exercise.

After an application has been received, and acknowledged, a Case Officer will arrange an appointment with the landlord and/or agent to inspect the house. The inspection will be an exhaustive one during which any deficiencies in the facilities or safety equipment, or their maintenance, will be identified together with issues relating to the management of the property.

Any works required will be discussed on site with the landlord. The proposed conditions of the licence are drafted on the basis of observations made at an inspection. After informal discussions with the parties about the substance of the conditions and about the time to be allowed for the completion of any works the draft licence will be sent out for the statutory consultation period.

Consequently, the grant of a licence occurs smoothly with a minimum of inconvenience to the applicant and with the least possible amount of bureaucracy.

In the cases where very poor or dangerous situations exist formal action has been taken and landlords have been prosecuted as a result of the initial visits following receipt of an application for an HMO licence.

More recently time has been taken to re-visit properties to ensure that licence conditions have been met. Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 113 properties were found to comply with all the conditions set as part of the licensing process and these checks are still being undertaken.

However, where there has been a failure by licensees to complete the necessary works legal action will be taken and two cases are currently being prepared with a view to prosecuting those responsible for this failure.

### **Evaluation**

Significant improvements to the Oxford housing stock as a result of mandatory licensing have included additional bathrooms, toilets, and kitchens or the facilities within them. There has also been considerable investment in safety through the installation or up-grading of fire doors, automatic fire detection systems and other fire

protection works. Other safety measures have also been undertaken including the elimination of trip hazards and the guarding of staircases.

There has been, however, a noticeable trend to avoid mandatory licensing by reducing the number of occupants. Although few have withdrawn an application on this basis there are anecdotal accounts from agents and others that what was once a house let to five people is now only available to four occupants and checks by Residential Safety Team staff have confirmed that numbers have been reduced in properties that have the capacity for additional occupants from information from previous visits that would have made them subject to mandatory licensing.

## **Compliance**

Steps have been taken to ensure landlords of HMOs believed to be subject to mandatory licensing apply. In cases where the owners (and their addresses) have been clearly identified they have been written to about licensing. In the year to May 2010 46 such letters were sent and all resulted in applications being received.

Since April 2009 the maximum 5 year licence period has also been reduced for those licences where enforcement action had to be taken to produce an application. In such cases the licence period was reduced by the period the applicant had avoided the obligation to be licensed. In some of these cases the avoidance has been up to 4 years so the licence period has been reduced to little more than a year though the full fee has still be charged.

Some of the other licensable HMOs have come to notice through events such as a complaint from an occupant about not being licensed or about the way the HMO is run. In every such case, the compliance procedures were followed through until an application was received or it was otherwise excluded from the requirements to license.

## **Prosecutions**

Cases have been taken up to the stage of a recorded PACE interview but invariably the landlord concerned has conceded and submitted an application. This has obviated the need to prosecute though there has been one case where a landlord has been prosecuted for operating a HMO without a licence. This resulted in a £4,000 fine and £1,000 costs. (There were also associated Management Regulation fines.)

## **Progress**

Mandatory Licensing with respect to new applications has virtually been completed now though the work to ensure that the required works to meet the required standards continues. However, the renewal of these licences will start in August 2011 and this work will not be adversely affected by additional licensing. There is a commitment to continue to resource the mandatory scheme and indeed there will be synergies, which will enhance both schemes. It is anticipated that there will be no difficulty continuing the mandatory licensing programme in conjunction with the proposed additional licensing scheme.

## **4. Working Partnerships**

### **Continuous Development**

Oxford City Council has been working with landlords to improve conditions within the HMO stock of the city since the mid 1980s. A dedicated multi-disciplinary team was created in 1990 to tackle the growing problems within the HMO stock in the city.

A variety of interventions have been used in Oxford to tackle problems in the HMO stock in the city. These range from providing advice and support to landlords and tenants through to the use of legislative powers to raise standards within HMOs. In 1999, for example, Oxford successfully introduced a HMO registration scheme in part of the city, which had special control provisions. The registration scheme was based in the East of the city covering 1000 HMOs. One of the consequences of the registration scheme was the migration of rental properties to other parts of the city as landlords and agents tried to evade regulation.

### **Operational Links**

The Environmental Development Service was created in 2009 and the re-organisation built upon earlier work to separate reactive and proactive functions. The Health Development service concentrates on mandatory HMO licensing while the Environmental Control service deals with service requests. There is a very close working relationship between the two services which is essential given the regulatory overlap.

Within the Health Development service there is a Tenancy Relations Officer who works alongside enforcement officers, giving advice to landlords and tenants. This service enables tenants to maintain their rights and ensures that landlords are aware of the legislation. However, where serious breaches occur legal action has been taken which has led to convictions and in one case imprisonment. In many cases the Tenancy Relations Officers prevent homelessness through their involvement with proactive casework.

Operational partners include CANACT, the anti-social behaviour team; Thames Valley Police in relation to improving home security in HMOs; the Oxford City PCT, linking between health visitors and Environmental Development; other departments of the council such as Planning and Housing Options including the Empty Property Officer. There is also a close working relationship with the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue service.

The relationship with private landlords and letting agents within the city and other stakeholders has developed over the last ten years. A Landlords Forum is held at least annually and attendance is generally good. The service also meets with letting agents, college domestic bursars and other strategic partners on a regular basis.

HMO licensing is just one part of the jigsaw in improving conditions in the private rented sector, it is essential that the Environmental Development service continues to work within the partnerships already developed and continues to work with new partners to bring about real improvements in this area. It is also clear that for this work to have any real impact the resourcing for this area must be sustained, as HMO licensing is a long-term strategy.

The linkages set out in Figure 1 are vital to the success of HMO licensing in Oxford and the continued improvement of conditions and management practices within the HMO stock in the city.

### **Overall strategic approach**

The theme of improving the existing housing stock is included in a number of strategic plans and has been a key aim for many years. The lack of affordable

housing within the city has a far-reaching effect and therefore it is essential that improvements be made to the existing housing stock.

Within Oxford's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2012, the Oxford Strategic Partnership (Local Strategic Partnership) has affordable housing as a cross cutting key theme. One of the objectives within the strategy is to provide safer and enhanced residential areas and the Council's role in improving the quality of the existing housing stock in the City is recognised as having a part to play in realising the strategies aims.

The Regeneration Framework published in 2009 contains an objective to create places where people wish to live and that it will engage with the local community and local voluntary groups to ensure that local people have a say in shaping where they live and work. One of the key issues for many residents in Oxford is the perceived degradation of their environment caused by poorly managed HMOs that has manifested itself in large volumes of service requests about rubbish and anti-social behaviour.

The Council itself has six corporate priorities, one of which is to provide more housing and better housing for all. Whilst it can be argued that additional licensing will not provide more housing it can be said that one of the key aims of licensing is to provide better quality housing.

The Council's current corporate plan for 2010-2013 sets out the strategic priorities and key commitments of the Council. The foreword to the plan includes the following statement:

"Providing more and better affordable housing is at the top of the Council's priority list. More existing homes in the private rented sector now meet higher standards. As a result of concerted lobbying by the Council, the Government has agreed that local authorities can introduce compulsory licensing schemes for houses in multiple occupation from April 2010. The City Council will be making full use of these new powers. HMOs are essential to providing accommodation within a city suffering a severe housing shortage. However, we will crack down on unscrupulous landlords and stop the spread of high concentrations of shared homes, where it causes problems for other residents or changes the character of a neighbourhood."

The following corporate targets are included in the plan:

By March 2011 we will:

- Improve standards in the private rented sector by using any new powers granted to us to extend the licensing of HMOs, so that over 200 are licensed.

By March 2013 we will:

- Improve standards in the private rented sector by using any new powers granted to us to extend the licensing of HMOs, so that over 900 are licensed.

The Housing Strategy 2008-11 contains a strategic objective to improve the quality of the existing housing stock across the City. The implementation of additional licensing is seen as a key action to assist the Council in meeting that objective. One of the actions to enable the council to meet this strategic objective is that the Council will:

- Deliver demonstrable improvements to the private rented sector through use of mandatory and additional HMO licensing



The Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007-10 contains a clear message that the Council wishes to use its powers to introduce additional licensing for HMOs and the following text outlines the process:

“The Act has changed the definition of a house in multiple occupation (HMO) and has also introduced a national HMO licensing scheme. The scheme covers certain larger dwellings used as HMOs. The granting of a licence is subject to conditions, whereby the HMO will have to meet minimum standards for amenities, management and fire precautions. The Council has introduced the mandatory HMO licensing scheme; this will only cover an estimated 20% of the total HMO stock in the city, approximately 1000 HMOs. The Council are therefore exploring an additional scheme which will cover more HMOs. The scope of this will be decided once mandatory HMO licensing has had a chance to operate. The scope of any additional scheme will be dependant on the available resources and is subject to consultation.”

## 5. Option Appraisal

Oxford City Council has for many years been committed to improving the standards and conditions of housing across all tenures. The Council has a strategic aim to improve housing for all and HMO types and dwelling/household characteristics of licensing assists in meeting this strategic aim.

This report provides an overview of the issues around HMO types and dwelling/household characteristics licensing and some of the areas of concern in relation to the conditions and management practices found all too often in the HMO stock in the city.

The options open to the Council to deal with the problems created by HMOs fall into three distinct categories, increasing enforcement, increasing partnership working or using our discretionary licensing powers.

Oxford City Council has tried increasing enforcement to increase compliance and according to CIPFA in 2007/8 and 2008/9 the Council became one of the leading authorities in the country for pursuing court action against rogue landlords. Despite creating one of the toughest regulatory environments in the country there is still strong evidence of non-compliance, particularly amongst the non-mandatory licensable HMO stock where bad landlords can continue to manage and control HMOs as there is no “fit and proper person” restriction. In addition some tenants are reluctant to come forward and contact the council about bad landlords for fear of retaliatory action.

The Council already has a well developed partnership approach to problems in the private rented sector. This approach is both broad and deep with long established partnerships, such as those with the Universities and agencies covering anti-social behaviour and newer approaches such as the recently established Oxford City Landlord Accreditation Scheme. There has been a reluctance by the sector to engage with the Council, even amongst those with a good reputation and the lack of take up by letting agencies of the accreditation scheme is a good example of the limitations of this option.

The final option is adopting additional licensing powers and the extent to which these powers should be used. An area based approach may initially appear attractive, but our experience with Registration Schemes, the citywide spread of HMOs and the creation of a level playing field all detract from this option.

All these alternative approaches to extending HMO licensing have been considered and are illustrated alongside the strengths of additional licensing in table 1. Each is a valuable tool for dealing with the problems in the HMO stock. However in each case the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. Table 2 outlines the risks involved with additional HMO licensing and the preventative measures, which could be used to alleviate those risks.

In general the limitations to the alternatives to extending additional licensing include:

- Most other schemes are expensive and would require funds being taken from the Council Tax. This seems unfair when many of the problems are due to poor management practices by landlords or agents operating in a buoyant market place. Additional licensing will be self-financing with the fee covering the cost of licensing; the fee will be paid by the applicants and not by the wider community.
- The use of Interim Management Orders (IMO) on individual properties does not appear to give value for money, as the amount of resources being put

into one property will mean that other properties cannot be tackled. It is clear from our experience that if this were to be the only sanction available then operating more than a few IMOS at a time would not be feasible given the lack of funding. This approach can also be seen to be heavy handed and can cause problems for the Council when attempting to work with and engage with landlords.

- None of the proposals give a long-term solution to the problems within the HMO sector. However the Council has introduced a voluntary landlords accreditation scheme alongside licensing – this may help with landlord training and improving property management. However interest in the scheme has been low to date, despite efforts to market the scheme locally.
- Other schemes will not give the Council detailed and accurate information concerning the HMO stock. This is essential in order to undertake meaningful prioritisation and work planning. Such information is not only used in the area of Environmental Development but is also used and required by colleagues in other city and county services.

Table 1

## Strengths and Weaknesses

	<i>Strengths</i>
<b>Complaint led enforcement regime</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improves some individual properties</li> <li>▪ Positive publicity for enforcement action provides disincentive for bad landlords</li> </ul>
<b>Voluntary landlord accreditation scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improves standards where landlord wishes to co-operate with Council</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted use of Interim Management Orders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Removes landlords responsibilities and gives to responsible nominated agent</li> <li>▪ Improves standards for individual tenants</li> </ul>
<b>Area based licensing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Will improve HMOs within a specified area</li> <li>▪ Source of funding clear</li> </ul>
<b>Proactive inspection regime without licensing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improves some individual properties</li> </ul>
<b>City-wide Additional Licensing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fairest scheme</li> <li>▪ Universal treatment of all HMOs in city</li> <li>▪ Benefits accrue to all tenants</li> <li>▪ Bespoke licence conditions allow for contractual arrangements to achieve more than just compliance with the Management Regulations.</li> <li>▪ Funds available for additional licensing</li> <li>▪ Costs borne by appropriate sector</li> <li>▪ Meets letting agents requirements for level playing fields</li> <li>▪ Readily understandable regime for tenants</li> <li>▪ Risk based approach to inspections</li> <li>▪ Sound source of information about HMO stock</li> <li>▪ Pre-empts problems within individual HMOs and reduces reactive work</li> </ul>

## Weaknesses

- Resource intensive
- Reactive service which will lead to some improvements in individual properties – but relies upon occupiers coming forward to the Council with their concerns which they are often frightened to do so.
- Inconsistent impact over the city.
- Allows bad landlords to continue poor practices.
- Not risk based approach
- Does not provide the Council with information about the HMO stock

- Relies on voluntary engagement by landlords and agents
- Funding source very limited as no ability to charge for such a scheme.
- Experience has shown only a limited interest in scheme to date

- Resource intensive – not good value for money as it amounts to disproportionate use of resources
- Does not present a long term solution to poor management of private rented properties (up to maximum of 5 years – then property returned to original owner)

- Previous area schemes led to landlords and agents changing letting areas to avoid registration
- Resources targeted at one area reducing resources in other areas of the city leading to inequalities in service provision
- Leads to variable standards in different parts of the city which is unacceptable to elected members
- Disliked by letting agents who want a level playing field
- Can cause confusion to tenants especially those renting for the first time (a significant proportion in the city)

- No additional funding or resources arrives via this route
- Inability to inspect/enforce in all HMOs across city with current resources

- Large programme requiring additional staff and resources

Table 2

An outline of some of the risks associated with the introduction of Additional Licensing

DESCRIPTION OF RISK	<i>Description of Impact</i>	PROBABILITY OF RISK	IMPACT
<b>Landlords leave market</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exits rental market by sale of property</li> </ul>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Landlords avoid requirements for licensing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increases in vacant lettings</li> <li>▪ Letting patterns change</li> <li>▪ Increase use of section 21 notices to reduce number of occupants</li> </ul>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Landlords fail to licence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Problems persist in HMO sector</li> <li>▪ Landlords operate illegally</li> <li>▪ Resource implications of prosecutions</li> </ul>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Local Authority inadequately manages the scheme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of credibility for this or any scheme</li> <li>▪ Unmet demand for (non-existent) services</li> <li>▪ Bureaucratic paper exercise with little veracity or validity</li> </ul>	<b>Low</b>	<b>High</b>

PREVENTATIVE ACTION	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION	OUTCOMES OF PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None required – property has new</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote benefits of licensing.</li> <li>▪ Work with letting agents/ landlords to encourage take up</li> <li>▪ Publicise sanctions available</li> <li>▪ Raise awareness with private tenants through Tenancy Relations Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health Development Service</li> <li>▪ Landlords Forum</li> <li>▪ Tenancy Relations officer</li> <li>▪ Housing Options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness and support of additional licensing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extensive consultation</li> <li>▪ Data gathering from all available sources</li> <li>▪ Ensure information available to all landlords</li> <li>▪ Enforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health Development Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness and support of additional licensing</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adequately resourced, trained and experienced officers</li> <li>▪ Robust and consistent enforcement of the scheme</li> <li>▪ Expectations clearly set out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Councillors during budget setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Successful Additional Licensing scheme</li> </ul>

## **6. Consultation**

Consultation with people likely to be affected by the scheme including local residents, landlords and tenants was undertaken using various methods. The consultation period began on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and was planned to continue until 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010, a period of ten weeks. Following representations from landlords and community leaders the Council extended this period until the 25<sup>th</sup> June during which time the online questionnaire remained open and written responses were accepted.

A total of 688 people responded to the consultation. Overall 561 (81.5%) of respondents were in favour of extending HMO licensing with the majority of the 52 landlords who responded (90%) disagreeing. A considerable number of respondents had had problems with rented properties in their area, with rubbish and external appearance of the property being the major issue.

### **General Consultation**

Consultation began on the 9<sup>th</sup> April with a web-based document giving information about the scheme and an on-line questionnaire. In addition three press releases were sent out, one on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April, the second on the 17<sup>th</sup> May and the third on the 9<sup>th</sup> June.

A HMO licensing news item was available on the Council's website, either as a main article or in the latest news section and it was also available in the "Have your say" part of the website throughout the consultation period.

Letters were sent to Chief Executives of the neighbouring district councils on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April advising them of the proposal and requesting that they publicise the proposal on their website.

An email was sent to every Councillor on the 14<sup>th</sup> May regarding the proposal and asking them to circulate the information to anyone who they believed may be affected by the scheme.

### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were made available during every event where the public or landlords were invited to attend. In addition questionnaires were placed in five letting agents premises so landlords and tenants could respond by this method.

In addition a door to door consultation took place using questionnaires from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> June in four areas of the City, Headington, Jericho, East Oxford and Grandpont. A total of 612 houses were visited.

Overall 109 questionnaires were completed.

Consultees were invited to make comments freely, and a comments field was provided in a number of consultation exercises involving the return of questionnaires.

Appendix 2 shows a summary of the responses received to the questionnaires and the comments.

### **Consultation with Landlords**

In addition to the general consultation activities, efforts were made to ensure that landlords and agents who would be affected by the scheme were made aware of it and given an opportunity to comment.



Landlords and letting agents were consulted during a Landlords' Forum held on 13<sup>th</sup> May where over 50+ landlords and letting agents were in attendance. This was promoted via the landlords email newsletter, sent to 201 email addresses, by direct contact by telephoning letting agents and promotion via the Council's website.

As letting agents are key intermediaries they were asked to ensure that their landlord clients were advised of the Forum.

There were also two public meetings held on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June at which landlords were able to attend.

There were 52 responses from landlords and letting agents to all the consultation exercises and 90% (47) of the landlords who responded disagreed with the proposal to introduce additional licensing.

One of the most contentious issues for landlords was the suggestion that they should have some responsibility to become engaged in dealing with anti-social behaviour problems caused by their tenants. There was also a reluctance from landlords to acknowledge that they had any responsibility regarding problems caused by rubbish or maintaining the appearance of the garden of an HMO.

The Council also received three written responses to the proposal from landlords and agents and two petitions against the scheme were received. The first had been signed by 115 people and the second by 83 people, primarily people believed to be landlords. They stated that they believed the proposed scheme was "totally unnecessary and is not required as it is just a way of getting landlords to pay up unnecessarily." There was also an item in the Oxford mail regarding the scheme regarding local letting agents and their desire to run a scheme themselves.

Landlords also raised concerns that the fees would be passed onto tenants causing rents to rise. Since the government have indicated that licensing must be self-funding and the Council has stated that the Council Tax payer will not be funding the scheme, the level of the fee will be reasonable. The proposed fee is a maximum of £7.84 per month per letting for the first year of the licence period and £2.87 per month per letting for subsequent years for a two storey HMO with 5 tenants.

Landlords were concerned about the costs being imposed upon them by additional licensing and many expressed the opinion that the Council was going too far by introducing licensing across the city. A number of landlords felt that licensing in certain areas of the city would be a better way forward and others thought that only the larger properties should be licensed.

Appendix 3 contains the comments from landlords and a copy of the article from the Oxford Mail.

## **On-Line Consultation**

There was an on-line questionnaire that was available throughout the consultation period on the City Council's website. This was actively promoted and links provided to it whenever possible. Of the 120 respondents, 83, (69%) agreed with the Council's proposal to introduce additional licensing. The summary of the results can be found in Appendices 4a and b.

## **Talkback Panel**

The Talkback Panel consists of over 900 citizens of Oxford who have agreed to help in consultation exercises. The response to the talkback survey was 403 and of the respondents a considerable number had experienced problems with

privately rented homes. For example 76% had experienced problems with the poor external appearance of HMOs, 71% had experienced problems with rubbish and 49% had experienced anti social behaviour from HMOs. Over 91.5% of respondents supported the proposal to extend HMO licensing. The results are attached as Appendix 5.

## **University Consultation**

University accommodation offices and student union officials were contacted and asked to spread the opportunity to consult amongst the student population.

Students at Oxford Brookes University were consulted via three sessions on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> May which were undertaken at the University campus.

Students were also able to respond to questionnaires left in letting agent offices and were canvassed via the door to door survey. A total of 74 students responded. Of the respondents, 43 (58%) agreed with the proposal to extend licensing.

## **Area Committees**

The issue was first raised at the East Area Parliament on the 21<sup>st</sup> April and subsequently a report was written for the Area Committees cycle in June. An officer attended each of the six meetings to present the report and explain to members and the public what the proposed scheme was aiming to achieve and how it would operate. At these meetings those attending were asked to spread the information regarding the scheme to anyone who would be affected by it.

## **Letters**

Two letters were received from residents expressing broad support for the proposal and expressing the hope that it would deal with issues such as parking and unsociable tenants.

## **7. Benefits for Landlords, Occupiers and the Community**

### **Two Perspectives**

From consultation we know that there will be a number of landlords who will never see the overall value of Licensing. They take an essentially narrow, self-interested view. Their interest is focused on financial returns; their criticism of any form of licensing is couched in terms of 'unnecessary financial burden' and 'pointless bureaucratic interference'.

On the other hand, the majority point-of-view takes a wider perspective on the provision of stock for the housing rental market. This group includes, most landlords and agents.

While the general public may not be directly involved in paying or receiving rent, they also experience the impact that HMOs have on the social and political economy of Oxford. The view that Licensing is instrumental in the improvement of facilities, management and safety in the housing rental market is echoed by a broad cross-section of the City. Licensing is seen as one strand in preventing the long-term decline in the amenity of the urban environment.

They recognise that wider licensing removes the inequalities caused by partial regulation and spreads costs and obligations in a fairer way. They recognise that it creates a common footing and can help agents. Provided that it is properly run, they see it as helping the market function effectively.

### **Benefit: Consistent Approach to all Oxford HMOs**

Additional Licensing will extend and continue the process of upgrading of the HMO rental stock already delivered by the Mandatory scheme. Additional Licensing will add the remainder of the Oxford HMO market to the list of those houses where the Council currently is involved with licensing.

This will mean that such houses will be subject to the same evaluation and improvement regime as the larger houses already covered by the national scheme. Oxford has in the order of 4500 remaining HMOs. Their occupants deserve to be afforded the same protection as people in licensed HMOs. Without Additional Licensing there will continue to be a significant and growing disparity in Oxford's HMO market.

The introduction of licensing for all HMOs in the city will enable Oxford to develop a consistent approach to the whole of the HMO rental market. At present it is possible to be a bad landlord and run any number of smaller HMOs. With Additional Licensing these landlords will not be permitted to become a licence holder and will need to find a "fit and proper person" willing to take on the risk of running their properties. It is anticipated that the value of "fit and proper person" status will result in landlords being required to improve their properties before others are prepared to take them on.

### **Benefit: Appreciation of Property Values**

Oxford has traditionally had a buoyant housing market and this being the case it means that there will be a financial benefit to individual landlords in the longer term as accommodation standards are raised across the HMO sector. The benefit will be apparent in the capital appreciation of the property value. The heavy usage that multiple households inflict on the fabric of a building usually causes a far more rapid decline than does that of a single family. Where there are heavy concentrations of HMOs, as is the case in Oxford, it can lead to a general reduction in the amenity of whole suburbs and the relative loss of value of specific properties. A bespoke agreement between landlord and local housing authority as a result of licensing

ensures that standards are maintained and improvements encouraged. In turn, this means that neighbourhoods will not deteriorate and thus property values are enhanced.

### **Benefit: Links with Landlords**

The formation of a formal but direct and individual link with the Council, which the Licence Conditions affords, also allows for a beneficial flow of information between the authority and landlords. The owners of houses can receive news and ideas relevant to the development of the market sector. They can also provide accurate data on which Council can make informed decisions on issues which impact on both landlords and tenants.

The creation of a dynamic partnership between the landlord and council is an under-rated benefit of Licensing. For example, the experience with mandatory licensing has been that it helps speed up the resolution of problems such as noise, rubbish and anti-social behaviour.

### **Benefit: A Recognised Group of Landlords**

Landlords, once subject to licensing, become part of a specific group recognised in law and by government policy. This has implications for their ability to organise themselves to influence HMO related decisions. Recognition as a licensed landlord will have several flow-on benefits.

It may have the benefit of providing for simpler justification to lending institutions when it comes to securing finance if the local housing authority requires specific work to be done.

Agents and letting organisations such as student housing departments are more likely to accept landlords if their *bona fides* is supported by being licensed. Licensing brings its own degree of reliability and assurance to the relationship between landlord and agent.

That benefit is reinforced by the fact that licensing requires landlords to keep their letting arrangements (either privately or through an Agent) on a more business-like footing. A licensed landlord is obliged to do things formally, like provide written terms of occupancy rather than *ad hoc* verbal arrangements that too often result in disputed interpretations of the agreement.

### **Benefit: Pro-active involvement eliminates reactive work**

Licensing also provides a consequential benefit in that it eliminates or mitigates many of the issues that generate tensions between landlords and tenants. Licensing is a means of pre-empting problems (for example, damp or ventilation issues leading to poor living conditions) before they become matters of contention and stress that the landlord would otherwise have to manage. Licensing will go a long way to ensure there are fewer hassles for a landlord from, for example, anxious parents of students who rent a house. It will at least, provide a recognised mechanism for resolving any disputes without the cumbersome mechanisms of prosecution.

The Council already deals with much of this work but in different capacities. The work is normally in response to a service request. Reacting to something after damage has been done is usually a negative and inefficient way of resolving an issue. Additional licensing will allow for positive, pro-active and efficient involvement, and should eliminate many problems before they occur.

## Appendix 1 Case Studies

### *Introduction*

The case studies give examples of

- Houses of three storeys – where occupancy has been reduced to avoid Mandatory Licensing:
  - [A] Great Clarendon Street
  - [B] Bateman Street
- Houses of two storeys – where lack of facilities or maintenance or management problems have been discovered which could be better managed by Additional Licensing:
  - [C] Maidcroft Road
  - [D] St Marys Road
  - [E] Newman Road
  - [F] Marston Road
  - [G] Iffley Road
- Houses converted to self-contained flats without Building Regulation 1991 approval
  - [H] London Place
  - [I] Horspath Road

As there are no proactive visits to non-licensable HMOs, these houses have come under notice through a variety of sources. Some emerged as a by-product of desktop searches of Environmental Health records cross-referenced to information obtained from Council Tax records, the Electoral Register and from HM Land Registry. Potentially licensable HMOs were subject to a 'status check' visit to the property.

Information about houses has also been gathered over a number of years from tenants' service requests, from the former registration scheme, from other house condition surveys and from Health Visitors. Although primarily aimed at houses subject to mandatory licensing these sources are also indicative of the number of other HMOs in Oxford.

Further research has been undertaken by checking property 'to let' advertisements in newspapers, shop windows, university accommodation notice boards and accommodation websites. This has revealed, particularly with respect to properties on offer to students, that accommodation is being offered in two storey houses where facilities and fire precautions do not meet current standards.

More recently access to Council Tax records for those properties where there is student exemption from liability has led to an increase in the available data for rented property throughout the city.

***Three storey properties – where occupancy has been reduced to avoid mandatory licensing:***

**[A] Great Clarendon Street**



The property is a pre-1919 terraced HMO currently with four in occupation. The loft conversion added a third floor.

With the introduction of mandatory licensing in 2006 an application for an HMO licence was received from the owner of the property and an inspection carried out by a suitable Case Officer.

However, when the draft licence was issued and the applicant saw the extent of the works required to bring the property to the required standard the

application was withdrawn and the number of occupants reduced from five to four to avoid the requirement for the property to be licensed.

Additional fire precautions had been required as well as an additional separate toilet and wash hand basin.

Since the application was withdrawn in 2007 complaints have been received from neighbours relating to noise from this property.

Additional Licensing would ensure that the fire precautions were satisfactory thereby reducing the risk of fire at the property and with the aim of introducing conditions relating to the management of anti-social behaviour this problem could also be addressed through these means.

## [B] Bateman Street

A visit to the property in 2008 revealed five tenants in occupation in this five bedroom pre-1919 terraced HMO. The loft conversion had added a third floor. The tenant who had answered the door confirmed that both bathroom and kitchen facilities were shared.



Following these findings the owners of the property were written to inviting them to apply for an HMO licence and warned that they could face legal action if they failed to licence the property.

In reply to this warning the number of occupants was reduced from five to four to avoid the requirement for the property to be licensed.

Since then complaints have been received by the Environmental Development Department relating to the storage of rubbish at this property..

Additional Licensing would ensure that the fire precautions and general living conditions were satisfactory although such standards are unknown at this property. With the imposition the Management Regulations the problem with the storage of rubbish would also be dealt with.

***Houses of two storeys – where lack of facilities or maintenance or management problems have been discovered. These properties have come to light incidentally as there is no pro-active programme as would exist with additional licensing***

**[C] Maidcroft Road**



The property was visited in March 2009 following a referral from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service where no working smoke alarms, poor hygiene and poor house keeping were all highlighted. The two storey property was found to be an HMO occupied by five adult males but because of the number of storeys did not meet the criteria for mandatory HMO Licensing under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

A survey of the property revealed conditions that contributed to contraventions of the HMO Management Regulations. Issues identified in the survey included:

- Damaged and inoperative automatic fire detection and warning system.
- Damaged half hour fire resisting doors.
- Poorly maintained kitchen and cooking facilities.
- Severely defective gas central heating boiler.



**Poorly maintained domestic fire detection system**

Environmental Development took immediate action compelling the Manager of the HMO to remedy the defective central heating boiler and faulty fire alarm deflection system. The Manager was then given a period of 21 days to remedy all other noted defects.



## **Defective central heating boiler**

The Manager was also warned as to his future conduct and given advice and assistance in meeting his obligations under the HMO Management Regulations.

Additional HMO Licensing would mean that this property would have been visited as part of the programme and as such problems could have been pre-empted. Licensing would also ensure that the sub-standard fire precautions are improved to a minimum standard and the control of other safety and management issues.



## **Poor condition of fitted kitchen**

## [D] St Mary's Road



Following a service request from one of the tenants when it was reported that damp was waist high on walls and that the landlord had painted over it, the property was visited in September 2008. The property is a two storey House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) providing accommodation for 6 adult student sharers. The property does not meet the criteria for mandatory HMO Licensing under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.

The survey of this property revealed conditions that contributed to contraventions

of the HMO Management Regulations. Issues identified in the survey included:

- Poorly maintained sliding sash windows.
- Cracked and inoperative toilet cistern.
- Dampness to side elevation ground floor accommodation.
- Poor condition of pointing to main chimney stack.

### **Perished external masonry contributing to ground floor dampness**



Several hazard related deficiencies under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) were also identified including:

Absence of fire alarm detection system to the HMO.  
Absence of fire fighting equipment to the HMO  
Inadequate Means of Escape in the event of fire.

The Authority took immediate action compelling the Manager of the HMO to remedy the noted contraventions of HMO Management Regulations. The landlord replaced all existing timber windows with UPVC double glazing and undertook all other necessary repairs. The Manager was also given advice and assistance in meeting his obligations under the HMO Management Regulations.

In accordance with the adopted Enforcement Policy the Manager was invited to undertake works to mitigate deficiencies highlighted under HHSRS within a period of 28 days. As the Manager undertook all necessary works within this timeframe no further formal enforcement action was considered appropriate.

As a result of works undertaken the HMO now fully conforms to the standards adopted by Oxford City Council.

Additional licensing would allow for this property to be visited proactively without the occupiers complaining, to ensure that the good standards of management eventually arrived at were properly maintained.

## [E] Newman Road



Following a request for service that was referred to Environmental Development by the Right Honourable Andrew Smith MP on behalf of one of his constituents a visit was made in July 2009. The property was found to be a two storey house occupied by four unrelated adults.

Contraventions of the HMO Management Regulations were found including:

- fire warning system not working;
  - no sign indicating the manager's identity and address;
- discarded rubbish in the rear garden which was also overgrown;
  - filthy cooking appliances; and
  - decayed woodwork to inoperable windows in the ground floor rear bedroom, the rear entrance porch and toilet areas.

Prosecution was pursued against the landlord for the contraventions of these Management Regulations and in January 2010 he received fines totalling £1,750. The fines reflected the landlord's timely guilty pleas.

Additional HMO Licensing would mean that this property would have been visited as part of the programme. As part of the process of licensing the sub-standard safety and management issues would be addressed.

## [F] Marston Road

This property was visited by an officer from Environmental Development in April 2009 following a phone call from Oxford City Council's Drug Strategy Co-ordinator, who had accompanied Thames Valley Police while they carried out search. Concerns were expressed over the condition of the premises and that it may not be suitable for occupation. The house was found to consist of two storeys and was occupied by four unrelated adults.

During the inspection several contraventions of the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006 were noted including:

- no landlord details displayed in a prominent position within the property;
- graffiti on the walls of the kitchen;
- damaged ceiling plaster to the hallway;
- shower room and the kitchen were in a filthy condition;
- the window to the first floor landing was not capable of being closed due to the mechanism being broken and the glazing was broken;
- the shower room window was broken;
- there were accumulated waste items in the rear garden of the property,
- broken ceramic tiles to the internal window sill of the shower room;
- glazing to the patio window to the ground floor rear bedroom was broken as was the glazing to the ground floor front bedroom.



**Filthy cooker & graffiti**



**Cracked glazing to patio doors**



### **Rubbish in rear garden**

Prosecution was pursued against the landlord for the contraventions of these Management Regulations and in September 2010 he received fines totalling £5,000. The fines represented an increase of £1,250 due to the landlord's previous convictions.

Additional HMO Licensing would give the Council information about management arrangements of HMOs. It would also ensure that the house was improved to a minimum standard and may well have pre-empted problems through early engagement with the landlord.

## [G] Iffley Road

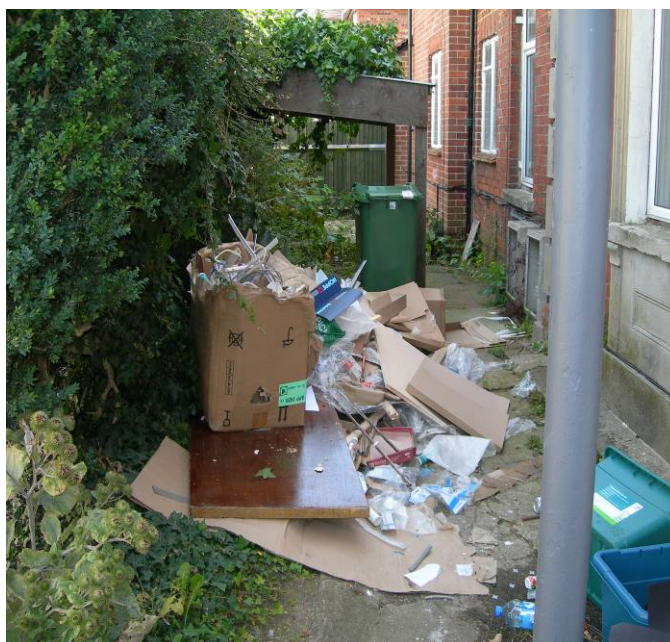


This property is an end of terrace HMO with eight students in occupation. Environmental Health has a long history of involvement and enforcement at this property and as a result, the fire precautions and amenities meet the current standards.

However, the management of the property has given rise to enforcement action to remedy neglect and this trend continues. Recent involvement by Oxford City Council has been due to issues with defective fire precautions and refuse around the property.

Additional Licensing would assist in this property as it would ensure the property meets minimum standards and these are maintained, pre-empting problems and therefore negating the need for residents to complain to ensure that issues are addressed.

### **Refuse around property**



***Houses converted into flats– where no Building Control approval was sought and where standards do not comply with the 1991 Building Regulations. These properties have come to light incidentally as there is no pro-active programme as would exist with additional licensing***

**[H] London Place**



The upper portion of this late Georgian building is a three storey maisonette occupied by four unrelated adults. The basement has been converted to a self contained flat with no documentary evidence of the conversion conforming to the standard of the Building Regulations 1991.

Currently this building in entirety does not meet the criteria for mandatory HMO Licensing but is considered a HMO under Section 257 of the Housing Act 2004 (converted self contained flats not conforming to the standard of the Building Regulations 1991 with more than two thirds of those units of accommodation let to tenants).

The survey of this property highlighted several hazard related deficiencies under the

Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). Issues identified included:

- Inoperable mechanical extract fan in bathroom of basement flat
- Defective automatic fire alarm detection system
- Poor condition of timber casement and sash windows
- The basement flat was heated via a central heating boiler located within the maisonette. No individual control available over heating available in the unit of accommodation.

In accordance with the adopted Enforcement Policy the landlord was invited to undertake works to mitigate deficiencies highlighted under HHSRS within a period of 28 days. As the landlord undertook all necessary works within this timeframe no further formal enforcement action was considered appropriate.

As a result of works undertaken the property now conforms to the standards adopted by Oxford City Council.



Additional HMO Licensing would mean that this property would have been visited as part of the programme. As part of the process of licensing the sub-standard safety and management issues would be addressed.

## [I] Horspath Road



This semi-detached inter-war house has been converted to two self contained flats with no documentary evidence of the conversion conforming to the standard of the Building Regulations 1991.

Currently this building does not meet the criteria for mandatory HMO Licensing but is considered a HMO under Section 257 of the Housing Act 2004 (converted self contained flats not conforming to the standard of the Building Regulations 1991 with more than two thirds of those units of accommodation let to tenants).

The party floor is likely to be constructed of 150mm joists with 18mm floorboards forming the floor and skimmed plasterboard (or lath) estimated to be 12mm forming the ceiling. The conversion has not been undertaken with Building Control supervision and sound insulation between the respective units is of a comparable standard to a single dwelling house of the period. Normal domestic noise from the first floor flat, including foot traffic has been witnessed by an assessor and is clearly audible in the ground floor unit.

Currently this building in entirety does not meet the criteria for mandatory HMO Licensing but is considered a HMO under Section 257 of the Housing Act 2004 (converted self contained flats not conforming to the standard of the Building Regulations 1991 with more than two thirds of those units of accommodation let to tenants).

The survey of this property also highlighted several other hazard related deficiencies under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). These further identified issues included:

- Missing render to the rear elevation

- Swollen access door to the ground floor flat
- Wind driven rain entering the ground floor entrance lobby through the ground floor flat entrance door
- Inoperable bathroom extract fan in ground floor flat
- Various severely mould tainted wall surfaces within the ground floor flat
- Defective smoke alarm in ground floor flat
- Poor condition of several ground floor flat windows

In accordance with the adopted Enforcement Policy the landlord was invited to undertake works to mitigate deficiencies highlighted under HHSRS within a period of 28 days. The landlord did undertake the majority of the works requested with the exception of improving sound proofing between the respective units of accommodation. As the Authority could see no prospect of a negotiated resolution to this issue the power to serve Notice was exercised and an Improvement Notice under Section 12 of the Housing Act 2004 was served. At present the compliance date for this work has not been reached but the Council is hopeful of satisfactory resolution.

With the introduction of Additional Licensing such a property would have been dealt with proactively without the need to respond to a service request by one of the occupiers. The correct safety standards and maintenance of an acceptable standard of management would be ensured.

## Appendix 2a – Questionnaire results

<b>Q1 Which of the following best describes your status?</b>	No.	%
Owner Occupier	59	54
Private Tenant	18	16
Social Housing Tenant	4	4
Letting/Managing Agent	14	13
Landlord	12	11
Other	2	2

<b>Q2 Do you think landlords have a responsibility to ensure their properties are managed well?</b>	No.	%
Yes	109	100
No	0	0

<b>Q3, A - Additional licensing will improve how HMOs are managed and maintained</b>	No.	%
Strongly Agree	23	21
Agree	52	48
Disagree	10	9
Strongly Disagree	15	14
Don't Know	9	8

<b>Q3, B - Additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs</b>	No.	%
Strongly Agree	17	16
Agree	45	41
Disagree	23	21
Strongly Disagree	14	13
Don't Know	10	9

<b>Q3, C - Additional licensing will improve safety standards within HMOs</b>	No.	%
Strongly Agree	25	23
Agree	55	50
Disagree	11	10
Strongly Disagree	14	13
Don't Know	4	4

<b>Q4 - In the last four years have you had a problem with any of the following issues in the area of Oxford where you live or own property?</b>	No.	%
<b>Q4, A - Poorly managed HMOs</b>		
Yes	45	41
No	64	59
<b>Q4, B - Dumped rubbish &amp; litter around HMOs</b>		
Yes	63	58
No	46	42
<b>Q4, C - Poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens</b>		
Yes	62	57
No	47	43

<b>Q4, D - Anti social behaviour such as noise and parties from HMOs</b>		
Yes	57	52
No	52	48
<b>Q4, E - Poor internal property conditions within HMOs</b>		
Yes	26	24
No	83	76
<b>Q4, F - Empty properties</b>		
Yes	15	14
No	94	86
<b>Q4, G - Any other problem caused by HMOs (please specify)</b>		
Yes	8	7
No	101	93

**Q5 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

**Q5, A - Licensing all HMOs instead of just the larger HMOs will make the system clear and prevent confusion**

Strongly Agree	26	24
Agree	44	40
Neutral	15	14
Disagree	7	6
Strongly disagree	17	16

**Q5, B - A landlord who fails to license their HMO to avoid paying a fee and any improvement costs should be penalised**

Strongly Agree	50	46
Agree	47	43
Neutral	4	4
Disagree	2	2
Strongly disagree	6	5

**Q5, C - Licensing all HMOs will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the private rented sector in Oxford**

Strongly Agree	29	26
Agree	42	38
Neutral	12	11
Disagree	12	11
Strongly disagree	14	14

**Q6 Do you agree with Oxford City Council's proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs?**

Yes	82	75
No	26	24
No answer	1	1

**Difference between views general public and LLs/Agents**

	General public	%	LLs/Agents	%	Total
Total No.	83	76	26	24	109
Q6					
Y	76	92	5	19	
N	4	5	21	81	
Don't know	1				

## **Appendix 2b - Comments from the questionnaires**

Will improving rented accommodation put the rent prices up in Oxford?

HMO licensing does not really make landlords to impose quality of their properties. It is unnecessary expense. Money can be spent and better licence the landlord and not the property.

It needs to advantage both tenants and landlords.

Good idea. Fees cost of rent going up. Where renting is the only option is good for regulation.

Strongly agree with proposal.

Strongly approve.

Concern about rent increasing.

Loss of community due to not knowing neighbours.

There would need to be a fee.

Resources for the city council to enforce a scheme on the scale needed.

Fewer HMOs, reduce numbers, more younger families.

Agreement in principal with proposals but I am sceptical that they will achieve the benefits that they need to.

It seems like this scheme will depend on the cooperation of landlords. Residents seem to have second place in the consultation. It is disappointing that residents will have no say in the licensing application when it is their permanent community. Therefore it would be helpful to build in a structure that incorporates residents into the system.

Useless rules that everyone will ignore.

Delighted that Oxford City Council taking this initiative.

Worried about the fee coming back to the tenant. Will there be enough resources for all the houses to be inspected?

Some landlords have simply no idea – a cultural problem but we must not abandon efforts to improve things because of this – of grooming/caring for a public area for the common good. A pity but many are making a lot of cash out of HMOs (their tax position – is that too being monitored – join things up?) regardless of the reasonable expectations of their tax and council tax-paying neighbours who ought to be able to live in tidy streets.

### **Appendix 3 - Landlords comments from questionnaires**

Licensing will obviously improve bad HMOs, however it is a waste of money to police good ones.

The most carefully maintained and licensed HMO can be reduced to a slum within weeks by bad tenants, who seem to ignore all safety and hygiene provisions. As landlords neither we nor our agent have power to prevent this.

Restrict HMO licensing to 4 bedrooms and above.

Set up a register of good landlords, code of practice & striking off after 3 complaints in 12 months.

5 year licensing but annual inspections.

Not to discriminate against landlords who have previous property convictions but have now ensured that their properties are being managed correctly.

HMOs should be restricted to 5 or more non-family sharers.

They should licence the landlord NOT the house.

I do not agree that licensing will make any difference to tenants social behaviour.

All licensed properties will need to be inspected on a regular basis so landlords know that they cannot break the rules.

The licence fees would mean that landlords would put up rent for tenants.

I can't see how a licence would prevent anti-social behaviour or rubbish/litter. Tenants are not going to change just because their property has a licence.

In my opinion if all properties let to sharers have to be licensed and landlords have to pay a fee that fee will be passed on to tenants as increased rent.

The increased costs that the landlords will pay will eventually get passed onto the tenants, increasing rents.

Landlords would pass on any charges to the tenants so raising rents if charged for HMO licence.

Better to licence the landlord rather than the property.

Do you have the resources to check all HMO applications and also to ensure any improvements etc are complied with?

More landlord fees would equal higher rents for tenants which as the Oxford City Council is always trying to push for low cost rent houses this would be a reverse of what the council strives to achieve! Moreover it is not just HMOs which can cause problems, these can be found in any type of housing and so it is an issue which can not be justified to be significant!

It is not just HMOs that are causing problems. Every landlord needs to be checked with every property. This can be done via an agent that can ensure that all their properties and landlords are in the highest possible standard.

I do not agree with extending HMO licensing.

Would not work, cause more problems for landlords.

The cost to the council is too large and it is not fair to make additional charges on landlords – this will pass on to tenants in time and push rents up. Nobody wins.

### **Agents bid to take on HMOs plan**

*11:00am Saturday 12th June 2010*

LETTING agents in Oxford say they are the best people to tackle rogue landlords, anti-social tenants and unfit rented homes.

Oxford City Council is set to extend its houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) licensing scheme from 600 larger properties to all HMOs in the city.

This would require around 4,000 extra homes to be inspected and licensed by housing officers.

But letting agents claim the council does not have the manpower to carry out the job and say each licensed agent could police hundreds of homes, allowing council staff to concentrate on spot checks.

Jan Bartlett, of Premier Lettings in Cowley Road, said every tenant should have the right to a safe home and a good landlord, but that a licensed agent could be held responsible for ensuring standards were met.

She said: "If there was a problem, with rubbish or parking, the agent would have to deal with it.

"They would have to check the safety, the gas the electric. If they didn't, they would lose their licence."

Bob Urwin, at Martin and Co, in Woodins Way, said the scheme to licence all HMOs was impractical.

He said: "I am in favour of what they are trying doing but don't licence the properties, licence the letting agents."

According to council figures, HMOs form an unusually high percentage of houses in the city, with one in five of the population living in one.

The council's house condition survey in 2005 reported that HMOs provided the poorest homes in the city, and that 70 per cent were unsafe.

At present HMOs must be licensed by the city council if they contain five or more unrelated tenants and have three or more storeys.

This applies to about 600 properties and costs landlords £1,200 for a five-year licence. The extended scheme would cover any property with three or more unrelated tenants, which equates to more than 4,000 homes in the city.

Under the proposed scheme, HMO landlords would have to apply for a licence and pass a 'fit and proper person' test.



Council leader Bob Price said having council officers inspect all properties was key to the scheme.

He added: "It's the property that matters and it is the property which causes the problems for tenants and neighbours. That external and internal inspection is key to getting what we want."

Public meetings on the scheme will be held on Monday in the Assembly Room, at Oxford Town Hall, at 6.30pm, and on Tuesday at Cheney Community Hall, at Cheney School, at 6.30pm.

### Your Say **YOUR OXFORD**

tribalamazonian, Oxford says...  
12:12pm Sat 12 Jun 10

*Premier Lettings couldn't care less about the standards of their HMOs - and I should know, I live in one! They, like all letting agents, are only interested in getting their extortionate fees and the rent every month and then spending it (as shown in your picture) on World Cup flags in a desperate attempt to attract new tenants. It is high time that the council cracked down on these agencies and got a better deal for the tenant.*

**[REPORT THIS POST »](#)**      **[REGISTER / SIGN IN »](#)**

bluenose, witney says...  
9:54am Sun 13 Jun 10

*That be like putting King Herod in charge of child care!!!!*

**[REPORT THIS POST »](#)**      **[REGISTER / SIGN IN »](#)**

Blue Pedro, Faringdon says...  
11:10am Mon 14 Jun 10

*I think putting agents in charge of inspections would be like putting Caligula in charge of a nursery. The agents would just do a 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours' deal and approve anything. Maybe they are scared of what the Council will uncover?*

**[REPORT THIS POST »](#)**      **[REGISTER / SIGN IN »](#)**

wangchung, says...  
11:57pm Mon 14 Jun 10

*Isn't it these folks who charge £100 per person to see your credit rating when everyone knows you can get it free and hand it to your landlord?*

**[REPORT THIS POST »](#)**      **[REGISTER / SIGN IN »](#)**

JanetJ, oxford says...  
11:31pm Tue 15 Jun 10

*"Council leader Bob Price said having council officers inspect all properties was key to the scheme".*

*Good idea - but as it doesn't happen now where is he going to get the staff from?? I can't see the current climate allows for lots of new staff to be recruited.*

**[REPORT THIS POST »](#)**      **[REGISTER / SIGN IN »](#)**

newcy, Oxford says...  
3:14pm Wed 16 Jun 10







*Admittedly the Council wouldn't bother, especially for those properties owned by councillors. Still, most letting agents will only use it as an opportunity to add extra fees for landlords and for tenants -feathering their own pockets, but probably doing nothing to fix problems. In this case the Council are perhaps 'better the devil you know' ... though the agents will add on extra fees regardless of who does the checking*

# Questionnaire Summary Results

This page shows the summary of the responses that have been received.

## 1

Which of the following best describes your status

Option	Results
Owner occupier	 55% (66)
Private tenant	 13% (15)
Social housing tenant e.g. council tenant	 2% (2)
Letting/Managing Agent	 5% (6)
Landlord	 17% (20)
Other (please specify)	 9% (11)

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 2




Do you think landlords have a responsibility to ensure their properties are managed and looked after well?

Option	Results
Yes	 99% (119)
No	 1% (1)

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 3








To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know	
Additional licensing will improve how Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are managed and maintained						33%
Additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs						39%
Additional licensing will improve safety standards within HMOs						32%

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 4







In the last four years have you had a problem with any of the following issues in the area where you live?

Option	Results
Poorly managed HMOs	 15% (49)
Dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs	 21% (68)
Poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens	 23% (75)
Anti social behaviour such as noise and parties from HMOs	 16% (53)
Poor internal property conditions within HMOs	 9% (29)
Empty properties	 5% (16)
Any other problem caused by HMOs (please specify)	 11% (36)

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 5

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Licensing all HMOs instead of just the larger HMOs will make the system clear and prevent confusion					
A landlord who fails to license their HMO to avoid paying a fee and any improvement costs should be penalised					
Licensing all HMOs will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the private rented sector in Oxford					

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 6

Do you agree with Oxford City Council's proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs?

### Option Results

Yes		69% (83)
No		31% (37)

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## 7

We would welcome any comments that you would like to make regarding the proposal to licence all the HMOs in the city.

This question has been answered 90 times.

[▶ View the full responses for this question.](#)

## Appendix 4b - Comments from online questionnaire

<p>The largest problem for me is the rubbish. larger houses need more facilities, at present we have to buy more bins, and in some cases are not allowed to. If the new regulation come in, would extra bins be provided as part of the large fee to apply?</p>
<p>I think it is a very good idea but do not think that it will help with anti-social behaviour created by HMOs.</p>
<p>I believe the vast majority of landlords are responsible and many like myself use a reputable agent to monitor their properties. If problems arise with the tenants then they as individuals should be made culpable and fined accordingly. If large licencing fees are insisted upon I assume we will have to pass this on the tenant. I am slightly sceptical as to whether this money would be put to good use in this area or just 'swallowed up' in the council coffers.</p>
<p>The Council will need to resource the HMO section properly to ensure that the rules can be enforced.</p>
<p>I hope that the licencing scheme will include controls of some sort on 'to let' signs on HMOs. Some of the signs in my neighbourhood, St Clements, have been up for several years even though the properties are clearly let. 'Already let' or 'Too late' signs also remain up for months. This contravenes the deemed consent regulations, and blights the streetscape. It is also tough on student tenants to have a 'to let' sign go up a few days after they paid a year's rent in advance!</p>
<p>This is one tool in an armoury. Creating a better private rented sector is a big task and will take a long time. I think this is a sensible and logical step for Oxford to take on the road there.</p>
<p>I am concerned that measures taken to improve the standard of HMOs might result in the external appearance of properties being spoiled, due to UPVC replacement windows being fitted on older buildings. (Currently, HMO properties are generally of better external appearance due to being still in their original architectural state.)</p>
<p>I have lived next door to a HMO for the last 6 years and in that time there has been no end of rubbish left outside which contributed to me getting a infestation of rats inside my house. The outside of the HMO is deteriorating rapidly and ultimately the people who will live in such a run down property will also deteriorate. I think licencing is long overdue.</p>
<p>This proposal will only result in higher rents and less rental property available. Any rogue landlord will still be a rogue landlord. We do not need further regulation. Obviously all rental property must be a safe place to live but a tenant is capable of voting by moving out of the property.</p>
<p>If rogue landlords are driven out of the market, by an arbitrary licensing system responsible landlords unable to afford the fee or wanting to get involved with the bureaucracy will also leave. Inevitably the costs will be passed on to tenants. The solution is to enforce the existing building regulation system, put in place a system to enable tenants to report below standard conditions. This will encourage landlords to behave responsibly without putting an unnecessary burden on the market.</p>
<p>The cost is far to high at at estimated £250 - £300pa (£1200/5). An energy performance certificate, which is comparable to time spent and detail collected, from a private company is upwards of £55 and less than £100. The whole thing should be privatised as were EPCs.</p>
<p>The consultation fails to state what the fee for a license would be and it should have been possible to give a range based on the existing fees and the resources required. It has also not been stated what the standards it will set and so there is no chance to comment on whether they are actually reasonable or not. Benefits may be seen in the first year when improvements to the property are carried out but in following years the costs are likely to outweigh any additional benefits.</p>

Yr proposals rely on outdated information ref. unregistered HMO property standards- you admit you last reviewed yr catchment in 2005! Properties have been substantially improved to satisfy increasingly discerning choice at all levels- competition improves standards far better than coercion. Private landlords and agents will avoid HMO status on principle, driving rents upwards & reducing availability- colleges build more accommodation blocks and joint tenants adopt subterfuge to obtain digs?

Applications for licenses should be made public, to allow for consultation. When licenses are awarded, the conditions of these should be publicly available, to offer clear information on which properties are HMOs, what the conditions are, and also how and where to raise a concern should one arise.

Costs being covered by licence fees will be passed on to tenants, so costs need to be kept down. Could the Council work in partnership with agents who might act as a useful intermediary, rather than Council having to deal directly with every landlord? Spot checks could be used to assure compliance. Agents will know the landlords with whom they deal directly, which could facilitate progress. This would need the agreement of agents and very clear definition of roles and responsibilities.

This is a very important initiative which will improve conditions for tenants, the dynamics of the local community and the reputation of the city as a place to live - thank you

I would like to see indications of a strong enforcement mechanism; it is quite possible for developers to take over properties and turn them into HMOs, claiming that the property has always been an HMO when in fact it was a family home with some letting rooms.

Although there were costs involved in meeting the HMO standards, now that I have done everything to ensure that my house is safe I know that it is very unlikely that somebody could be injured or, worse still, die in my house.

Above I said I did not think 'Additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs' - this is not because of the HMOs but because of the Council's attitude to providing adequate waste storage / recycling facilities for these HMOs. Until the council is willing to spend the money on providing large enough bins (to both HMOs and blocks of flats) and pro-actively seeking the help of the landlord / management agent, the problem will not go away.

I would like the Council to have powers to make landlords of HMOs maintain the exterior and garden of properties to a reasonable standard, as well as being able to enforce internal safety and hygiene requirements.

i think it's a good thing to licence all hmo's. i can see a downside in that rent may go up in order that landlords maintain their property properly

I look forward to the city clamping down on rogue landlords who ruin residential areas by turning decent houses into overcrowded, filthy hovels.

Whilst I agree with the need to maintain standards of residential let property in certain circumstances it would seem sensible to nail down the current HMOS before taking a wider sweep which will include many very well maintained homes rented by the professional sector which fall under the new proposals as they are occupied by three individuals.

Landlords must already provide gas and electrical certificates, and given today's discerning tenants, must ensure properties are well maintained otherwise they will not rent out. Anti social behaviour is a problem in all sectors, so there is no advantage to licensing - just unnecessary bureaucracy.

I strongly support this initiative which is long overdue. But the main problem is the high concentration of HMOs in East Oxford, not just their regulation. The anti-social behaviour, lack of neighbourliness, noise, litter and parking problems are caused by the occupants, not by the landlords. So licensing must be used to reduce the high concentration of HMOs in East Oxford.

<p>Do it soon.  Be prepared to check that standards are maintained - the council doesn't check this effectively with current newbuilds so I hope you are more competent with this legislation.  Ban or curb HMO cars.</p>
<p>Any scheme needs to be very well enforced, so that there are penalties for avoiding it. But perhaps an effort could be made to sell it as well as good citizenship practice, so there is some carrot and not all stick.</p>
<p>I would like to be able to find the name of the landlord of any HMO, and have a complaints procedure, so if there is an issue with the property or the tenant there is a way to get it registered and followed up.</p>
<p>Where I live (East Oxford) this is, together with the conditions of certain council housing properties, a MAJOR problem. Students make our life very uncomfortable during term. The number of HMOs in a certain street must have a limit of up to 30-40% of the houses in the street. Oxford Brookes students are a major problem. It is important that the council takes action. This initiative is very welcome.</p>
<p>Why can't this and the Landlord's Accreditation Scheme be combined? .  Will a map of E. Oxford streets which will not accept any further HMO applications be available soon?  Will accredited/HMO-registered houses appear on OCC website as 'approved' if landlords are being charged to register?' It could be an e-bay genre system where tenants leave HMO's a feedback star rating. As a University compliant with UUK and hopefully your forthcoming standards, we would appreciate bulk-membership of both</p>
<p>This will only work if it is properly staffed and if the council is really determined to challenge some of the truly cynical and nasty landlords - we know who they are - who are living on the housing benefits of the poorest members of society, funded by tax payers. Regardless of the shortage of housing, the council should never place anyone in these properties.</p>
<p>Forsee difficulties in defining HMO. However, overriding need is for good landlord scheme. IFRA recognises need for HMOs as part of housing supply, but over-supply of HMOs in East Oxford causing strain on local services.</p>
<p>Unclear if EPC is included or any action on Low Carbon initiatives  Should not register include EPC rating?</p>
<p>Houses that are well kept attract tenants, Legislation will only result in increased paperwork and due to the difficulties of policing such a bureaucratic system it is extremely unlikely to be effective at targeting the issues you wish to resolve. Those landlords who are diligent in their responsibilities are the ones likely to register, and those who let sub-standard properties are the ones who will avoid registration by various means.</p>
<p>As with the current HMO exercise, many (and often the worst) HMOs will escape registration as the multiple tenants will claim that they are related to their landlord and not be eligible .  The cost- many other councils are able to undertake this exercise at a much lower cost so either Oxford is particularly inefficient or there is a large profit element.  The legislation will be ineffective for the worst cases yet be paid for by the landlords that don't need inspections.</p>
<p>i disagree additional licensing for all houses of multiple occupation, i think system already in place for HMOs where five or more tenants living in three or more storey houses are fair.i do not understand by licensing all HMOs how it will reduce anti social behaviour, noise from parties, litter and rubbish.  thank you</p>
<p>I would also like to have a saturation policy which allows proposed HMOs to be refused on the ground that the immediate area already has enough (or too many) HMOs already.</p>
<p>Even with more licensing there will need to be a lot more and regular inspection of HMOs. Residents must be able to report poor landlords and know that their complaint will be followed</p>

up and action taken.
I am sending a letter to your office at Ramsay House and I trust you will take good note of its comments.
This is really long overdue. Far too many areas of the city have been blighted by poor, absentee management of HMOs. We struggle to keep our communities together, and badly managed HMOs make the situation worse. Longer term residents have been moving out because the area has become run-down owing to bad HMOs.
It is a positive move - although identifying all the HMOs will be time consuming.
An adverse effect is that the costs of registration will fall on all tenants (via the landlord) - But there will be a corresponding improvement in standards only for tenants who now live in substandard accommodation. That means that those who are currently tenants of good landlords will have to pay more with no corresponding increase in standards.
You have only managed to licence 597 of over 5000 5up HMO's in 4 years, why have you not managed to licence them all yet? Considering the above, you believe that you can licence a further 4000 in less than 3 years, how on earth do you expect to achieve this? Does this mean that you intend to take on more staff to achieve this and if so how will it be funded until the licence fees are received? I have other questions but they will not fit in here.
I hope that as well as a decision to register all HMOs there will also be enough staff to make this programme work.
It is unfair on good landlords that they should have to pay because of the bad landlords
I personally have lived in a HMO and had the council out on several occasions confessing that the property breaks several regulations and nothing was put right. The council does not have the time nor resource to police such a proposal! Some of the poor street presence of properties is down to the tenants, and this regulation will not impact them. A reasonable option would be to license the landlord's. If there were a landlord license, then an agent would know who to avoid
I think your aim should be to weed out the truly dreadful landlords initially. I do not think that you should immediately bring in a lot of swingeing regulations that will affect the reasonable landlords. Some tenants are happy to pay lower rent for a house where everything isn't perfect. It's the outside garden that causes distress to neighbours.
What are the grounds on which a council would grant a HMO license to a property? My concern would be that property prices in oxford are supported by both a value to potential owner occupiers and also a value to investors as well managed rental properties. Hard capping on HMO licenses or refusal of licenses to high quality landlords and investors on would adversely affect property prices for homeowners, or an inability to let properties for short periods
Reliance Way (my home) is a 5-year old estate and most of it is HMOs. Some, not all, landlords leave their properties a mess (one of them is our councillor and was bound over for it a while back) with spread rubbish, excess noise, barking dogs, loud parties and far too many cars for the capacity of the area. I believe compulsory licensing would send the message that owning a house comes with a responsibility to the community where it is located, not just a licence to print money!
I'm not happy that I had to choose a simple 'yes' or 'no' above. I support it with reservations. It is important, to have more information about how this proposal would affect the stock of housing available (as this would have a knock-on effect for residents on low incomes). A lot more should have been said about how this related to ASB beyond 'rubbish outside the house.' Will it be a reduction in numbers, a freeze on additional licences, partnerships..?



# Using evidence to shape better services



## Oxford City TalkBack Survey

Spring 2010

### FINDINGS REPORT

Wastes & resources management



Community safety & neighbourhood policing



Sure Start & Children's Centres



Affordable housing



Healthy communities



Local Authority research & evaluation

Active citizens & customer research



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## 1. Quality guarantee

<b>Title</b>	Oxford City TalkBack Survey Report
<b>Client</b>	Oxford City Council
<b>Project number</b>	10036
<b>Report number</b>	1
<b>Revision number</b>	1
<b>Authors</b>	Catherine Kidner, Dave Ruston
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## 2. Summary of results

This section presents a summary of the key findings from each section of the report.

### Additional licensing of houses of multiple occupation (HMOs)

- ◆ Almost all (99%) residents told us that they think landlords have a responsibility to ensure that their properties are managed well.
- ◆ When asked whether additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs, 78% agreed that it would.
- ◆ Almost nine out of ten (88%) residents agreed that additional licensing will improve safety standards within HMOs.
- ◆ Those aged over 55 agreed more with these statements compared to younger respondents, and social housing tenants agreed more compared to private tenants
- ◆ In terms of problems with HMOs over the last four years, poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens (76%) was the most common problem. A similar proportion (71%) had also had problems with dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs. Empty properties (17%) caused the least problems
- ◆ Older respondents had experienced more of these problems in comparison to younger respondents. In contrast a higher proportion of younger respondents had experienced problems with the poor internal property conditions within HMOs compared to older respondents
- ◆ Poor external appearance HMOs and their gardens was a problem more common amongst owner occupiers, with 79% saying they had experienced a problem in comparison to 60% of social housing tenants.
- ◆ 83% of respondents agreed that licensing all HMOs instead of just the larger HMOs will make the system clear and prevent confusion - with older respondents again agreeing more than younger respondents and social housing tenants agreeing more compared to owner occupier and private tenant respondents
- ◆ Nine out of ten (90%) residents agreed that a landlord who fails to license their HMO to avoid paying a fee and any improvement costs should be penalised.
- ◆ When asked whether licensing all HMOs will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the private rented sector in Oxford, 86% of respondents were in agreement that it would.

- ◆ Overall 91% of respondents agreed with Oxford City Council's proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs

### Leisure facilities

- ◆ 63% of residents said that they use one of the listed leisure facilities. The most commonly selected were Ferry Sports Centre, Temple Cowley Pools, and other alternative providers – such as David Lloyds, University and Schools - and Hinksey Pool. Only respondents who said they used a local leisure facility were asked the majority of questions in this section.
- ◆ 37% of respondents stated that they do not use any sports/leisure facilities
- ◆ When asked which facility they use the **most often**, a similar pattern emerged but with alternative providers (private, university) coming out more strongly – 30% saying that they used these the most often, followed by 28% using Ferry Sports Centre and 22% Temple Cowley Pools the most often. Hinksey Pool (7%), Barton Pool (6%), Blackbird Leys Pool (4%) and Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre (3%) make up the remainder.
- ◆ In terms of specific facilities used, the swimming pool (77%) is by far the most used overall. This was particularly the case for main users of Temple Cowley (98%), Barton Pool and Blackbird Leys Pool (both 100%). Gym facilities also appear to be popular amongst other alternative providers (37%) and Ferry Sports Centre (31%).
- ◆ Respondents told us that they use a wide variety of transport modes to access local leisure facilities. Just over half of users (51%) use a car to get to their preferred leisure centre, 35% walk and another 35% cycle.
- ◆ Users of sports/leisure facilities were **most satisfied** with:
  - The quality of lighting
  - The quality of the water e.g. clarity, chlorine, etc.
  - The temperature of the water
- ◆ Users were **least satisfied** with:
  - The availability of spectator facilities
  - The quality of catering/vending facilities
  - How well the facility caters for clubs
- ◆ In terms of active dissatisfaction, the quality of changing facility also performs weakly (17% stated that they were either dissatisfied/very dissatisfied).
- ◆ Users of sports/leisure facilities thought the **most important** factors are:
  - ◆ Cleanliness of the facility
  - ◆ The quality of the water
  - ◆ The temperature of the water

- ◆ Users thought the **least important** facilities are:
  - The availability of supporting services within the vicinity e.g. parks, libraries, education, shops
  - The availability of spectator facilities
  - The quality of the catering/vending facilities
- ◆ When levels of satisfaction were plotted against levels of importance, the following areas were identified as underperforming (low satisfaction and high importance):
  - The quality of the changing facilities
  - How well the centre caters for people with a disability
  - The continuity of service
- ◆ The full report provides information on how satisfaction with facilities varies according to the three main sports/leisure centres used - Ferry Sports Centre, Temple Cowley, and other providers.
- ◆ 96% of respondents overall stated that it was important for the sports/leisure facilities provided value for money, particularly social housing tenant and non-white respondents
- ◆ The top five suggested improvements to leisure facilities are:
  - The swimming pool
  - The facilities and equipment
  - The timetable
  - The changing rooms
  - Keeping local facilities
- ◆ 88% of respondents were overall satisfied with the facility that they use most often

### Museum of Oxford

- ◆ Overall 93% of respondents had heard of the Museum of Oxford, however awareness was lower amongst younger respondents and private tenants
- ◆ Respondents (30%) stated they have never visited the Museum of Oxford because:
  - They don't know what's on
  - They have no time
  - They didn't know about it
  - 'Other'
  - There is nothing they particularly want to see
- ◆ 81% of visitors agreed overall that the Museum of Oxford was easy to find
- ◆ Respondents that had visited the Museum of Oxford were **most satisfied** with:
  - Staff helpfulness
  - Content of displays/exhibitions

- Activities/facilities for children
- ◆ Visitors were **least satisfied** with:
  - Hands on exhibits to touch/try out
  - Special events/workshops
  - Gallery café
- ◆ Visitors and non visitors to the Museum of Oxford thought the **most important** factors in a museum visit are:
  - ◆ Content of exhibitions
  - ◆ Helpful staff
  - ◆ Museum layout
- ◆ Visitors and non visitors thought the **least important** features are:
  - Museum shop
  - Audio visual materials
  - Café
- ◆ When levels of satisfaction were plotted against levels of importance, reassuringly no facilities were given a low satisfaction and high importance ratings, identified areas for improvement (low satisfaction but low importance) were:
  - Museum shop
  - Audio visual materials
  - Café
  - Special events/workshops
  - Hands on exhibits
- ◆ Residents also told us that toilets are important but only currently perform with moderate satisfaction with visitors
- ◆ The highest rated options for the future role of the Museum were for it to be a place for discovery and learning about Oxford and a place for the residents of Oxford to learn about the city's history and development
- ◆ The lowest rated option was for the Museum to be a venue for community exhibitions created by local people
- ◆ Other open, verbatim suggestions made by respondents included:
  - Making the Museum more interesting to locals by creating an archive of local information so people can find out more about their local area in the past and perhaps look up their address to see what it was like previously
  - Developing the Museum of Oxford to help replace the Oxford Story attraction since its closure
  - Creating something different at the Museum of Oxford so it can compete with the other good museums in Oxford

### 3. Introduction

This was the first Oxford City Council Talkback Survey carried out with assistance from M·E·L Research.

Oxford City Council provided M·E·L Research with the latest database of panellists in Spring 2010. This contained contact details of 845 residents.

Oxford City designed and provided the survey questionnaires. M·E·L Research were responsible for mailing out, receiving responses via freepost, processing completed questionnaires and data analysis. An online version of the survey was also programmed, hosted by M·E·L Research.

Fieldwork was conducted 3<sup>rd</sup> June – 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010. Due to the urgent nature of the consultation need, there were reminder mailings issued.

#### Response rates

A total number of 403 surveys were completed, 77 were completed online whilst 326 were completed and returned in the post. There were 31 undeliverables or requests to be removed from the database (panellist moved, deceased, or no longer wants to participate).

This represents a total response rate of 47.4% and an adjusted response rate (after removing deadwood) of 49.5%

In many cases the base size being reported on will be smaller than the total number of questionnaires received. This will be because some panellists choose not to answer particular questions (missing data).

Statistically, with an overall valid 'population' of around 8,000 private landlords in total, the results are accurate to +/-4.47 at 95% confidence. This means that we can be 95% certain that the results are +/-4.47% of the calculated response, so results could either be 4.47% either above or below the figure calculated i.e. a 50% satisfaction response could in reality lie within the range of 45.53% to 54.47%.

Due to the fairly limited base size, the authors have not significance tested individual scores provided in this report. The reader should be particularly cautious of making conclusions based on small bases; those based on fewer than 50 questionnaires are generally regarded as being potentially problematic.

The general approach taken in this report has been to suppress the number of 'don't know' or 'missing' responses to particular questions where the panellist failed to record a valid answer, particularly around 'satisfaction' or 'importance' scale questions. This is the standard convention in social research reporting (such as the Place Survey reporting which follows official Government procedure issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government), to report on



proportions based on respondents who only gave valid responses to each relevant question, therefore excluding 'Don't Knows', 'Not applicable' and/or 'Not Stated' responses from the base.

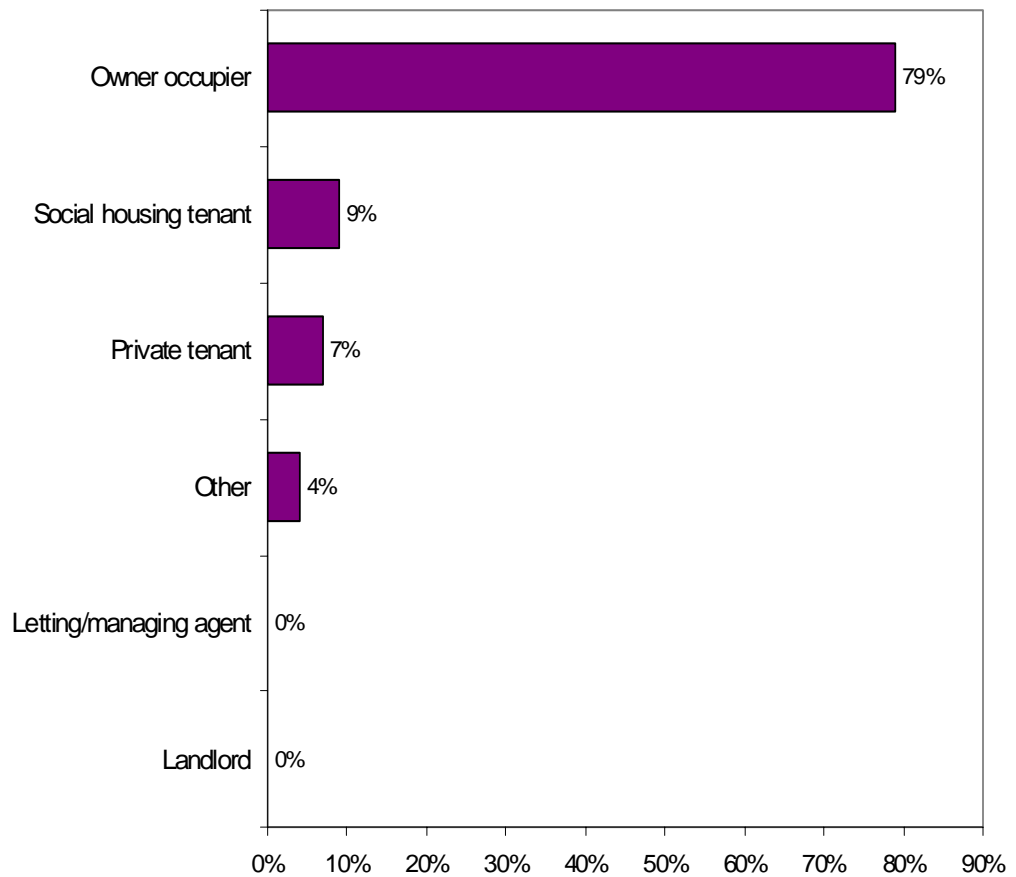
**4. Results for 'Additional licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO)'**

The following set of questions looked to gather the views of residents on the Council's proposal of licensing every house in multiple occupation (HMO) in Oxford City. A full description of the HMO definition and the proposed powers was offered to panellists.

Tenant status

The majority of respondents to the TalkBack survey were owner occupiers of the property at 79% (Fig. 3.1). Social housing tenants made up 9% of respondents and private tenants made up 7%.

**Fig 3.1 Status of survey respondent (n=398)**



### Landlord responsibility

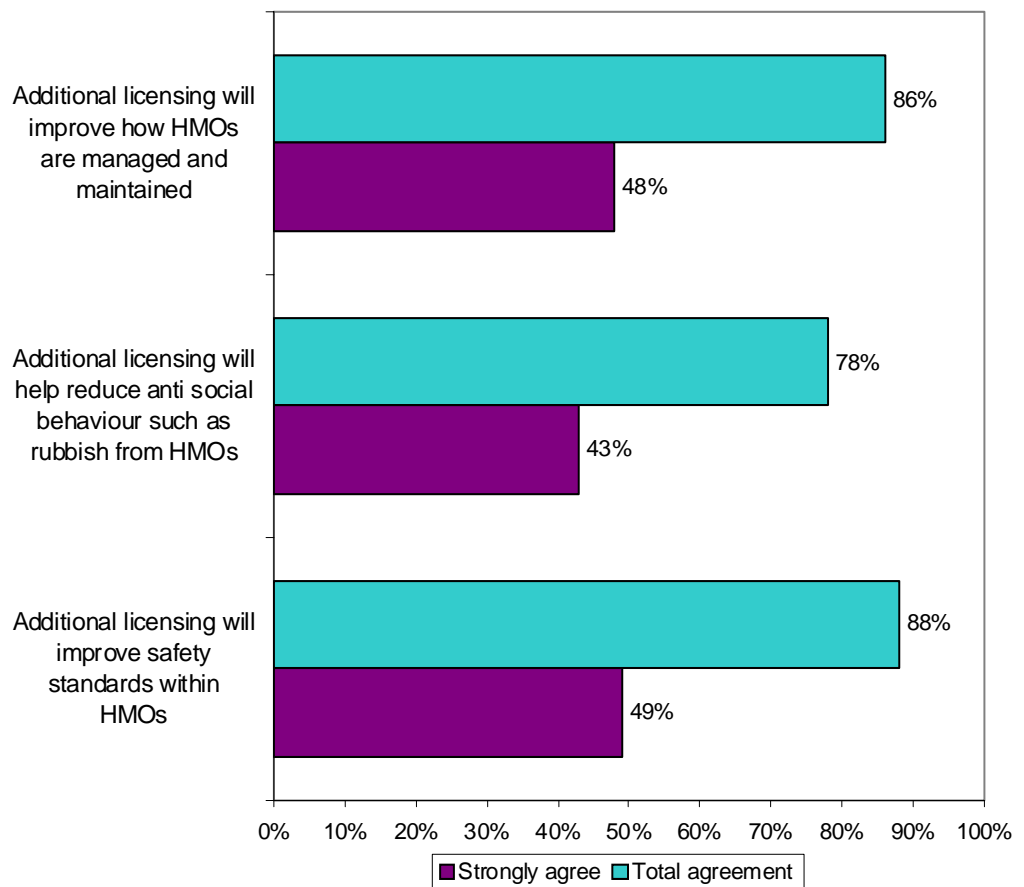
Respondents were then asked ‘Do you think landlords have a responsibility to ensure their properties are managed well?’ Almost all (99%) of respondents stated ‘Yes’, with just 1% stating ‘No’.

### Additional licensing

Panellists were asked whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements. The highest rate of agreement was that additional licensing will improve safety standards within HMOs, with almost nine out of ten (88%) residents agreeing overall and 49% ‘strongly’ agreeing (Fig. 3.2). Very slightly behind was the agreement that additional licensing will improve how HMOs are managed and maintained, with 86% agreeing and 48% strongly agreeing.

Agreement was lower that additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour from HMOs, with 78% agreeing and 43% strongly agreeing with this statement.

**Fig 3.2 Agreement with statements on additional licensing (min base n=395)**



**Table 3.1 Demographic variations in opinion on additional licensing (valid responses)**

Percent	Do you think landlords have a responsibility to ensure their properties are managed well? (% yes)	Additional licensing will improve how HMOs are managed and maintained (% agree)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	100.0	70.9	55
35-44 years	96.5	86.0	57
45-54 years	100.0	80.7	62
55+	100.0	90.8	87
Male	98.2	85.1	161
Female	99.6	86.0	228
Owner occupier	99.4	86.0	314
Private tenant	96.6	78.6	28*
Social housing tenant	97.3	94.4	36*
Have a disability	97.0	87.5	32*
White	99.4	86.6	358
Non-white	93.3	72.4	29*
In employment	98.8	83.5	249
Retired	98.9	92.4	92
Student	100.0	73.3	15*
Non-working	100.0	86.7	30*
Percent	Additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour such as rubbish from HMOs (% agree)	Additional licensing will improve safety standards within HMOs (% agree)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	72.7	78.2	55
35-44 years	68.4	84.2	57
45-54 years	72.6	88.7	62
55+	82.6	90.8	86
Male	77.6	86.3	161
Female	78.1	89.1	228
Owner occupier	79.3	88.9	314
Private tenant	51.7	75.0	28*
Social housing tenant	91.4	94.4	35*
Have a disability	87.5	90.6	32*
White	79.3	88.8	357
Non-white	63.3	76.7	30*
In employment	75.1	85.5	249
Retired	84.6	95.7	91
Student	73.3	80.0	15*
Non-working	80.7	86.7	30*

\* Caution low base

Respondents aged 55+ appeared to agree more that changes to the licensing of HMOs would bring about positive changes. For each of the possible benefits of additional licensing given (Table 3.1), respondents aged 55+ agreed with the statements much more than younger respondents. In the greatest difference of opinion 91% of those aged 55+ thought additional licensing will improve how HMOs are managed and maintained, whilst just 71% of 17-34 agreed with this statement.

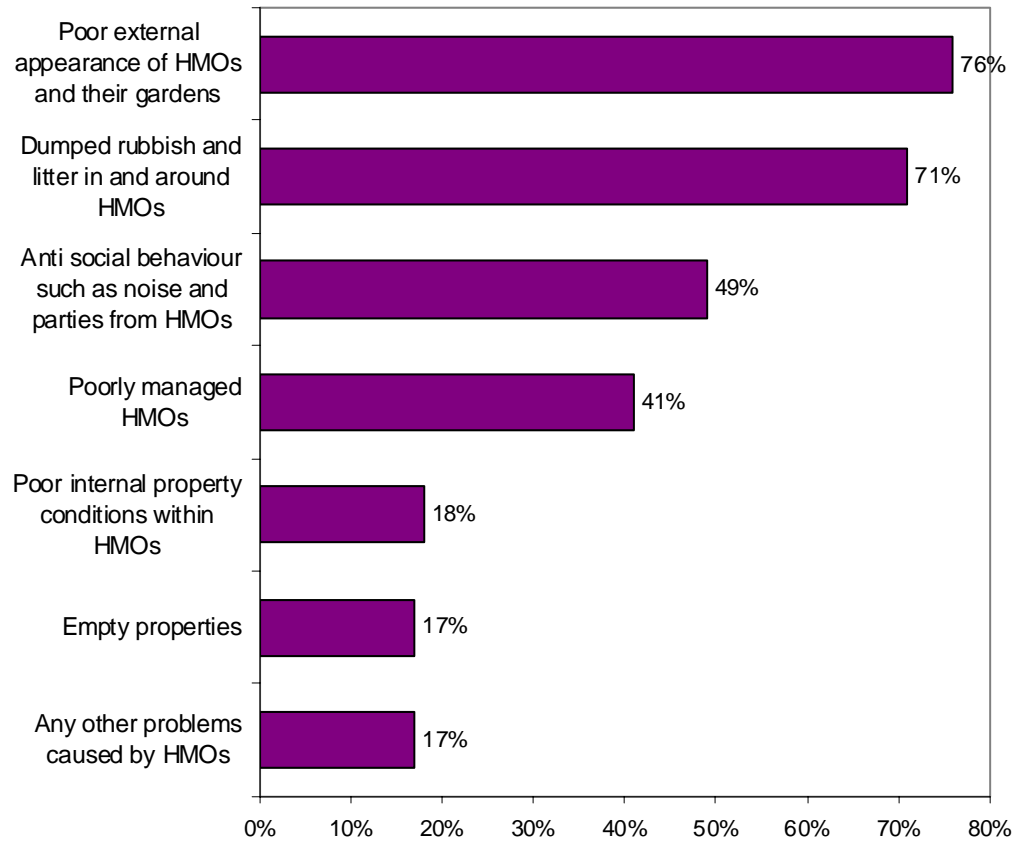
As we would expect, there are also differences in the views of respondents from private rented and social housing, with tenants of social housing agreeing much more with the statements on additional licensing (Table 3.1). 91% of social housing tenant respondents agreed additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour, while just 52% of private tenant respondents agreed with this (however there are small base sizes of 28 and 35 for this classification).

Non-white respondents agree less with the statements on additional licensing compared to white respondents. The greatest difference in opinion is on whether additional licensing will help reduce anti social behaviour, where 79% of white respondents agree but only 63% of non-white respondents.

Local issues

In terms of problems with HMOs over the last four years, poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens (76%) was the most common problem reported. A similar proportion (71%) had also had problems with dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs. Empty properties (17%) caused the least problems. Issues listed as other problems included car parking and the negative impacts on the community of short term residents.

**Fig 3.3 Experience of local issues (min base n=395)**



**Table 3.2 Demographic variations in experience of local issues (valid responses)**

Percent	Poorly managed HMOs (% yes)	Dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs (% yes)	Poor external appearance of HMOs and their gardens (% yes)	Anti social behaviour such as noise and parties from HMOs (% yes)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	23.1	59.0	76.9	46.2	39*
35-44 years	40.9	61.4	65.9	56.8	44*
45-54 years	45.8	79.2	89.6	47.9	48*
55+	43.8	78.1	76.6	48.4	64
Male	40.8	73.3	75.8	49.2	120
Female	40.9	69.5	75.0	48.2	164
Owner occupier	43.8	72.1	79.2	49.1	226
Private tenant	29.6	63.0	63.0	51.9	27*
Social housing tenant	32.0	76.0	60.0	48.0	25*
Have a disability	46.2	80.8	61.5	46.2	26*
White	42.6	73.4	77.3	50.0	256
Non-white	26.9	53.9	57.7	34.6	26*
In employment	38.7	70.7	78.5	50.8	181
Retired	49.2	71.4	74.6	36.5	63
Student	18.2	63.6	81.8	54.6	11*
Non-working	51.9	77.8	63.0	63.0	27*
Percent	Poor internal property conditions within HMOs (% yes)	Empty properties (% yes)	Any other problem caused by HMOs (% yes)		Min. Base:
17-34 years	25.6	5.1	15.4		39*
35-44 years	20.5	20.5	20.5		44*
45-54 years	18.8	10.4	8.3		48*
55+	10.9	25.0	12.5		64
Male	15.0	20.0	13.3		120
Female	20.7	15.9	19.5		164
Owner occupier	15.9	17.3	17.3		226
Private tenant	33.3	7.4	18.5		27*
Social housing tenant	28.0	24.0	20.0		25*
Have a disability	11.5	30.8	15.4		26*
White	18.0	18.0	16.4		256
Non-white	23.1	11.5	19.2		26*
In employment	19.9	16.0	17.1		181
Retired	11.1	22.2	15.9		63
Student	36.4	9.1	18.2		11*
Non-working	18.5	22.2	22.2		27*

\* Caution low base

Older respondents appeared to have experienced more problems with poorly managed HMOs and dumped rubbish and litter in and around HMOs compared with younger respondents (Table 3.2).

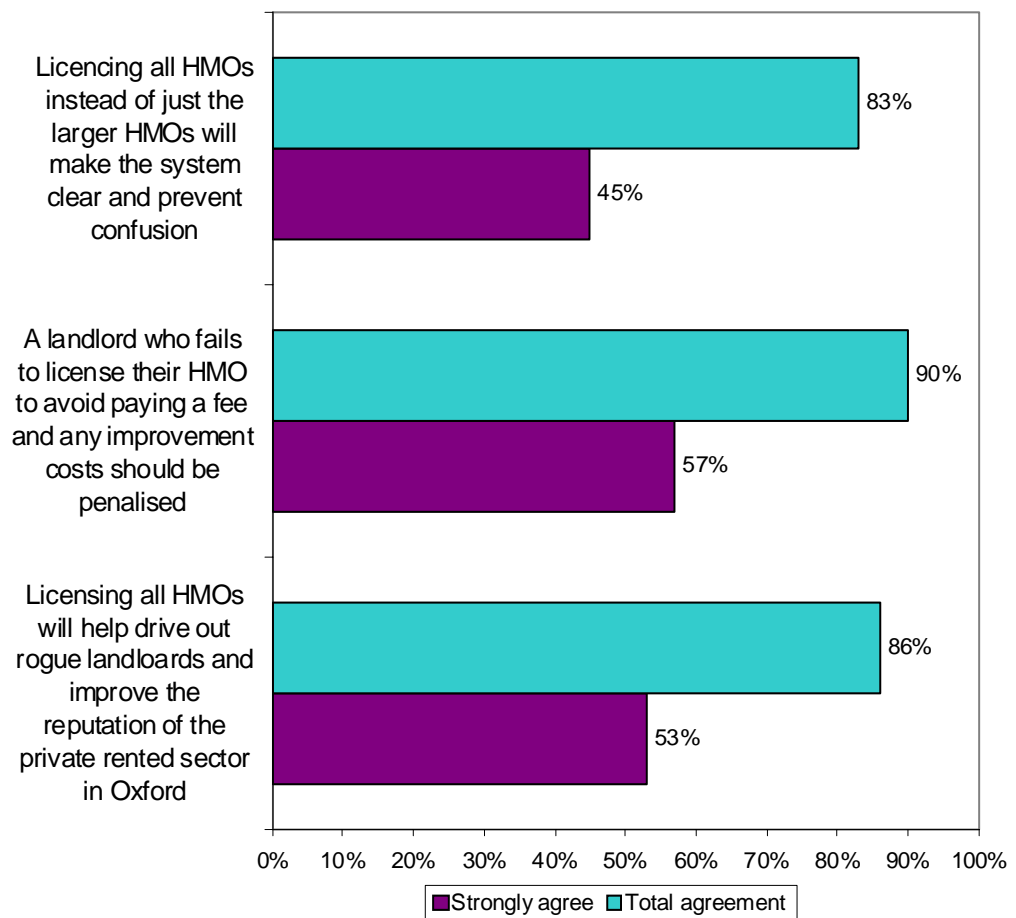
Owner occupier respondents reported having experience of poor external experience of HMOs and their gardens more than private and social housing tenants.

A larger proportion of young respondents had experience of poor internal property conditions within HMOs (26% of those aged 17-34) compared to older respondents (11% of those aged 55+).

Potential impacts of additional licensing

Agreement was high for all the statements on the impacts of additional licensing (Fig. 3.4). Most agreement was with the statement that landlords should be penalised if they do not conform to the new licensing arrangements - with 90% of respondents agreeing overall and 57% strongly agreeing.

**Fig 3.4 Agreement with statements on potential impacts of additional licensing (min base n=390)**





Agreement with additional HMO licensing

91% of respondents to the survey agreed with Oxford City Council's proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs.

**Table 3.3 Demographic variations in opinion on potential impacts of additional licensing (valid responses)**

Percent	Licensing all HMOs instead of just the larger HMOs will make the system clear and prevent confusion (% agree)	A landlord who fails to license their HMO to avoid paying a fee and any improvement costs should be penalised (% agree)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	70.9	79.6	54
35-44 years	79.0	87.3	55
45-54 years	79.0	88.7	62
55+	87.1	93.0	85
Male	83.0	91.1	157
Female	82.7	89.4	226
Owner occupier	82.9	90.0	310
Private tenant	67.9	92.6	27*
Social housing tenant	91.4	91.4	35*
Have a disability	87.5	84.4	32*
White	83.6	90.7	354
Non-white	72.4	82.1	28*
In employment	79.4	88.6	246
Retired	91.1	80.0	90
Student	66.7	95.7	15*
Non-working	90.0	89.7	29*
Percent	Licensing all HMOs will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the private rented sector in Oxford (% agree)	Do you agree with Oxford City Council's proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing for all HMOs? (% yes)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	77.8	79.3	53
35-44 years	80.4	90.9	55
45-54 years	83.9	90.2	61
55+	88.1	96.3	82
Male	84.4	89.2	158
Female	87.1	92.8	222
Owner occupier	86.4	91.8	304
Private tenant	79.3	88.9	27*
Social housing tenant	94.4	94.6	36*
Have a disability	87.5	90.6	32*
White	87.0	92.0	349
Non-white	75.0	83.3	28*
In employment	83.3	90.4	239
Retired	92.4	93.6	92

Student	80.0	86.7	15*
Non-working	90.0	93.3	30*

\* Caution low base

There is an overall trend for older respondents to agree more with the statements on the potential impacts of additional licensing and agree overall with the Council’s proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing (Table 3.3). 96% of respondents aged 55+ agreed with the additional licensing compared with 79% of respondents aged 17-34.

Social housing tenants agreed the most overall with Oxford City Council’s proposal to introduce citywide additional licensing (95%), also agreeing most that it will make the system clear and prevent confusion and it will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the rented sector in Oxford. Private tenants generally agree least with the Council’s plans.

As with the previous questions on additional licensing, non-white respondents agree less with the statements compared to white respondents. For example, 75% of non-white respondents agree licensing HMOs will help drive out rogue landlords and improve the reputation of the private rented sector, compared to 87% of white respondents.

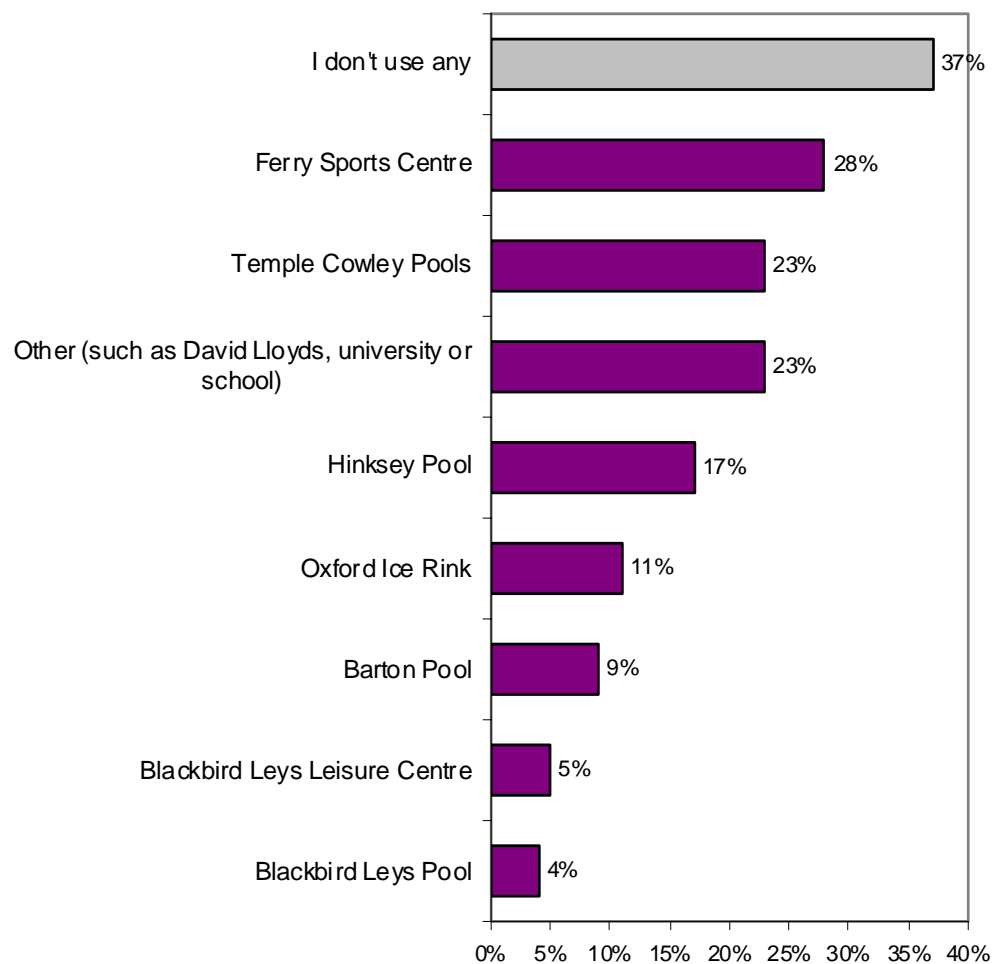
## 5. Results for 'Leisure facilities'

The following set of questions looked to gather the views of residents on the Council's sport and leisure facilities to help Oxford City Council to improve their facilities.

### Use of local facilities

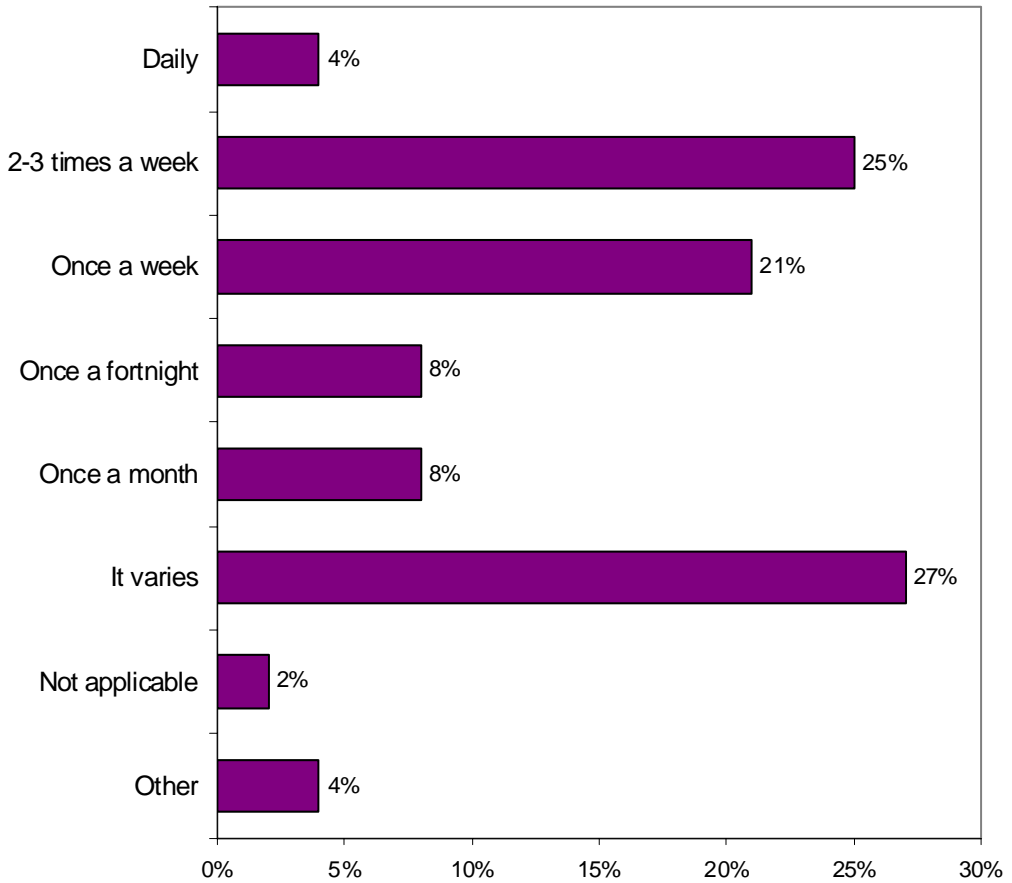
A large proportion of residents (37%) stated they do not use any sport and leisure facilities (Fig. 4.1). The most commonly used facility was Ferry Sports Centre (28%), with Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre and Pool the least used by respondents (5% and 4% respectively).

**Fig 4.1 Council sport and leisure facilities that respondents use (n=393)**



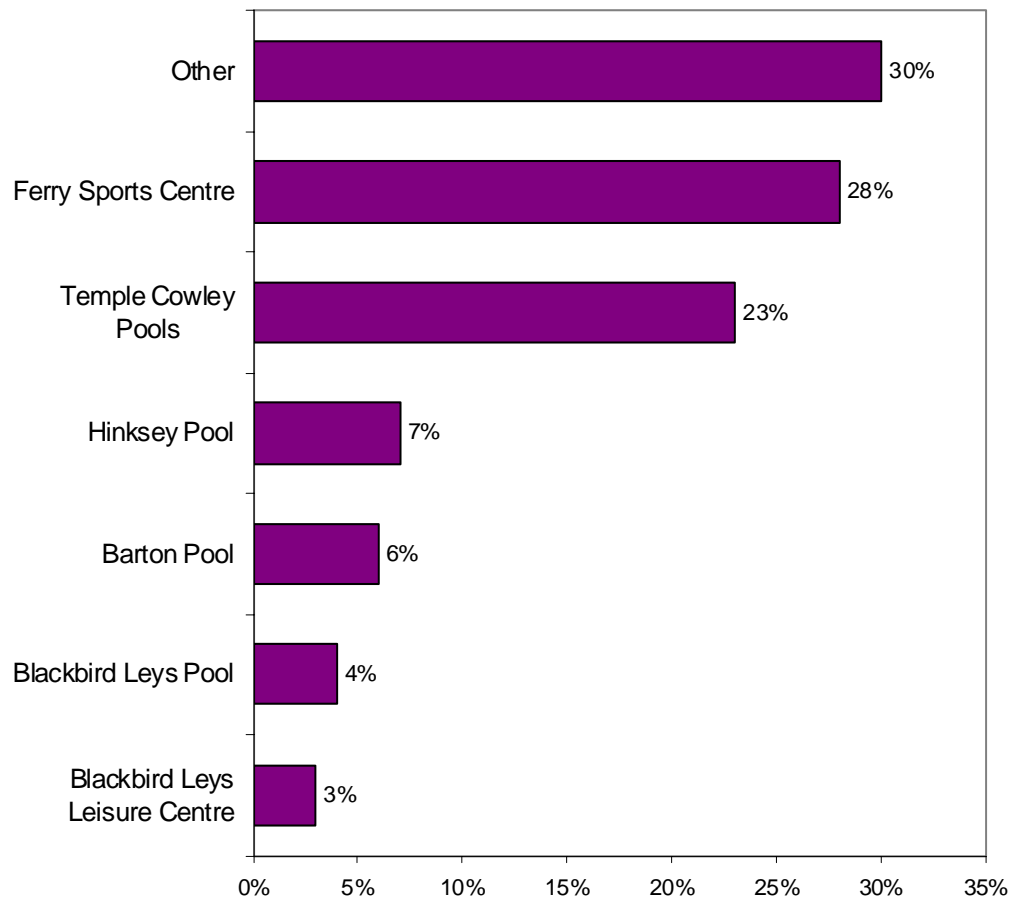
Residents who said they do use a leisure/sport facility were then asked a series of questions. The majority of these respondents (27%) stated 'it varies' how often they visit a sports/leisure facility (Fig. 4.2). This was followed by 2-3 times a week (25%) and once a week (21%).

**Fig 4.2 How often respondents use sport and leisure facilities (Those that do use a leisure facility n=250)**



When asked which sports/leisure facility they use most often, 30% of respondents stated 'other' (Fig. 4.3); a number of these mentioned University sports facilities, David Lloyds and Esporta as the facilities they used most often. Of the Council sports/leisure facilities, Ferry Sports Centre was the most frequently mentioned service being use most often (28%), followed by Temple Cowley Pools (23%).

**Fig 4.3 Sport/leisure facility respondents use most often (Those that do use a leisure facility n=250)**



**Table 4.1 Demographic variations in which sports/leisure facility respondents use most often (valid responses)**

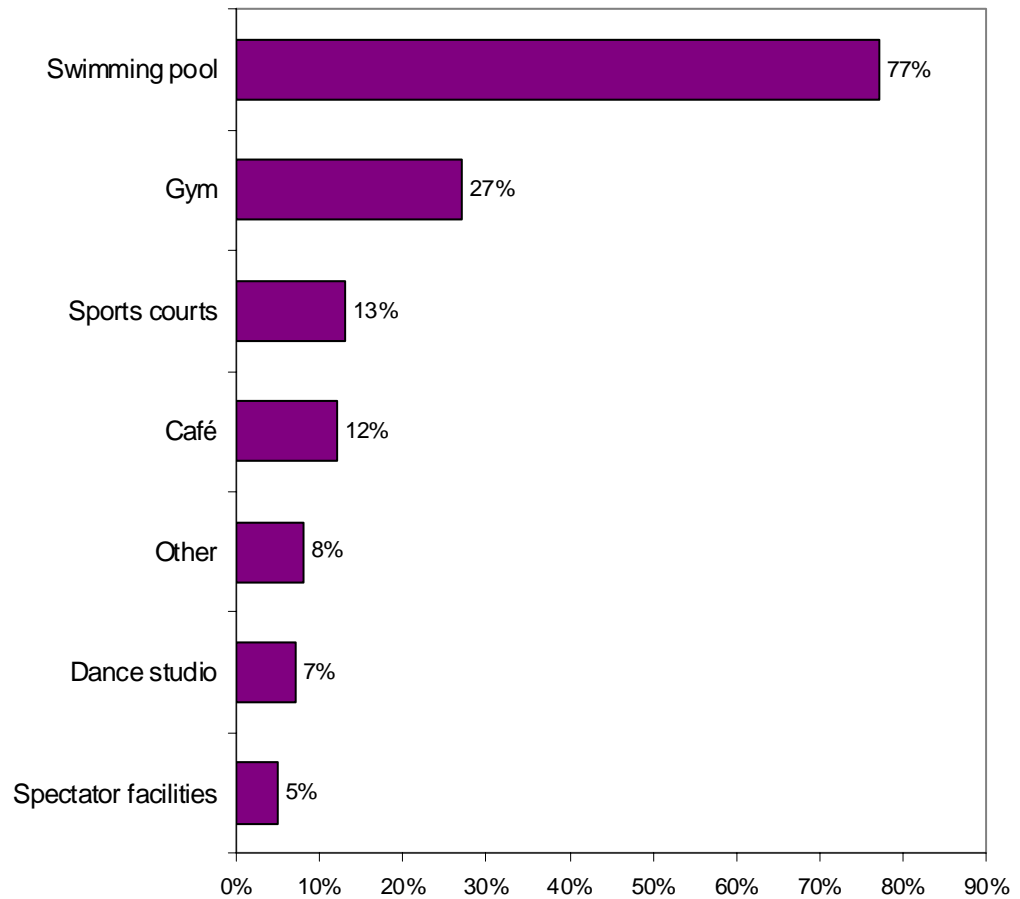
Percent	Ferry Sports Centre	Temple Cowley Pools	Other facilities	Base:
17-34 years	22.5	12.5	42.5	40*
35-44 years	22.5	25.0	27.5	40*
45-54 years	37.8	17.8	31.1	45*
55+	26.1	23.9	26.1	46*
Male	25.8	18.3	33.3	93
Female	28.4	25.0	28.4	148
Owner occupier	30.5	23.7	27.1	203
Private tenant	13.3	6.7	53.3	15*
Social housing tenant	21.1	31.6	15.8	19*
Have a disability	23.5	23.5	23.5	17*
White	26.2	23.5	30.8	221
Non-white	36.8	15.8	26.3	19*
In employment	27.4	21.4	31.6	168
Retired	30.8	20.5	35.9	39*
Student	22.2	22.2	33.3	9*
Non-working	29.2	33.3	12.5	24*

\* Caution low base

The main demographic variation in which sports/leisure facility respondents use most often was in the use of 'other' facilities. Other facilities were identified as the most popular sports/leisure facility, and proved more popular with younger respondents (43% of 17-34 years olds) compared to older respondents (26% of those aged 55+).

The swimming pool was by far the most frequently used facility at sports/leisure facilities at 77% (Fig. 4.4). This was followed by the gym at 27%.

**Fig 4.4 Facilities respondents use at the sports/leisure centre they visit most often (*Those that do use a leisure facility n=243*)**



**Table 4.2 Demographic variations in sports/leisure facilities used most often (valid responses)**

Percent	Swimming pool	Gym	Base:
17-34 years	67.5	32.5	40*
35-44 years	87.5	35.0	40*
45-54 years	75.6	28.9	45*
55+	84.8	21.7	46*
Male	67.0	30.8	91
Female	82.9	24.7	146
Owner occupier	78.1	27.4	201
Private tenant	60.0	33.3	15*
Social housing tenant	82.4	23.5	17*
Have a disability	66.7	6.7	15*
White	78.4	25.2	218
Non-white	61.1	44.4	18*
In employment	78.6	29.2	168
Retired	64.9	24.3	37*
Student	66.7	22.2	9*
Non-working	81.8	18.2	22*

\* Caution low base

Respondents aged 35-44 years stated most that they use the swimming pool most often (88%), closely followed by respondents aged 55+ at 85% (Table 4.2). Those aged 17-34 years stated the least that they use the swimming pool most often at 68%. Respondents aged 35-44 years also stated most that they use the gym most often (35%), closely followed by those aged 17-34 at 33%. The gym was less popular with older respondents.

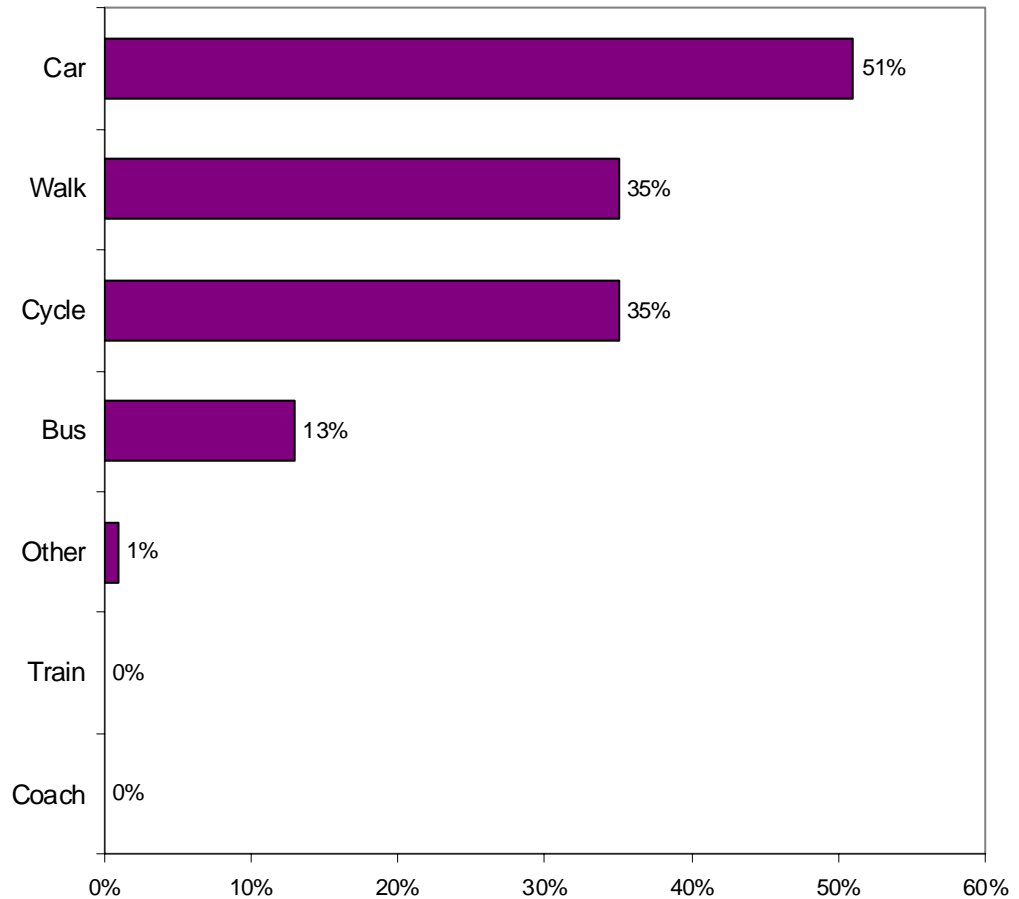
There was also a difference in use of the swimming pool and the gym between female and male respondents. Female respondents stated that they use the swimming pool most often (83%) compared to male respondents (67%). However male respondents stated most that they use the gym most often (31%) compared to female respondents (25%).

We can also look at results according to the main leisure facility used (Fig 4.3). Use of a swimming pool was particularly strong for main users of Temple Cowley (98%), Barton Pool and Blackbird Leys Pool (both 100%). Gym facilities also appear to be popular amongst other alternative providers (37%) and Ferry Sports Centre (31%).



Most respondents (51%) used a car as their method of transport to get to their preferred leisure centre (Fig. 4.5). 35% of respondents also stated they walk or cycle there. No respondents used the train or a coach to travel to their sports/leisure centre.

**Fig 4.5 Method of transport used to get to sports/leisure facilities (Those that do use a leisure facility n=248)**



This was a multiple response question, so respondents could indicate if they use more than one method of transport to access the sports/leisure facility of their choice. Further analysis was conducted to understand the ways people travel to the sports/leisure centres (Table 5.3).

Respondents that used only one method of transport to get to their sports/leisure centre mainly used a car (42%), followed by walking (28%) and cycling (24%) with only 6% using a bus.

Respondents using two methods of transport also mainly used a car (71%) but 55% said they also cycle and 48% said they walk; this may be dependant on the weather.

Of those who said they use more than two methods of transport, 92% stated they used a car and 92% stated they cycle, with 77% stating they walk and 46% using the bus. Again their choice of transport could be weather dependant.

**Table 4.3 Use of different methods of transport**

Percent	Use one method of transport	Use two methods of transport	Use more than two methods of transport
Walk	28	48	77
Cycle	24	55	92
Bus	6	26	46
Car	42	71	92

**Table 4.4 Demographic variations in the method of transport used to access sports/leisure facilities (valid responses)**

Percent	Car	Walk	Cycle	. Base:
17-34 years	62.5	32.5	30.0	40*
35-44 years	48.8	41.5	34.2	41*
45-54 years	64.4	26.7	35.6	45*
55+	45.7	41.3	28.3	46*
Male	50.0	35.1	37.2	94
Female	51.4	35.1	33.1	148
Owner occupier	54.2	34.5	38.4	203
Private tenant	33.3	40.0	20.0	15*
Social housing tenant	47.4	26.3	10.5	19*
Have a disability	47.1	17.7	17.7	17*
White	52.0	33.9	35.3	221
Non-white	35.0	50.0	25.0	20*
In employment	57.1	36.9	36.3	168
Retired	38.5	23.1	35.9	39*
Student	33.3	55.6	22.2	9*
Non-working	36.0	40.0	24.0	25*

\* Caution low base

Respondents aged 45-54 years were most likely to use a car to travel to their sport/leisure facility (64%) and were least likely to walk there (27%). Those aged 55+ were the least likely to cycle with 28% saying they do cycle to their sports/leisure facility.

Walking appears to be a more popular choice of travel for residents who mainly use Temple Cowley (42%), compared with fewer who walk to Ferry Sports Centre (29%) or other alternative providers (28%). Users of Ferry Sports Centre are more likely to cycle (41%) or use the car (54%).

## Satisfaction with sports/leisure centre facilities

Respondents were provided with a list of 20 elements and firstly asked to rank their satisfaction with each element. Our analysis here combines those selecting either 'Very satisfied/Satisfied' and removes those who selected 'not applicable'

Respondents were most satisfied with the quality of lighting (85%) at the leisure centre they use most often, followed by the quality of the water (84%) and the temperature of the water (80%) (Fig. 4.6).

Respondents were least satisfied with the availability of spectator facilities (40%), the quality of catering/vending facilities (43% satisfied) and how well the facility caters for clubs (47%).

In terms of active dissatisfaction, the quality of changing facility also performs weakly (17% stated that they were either dissatisfied/very dissatisfied).

## Importance of sports/leisure centre facilities

Respondents were then provided with the same list of 20 elements, plus 2 new elements, and asked to say how important each one is to them.

Overall, residents think that the cleanliness of the facility is of most importance (99%), followed by the quality of the water (97%) and the temperature of the water (95%).

Respondents placed least importance on the availability of supporting services in the vicinity such as parks, libraries, education, shops (45%), the availability of spectator facilities (46%) and the quality of catering/vending facilities (46%).

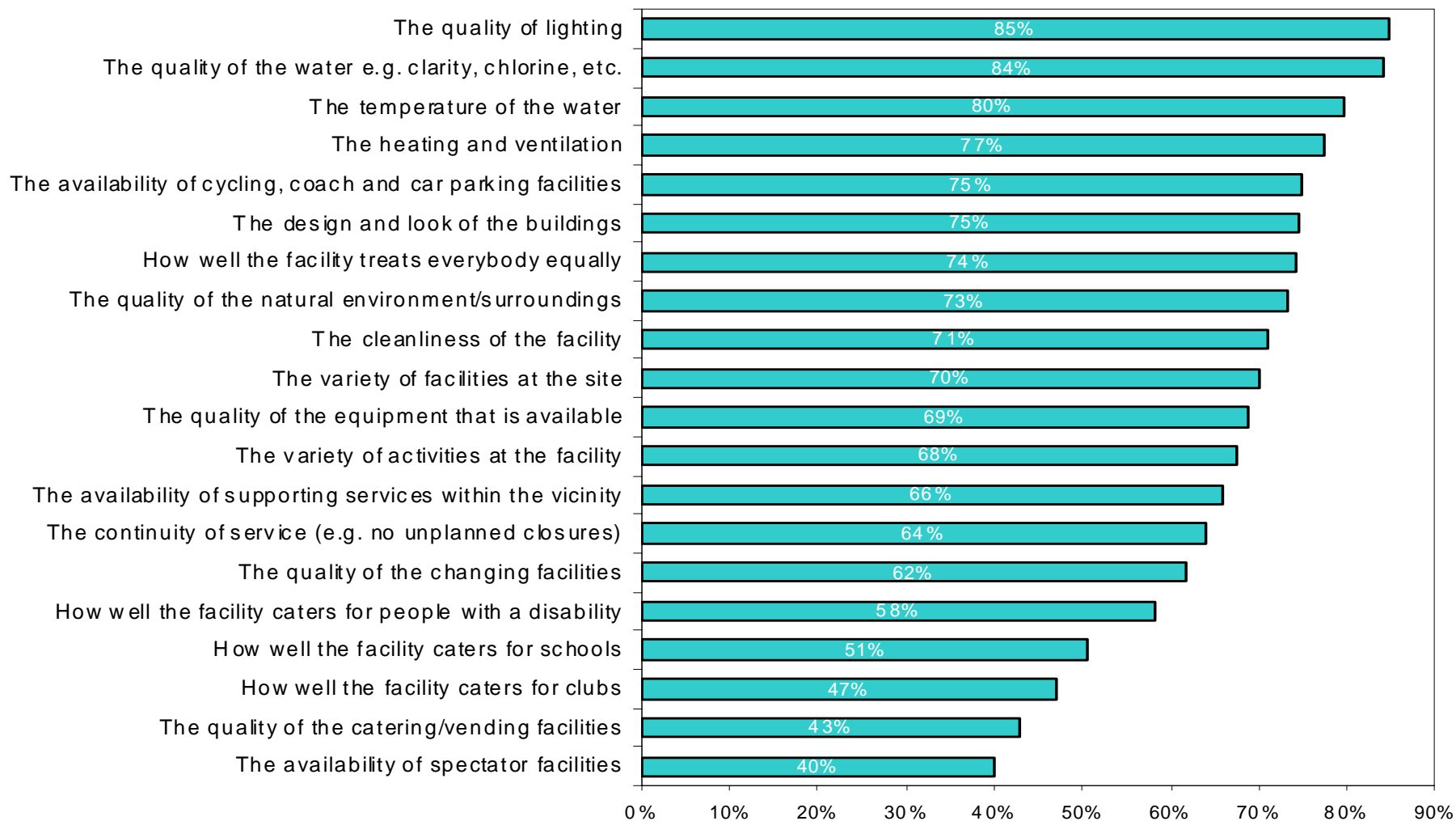
## Performance of sports/leisure centre facilities

The results of the question on satisfaction with centre facilities were plotted against the results of the question on importance of centre facilities. To do this the average percentage of respondents stating they were very satisfied/satisfied with facilities was calculated and the result for each facility subtracted from this average. The same was performed on the percentage of respondents stating they thought the facilities were very important/important. The result is a quadrant map illustrated in Fig. 4.8.

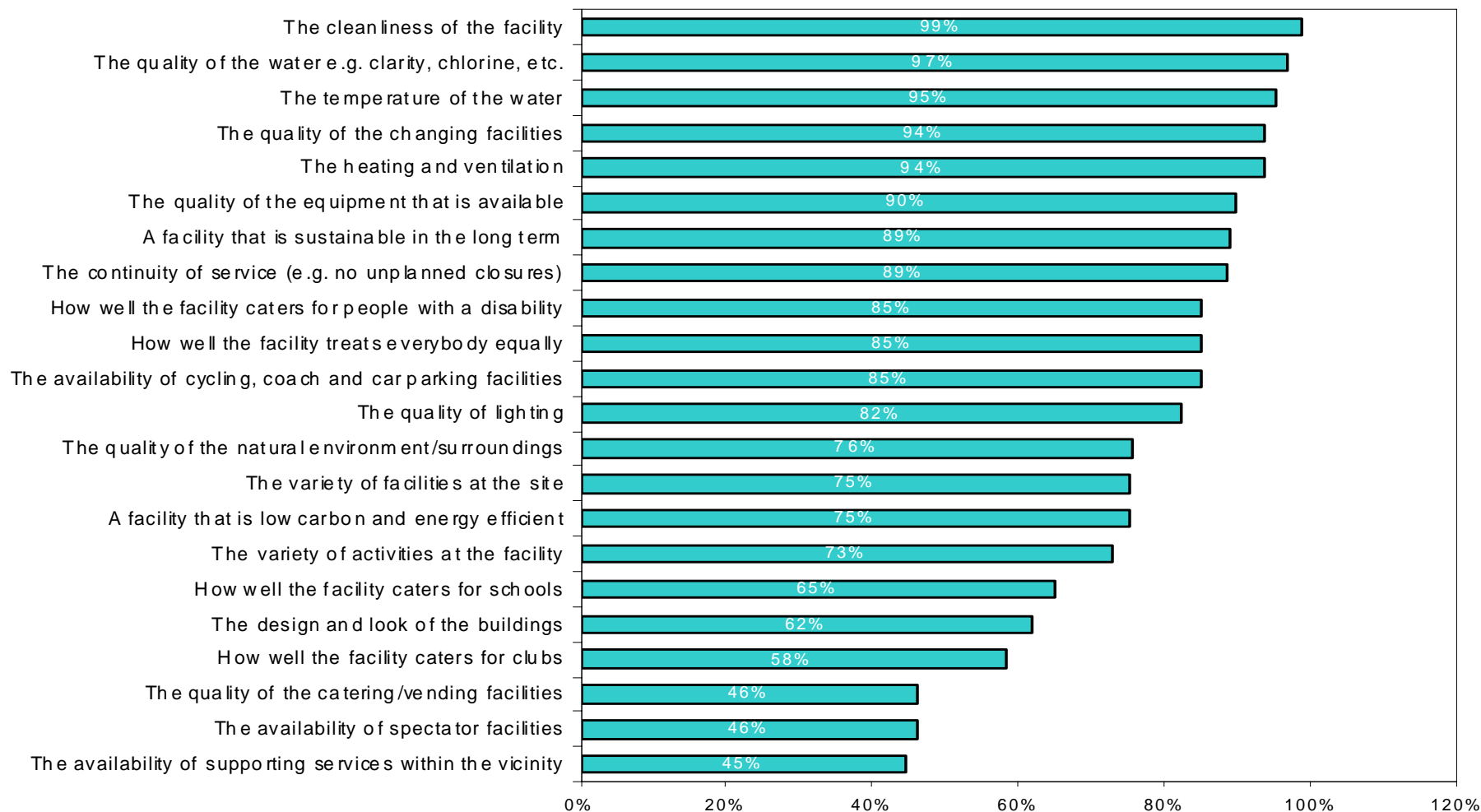
Fig. 4.8 shows that the Council is under-performing (top left section of the graph where facilities have higher importance but lower satisfaction) in three keys areas:

- ◆ The quality of changing facilities;
- ◆ How well the centre caters for people with a disability;
- ◆ The continuity of service.

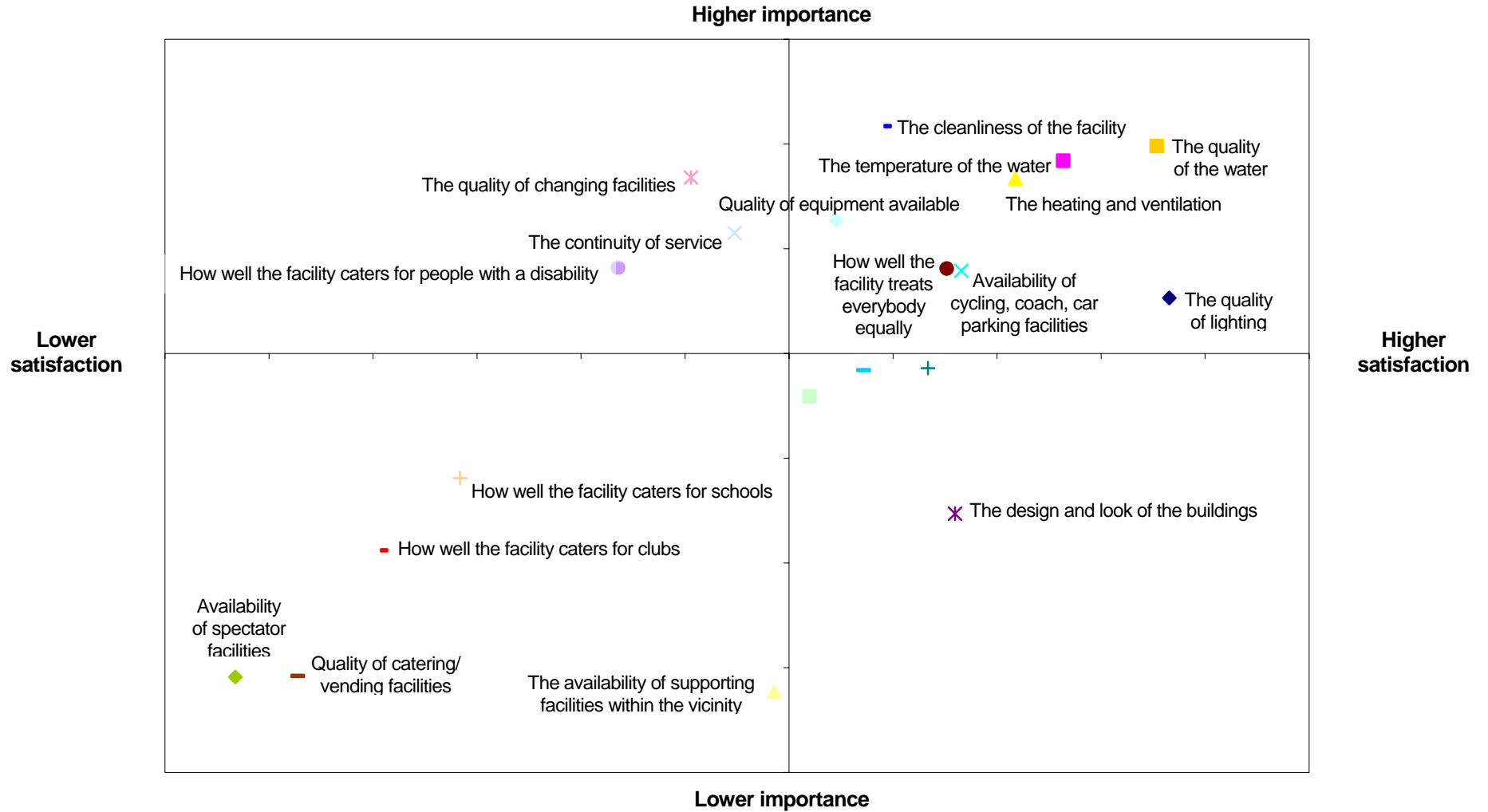
**Fig 4.6 Respondent satisfaction with sport/leisure centre facilities (Those that do use a leisure facility and giving a valid response)**



**Fig 4.7 Respondents rating of importance of sport/leisure centre facilities (Those that do use a leisure facility and valid response)**



**Fig. 4.8 Respondents rating of satisfaction vs. rating of importance of sports/leisure centre facilities**



**Table 4.5 Demographic variations in satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities (valid responses)**

Percent	The quality of changing facilities (% satisfied)	The continuity of service (% satisfied)	How well the facility caters for people with a disability (% satisfied)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	56.4	60.0	54.8	40*
35-44 years	67.5	65.0	54.6	40*
45-54 years	65.1	67.5	59.4	42*
55+	45.2	62.9	59.4	39*
Male	59.0	67.5	60.3	86
Female	64.3	62.6	59.3	134
Owner occupier	58.3	63.1	58.6	186
Private tenant	78.6	66.7	45.5	15*
Social housing tenant	82.4	68.8	62.5	16*
Have a disability	71.4	72.7	54.6	12*
White	62.0	64.7	58.7	201
Non-white	66.7	55.6	71.4	19*
In employment	62.4	63.3	57.9	159
Retired	61.8	54.2	62.5	27*
Student	44.4	77.8	71.4	9*
Non-working	68.2	72.2	58.8	22*
Percent	How well the facility caters for schools (% satisfied)	How well the facility caters for clubs (% satisfied)		Min. Base:
17-34 years	45.8	51.9		40*
35-44 years	56.3	51.6		40*
45-54 years	46.9	45.5		42*
55+	29.4	22.2		38*
Male	53.9	50.9		84
Female	49.4	45.5		130
Owner occupier	48.3	43.4		179
Private tenant	37.5	58.3		15*
Social housing tenant	84.6	64.3		16*
Have a disability	83.3	75.0		12*
White	49.2	46.0		194
Non-white	64.3	62.5		19*
In employment	49.0	48.0		156
Retired	46.7	33.3		28*
Student	40.0	57.1		9*
Non-working	71.4	50.0		21*

Respondents aged 55+ were much less satisfied with the quality of changing facilities, how well the facility caters for schools and how well the facility caters for clubs compared to younger respondents (Table 5.5).

**Table 4.6 Variations in satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities by centre of choice (valid responses)**

Percent satisfied	Ferry Sports Centre	Temple Cowley Pools	Other providers
The design and look of the buildings	78.3	65.5	69.8
The quality of the water e.g. clarity, chlorine, etc.	79.6	81.8	89.6
The temperature of the water	72.2	75.9	87.2
The heating and ventilation	70.3	71.7	83.3
The quality of lighting	83.3	83.3	86.9
The quality of the natural environment/surroundings	64.1	64.8	81.8
The cleanliness of the facility	63.6	50.9	89.2
The availability of cycling, coach and car parking	83.3	60.4	80.0
The variety of facilities at the site	62.9	65.3	84.2
The variety of activities at the facility	65.0	63.8	77.2
The quality of the catering/vending facilities	25.5	36.6	69.1
The availability of spectator facilities	35.7	42.9	42.2
The quality of the equipment available	65.0	66.7	75.4
The quality of the changing facilities	49.3	49.1	81.4
The availability of supporting services	70.5	73.3	51.0
How well the facility treats everybody equally	67.2	82.4	70.7
How well the facility caters for people with a disability	55.1	58.3	60.0
How well the facility caters for clubs	43.9	56.7	46.3
How well the facility caters for schools	54.6	60.7	36.8
The continuity of service (no unplanned closures)	62.1	60.4	66.7
<i>Base:</i>	65	53	63

Satisfaction with facilities varied between the different sports/leisure centres mainly used. At Ferry Sports Centre, satisfaction was highest with the quality of lighting and the availability for vehicle parking (both 83%). Quality of lighting also provided the greatest level of satisfaction at Temple Cowley pools at 83%. Satisfaction was greatest with the quality of the water at other providers centres, at 90%.

The quality of the catering/vending facilities provided the least satisfaction for both Ferry Sports Centre (26%) and Temple Cowley Pools (37%). Satisfaction was lowest with how well the facility caters for schools at other providers centres (37%).



**Table 4.7 Variations in importance of sports/leisure facilities by centre of choice (valid responses)**

Percent important	Ferry Sports Centre	Temple Cowley Pools	Other providers
The design and look of the buildings	67.2	48.1	55.7
The quality of the water e.g. clarity, chlorine, etc.	96.7	98.2	92.9
The temperature of the water	93.3	96.3	92.9
The heating and ventilation	92.4	94.4	95.0
The quality of lighting	83.1	83.0	78.0
The quality of the natural environment/surroundings	70.2	70.4	75.0
The cleanliness of the facility	100.0	100.0	96.7
The availability of cycling, coach and car parking	91.0	82.4	85.3
The variety of facilities at the site	75.0	73.6	81.4
The variety of activities at the facility	73.9	75.5	72.4
The quality of the catering/vending facilities	36.9	44.0	50.0
The availability of spectator facilities	48.4	42.0	40.4
The quality of the equipment available	87.3	92.5	89.8
The quality of the changing facilities	98.5	92.6	89.7
The availability of supporting services	53.1	50.0	15.7
How well the facility treats everybody equally	83.1	86.8	84.8
How well the facility caters for people with a disability	88.3	86.0	80.7
How well the facility caters for clubs	64.3	71.7	40.0
How well the facility caters for schools	69.6	80.4	40.0
The continuity of service (no unplanned closures)	87.5	94.2	84.5
<i>Base:</i>	65	53	63

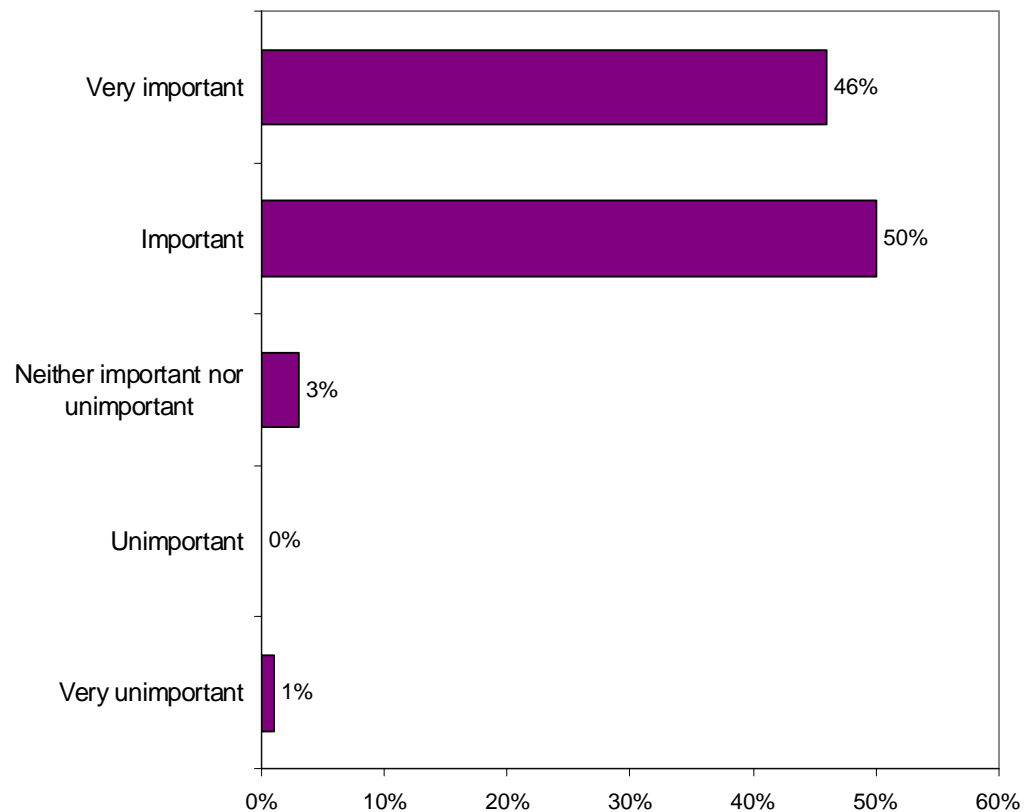
Users of all facilities stated that the cleanliness of the facility was most important; 100% of respondents using Ferry Sports Centre and Temple Cowley Pools stated this and 97% of respondents using other providers.

Users of Ferry Sports Centre placed least importance on the quality of catering/vending facilities (37%), users of Temple Cowley Pools rated the availability of spectator facilities as least important, and users of other providers rated the availability of supporting services the least important (16%).

Value for money

The vast majority of respondents thought that it was important (50%) and very important (46%) that the sports/leisure centre they used most often provided value for money.

**Fig. 4.9 Importance of sports/leisure centres providing value for money  
(Those that do use a leisure facility n=241)**



**Table 4.8 Demographic variations in importance of the sports/leisure facility providing value for money (valid responses)**

Percent	Very important	Total important	Base:
17-34 years	45.0	95.0	40*
35-44 years	41.5	97.6	41*
45-54 years	47.7	100.0	44*
55+	43.2	97.7	44*
Male	40.7	94.5	91
Female	47.9	96.5	144
Owner occupier	42.4	95.9	196
Private tenant	53.3	100.0	15*
Social housing tenant	63.2	94.7	19*
Have a disability	46.7	86.7	15*
White	43.5	96.3	214
Non-white	65.0	90.0	20*
In employment	42.7	96.3	164
Retired	43.2	100.0	37*
Student	55.6	89.2	9*
Non-working	62.5	100.0	24*

A higher percentage of social housing tenant respondents stated they thought it was very important their sports/leisure facility provided value for money (63%) compared to private tenant respondents (53%) and owner occupier respondents (42%).

In addition, a higher percentage of non-white respondents stated value for money was very important (65%) compared to white respondents (44%). More non-working respondents also stated value for money was very important (63%) compared to employed or retired respondents and students.

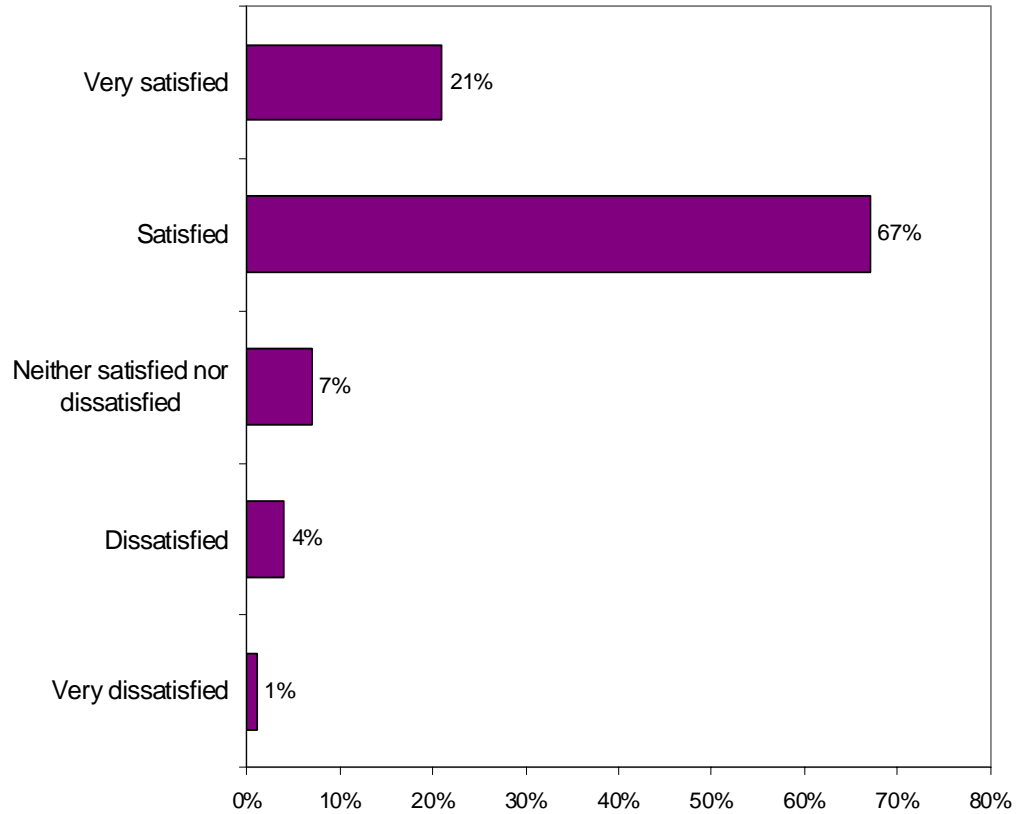
Respondents were then asked to list a top 5 of suggestions for improvement at the sports/leisure facility they use. The top listed improvements were:

- ◆ The swimming pool (52%)
- ◆ The facilities and equipment (45%)
- ◆ The timetable (28%)
- ◆ The changing rooms (25%)
- ◆ Keeping local facilities (25%)

Overall satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities

The vast majority of respondents were overall satisfied (67%) and very satisfied (21%) with the sports/leisure centre they used most often.

**Fig 4.10 Overall respondent satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities (*Those that do use a leisure facility n=242*)**



**Table 4.9 Demographic variations in overall satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities (valid responses)**

Percent	Very satisfied	Total satisfied	Min. Base:
17-34 years	15.0	85.0	40*
35-44 years	26.2	85.7	42*
45-54 years	15.9	90.9	44*
55+	22.7	81.8	44*
Male	18.9	90.0	90
Female	21.9	87.0	146
Owner occupier	18.3	89.3	197
Private tenant	26.7	86.7	15*
Social housing tenant	36.8	84.2	19*
Have a disability	23.5	70.6	17*
White	19.0	87.5	216
Non-white	40.0	90.0	20*
In employment	17.7	89.0	164
Retired	25.6	87.2	39*
Student	22.2	77.8	9*
Non-working	29.2	83.3	24*

Overall satisfaction varied greatly within each demographic group. In terms of age, respondents aged 35-44 most stated they were very satisfied, but those aged 45-54 years were the most satisfied in total at 91% (Table 5.7).

The proportion of those very satisfied was highest with social housing tenant respondents at 37% compared with 18% of owner occupier respondents, however total satisfaction was similar for all three tenure types. Similarly there were more non-white respondents that were very satisfied (40%) compared to white respondents (19%), but total satisfaction was very similar at 88% and 90% respectively.

By analysing results according to the facility used most frequently we can see that there are differences in overall satisfaction. Satisfaction is highest both amongst Ferry Sports Centre users and those that use other alternative providers (private, university) (both 93%). There is a suggestion that satisfaction is lower amongst Temple Cowley Pool users (78%).

## 6. Results for 'Museum of Oxford'

The final set of questions looked to gather the views of residents on the Museum of Oxford to help Oxford City Council to develop cultural services that it delivers in this sector.

### Awareness of the Museum of Oxford

The majority of respondents to the survey stated they had heard of the Museum of Oxford (93%). Just 7% had not heard of it.

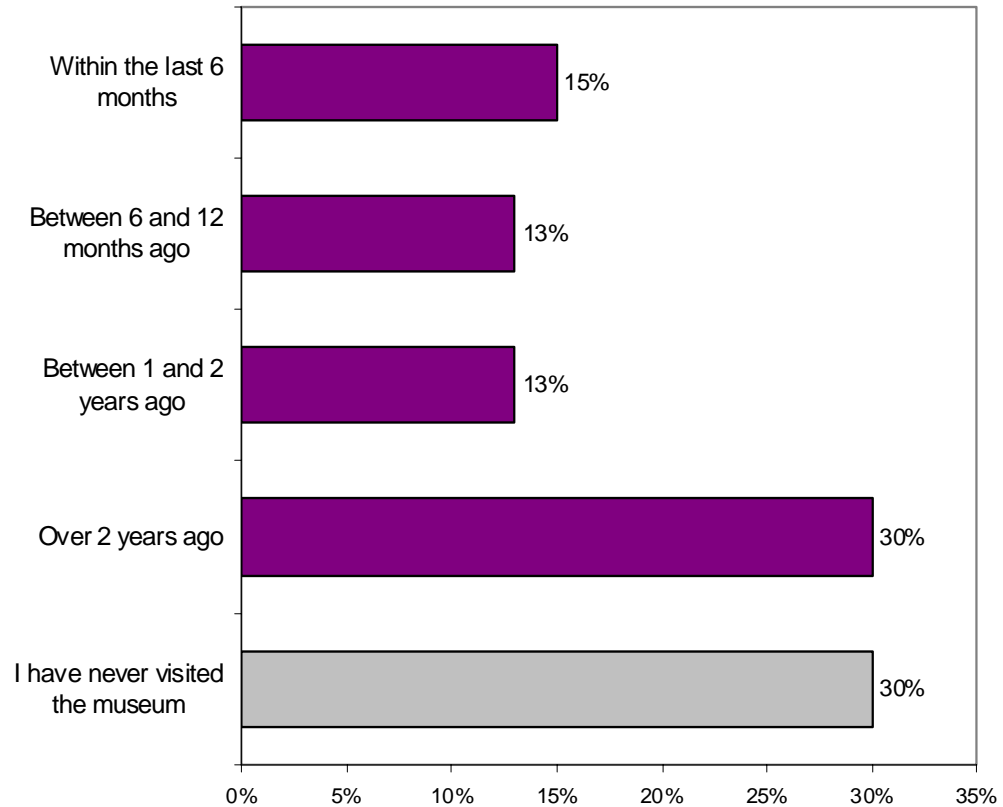
Awareness of the museum is not uniform across the population. When analysed by demographic variation, it was seen that fewer young respondents had heard of the Museum (82% of those aged 17-34) compared to older respondents (97% of those aged 55+).

In addition fewer respondents living in private rented housing had heard of it (79%) compared to owner occupier respondents (95%) and social housing respondents (92%). These results suggest that it may be young people that have perhaps moved to the area for work or students that have not heard of the Museum; this is supported by the finding that 3 of 15 students that completed the survey (20%) had not heard of the Museum.

Visits to the Museum of Oxford

In terms of the last visit made, 30% said that they had visited the Museum of Oxford over 2 years ago. But the same proportion said they had never visited the museum. 15% had visited within the last 6 months, followed by 13% saying between 1 and 2 years ago and 12% between 6 and 12 months ago. (Fig. 5.1).

**Fig 5.1 Period of time since respondents' last visit to the museum (n=396)**



**Table 5.1 Demographic variations in how long ago respondents visited the Museum of Oxford (valid responses)**

Percent	Visited the museum <b>within the last 6 months</b>	<b>Never</b> visited the museum	<i>Min. Base:</i>
17-34 years	10.9	45.5	55
35-44 years	14.3	32.1	56
45-54 years	11.3	32.3	62
55+	11.5	28.7	87
Male	14.9	32.3	161
Female	14.6	27.9	226
Owner occupier	15.5	25.8	310
Private tenant	10.3	62.1	29*
Social housing tenant	2.8	36.1	36*
Have a disability	6.5	22.6	31*
White	13.5	29.9	355
Non-white	26.7	30.0	30*
In employment	12.1	31.3	249
Retired	18.0	22.5	89
Student	33.3	46.7	15*
Non-working	16.1	29.0	31*

A higher proportion of respondents aged 17-34 years had never visited the Museum (46%) compared to older respondents (29% of those aged 55+). In addition a greater percentage of private tenant respondents had never visited the Museum (62%) compared to social housing tenant respondents (36%) and owner occupier respondents (26%).



### Reasons for not visiting the Museum of Oxford

One third of respondents (33%) stated they have never visited the Museum of Oxford because they ‘don’t know what’s on’, followed by one quarter who stated they have no time to go (25%) and 22% who said they did not know about it (Fig 5.2).

Less significant factors explaining why residents have not visited the Museum are cleanliness and that there is not enough for children to do or see (both 0%), and that it is too far from where they live and a lack of transport (both 1%).

**Fig 5.2 Why respondents have never visited the Museum of Oxford (Respondents never visited n=116)**

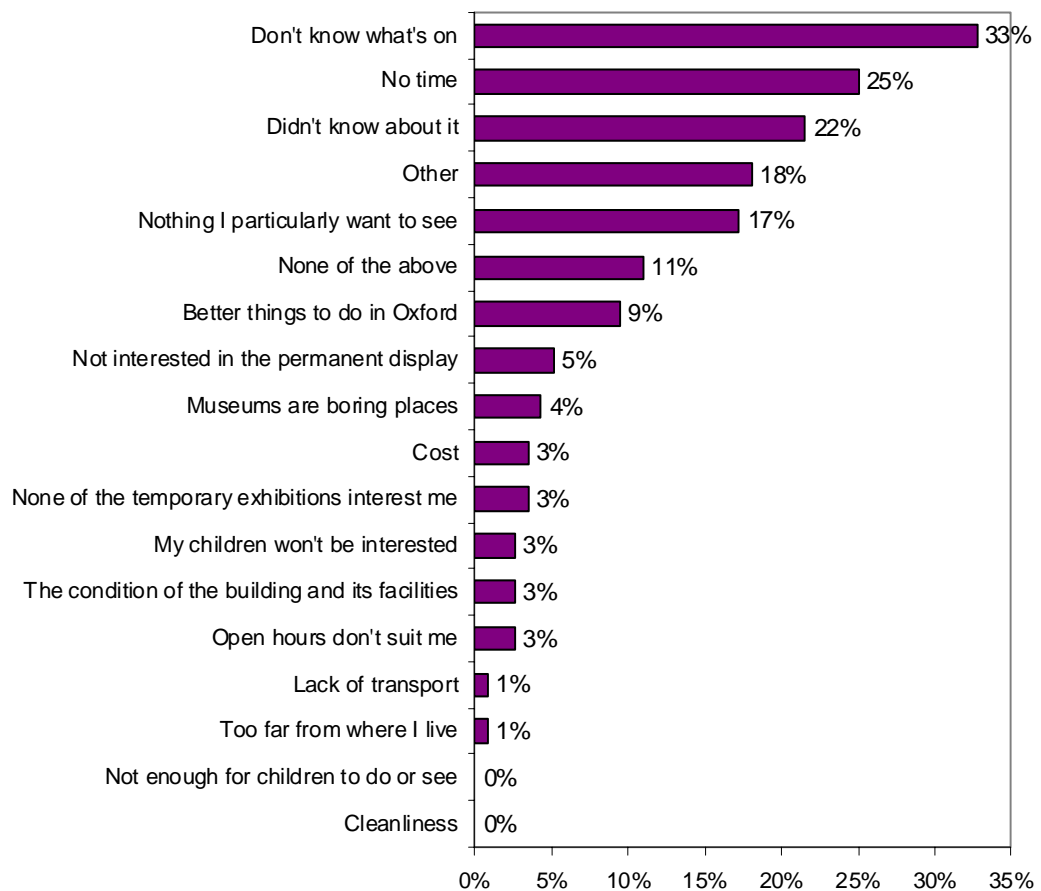
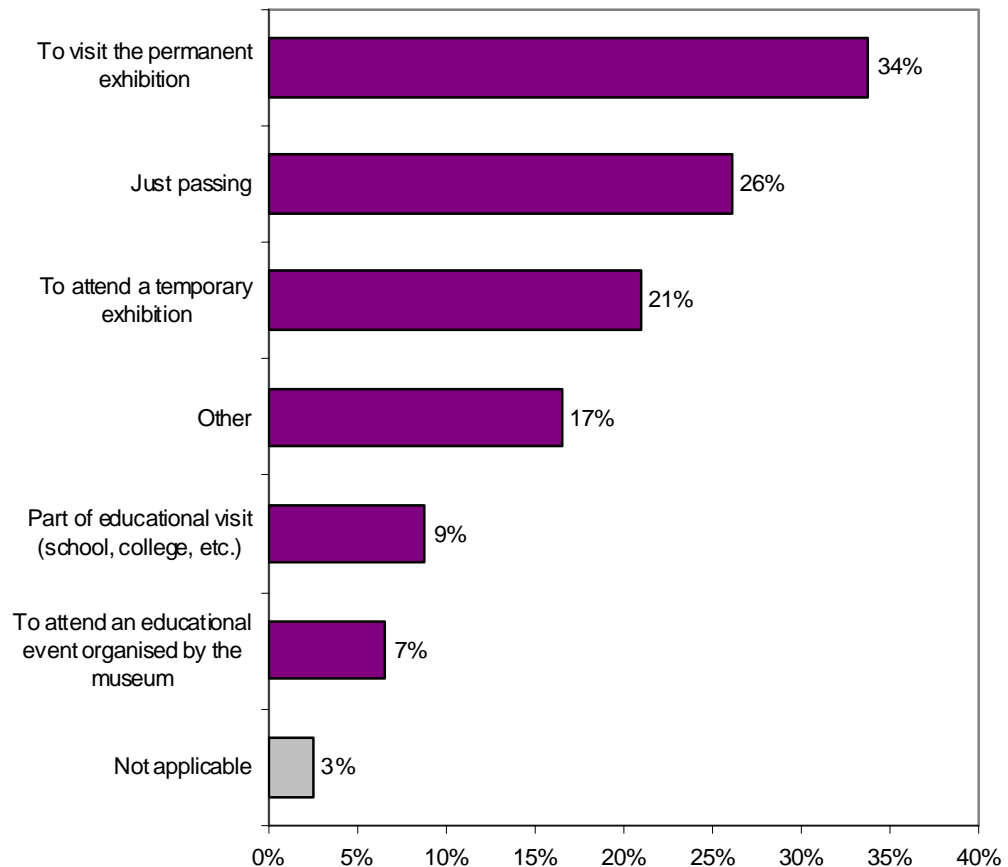


Table 5.1 on the previous page shows that 46% of respondents aged 17-34 said they had never visited the Museum and it was this age group who stated the most that they had not visited because they ‘don’t know what’s on’ (44%), they have ‘no time’ (36%) and they ‘didn’t know about it’ (44%). One third of respondents aged 35-44 stated that they have not visited because there is ‘nothing in particular I want to see’ (33%).

Reasons for most recent visit to the Museum of Oxford

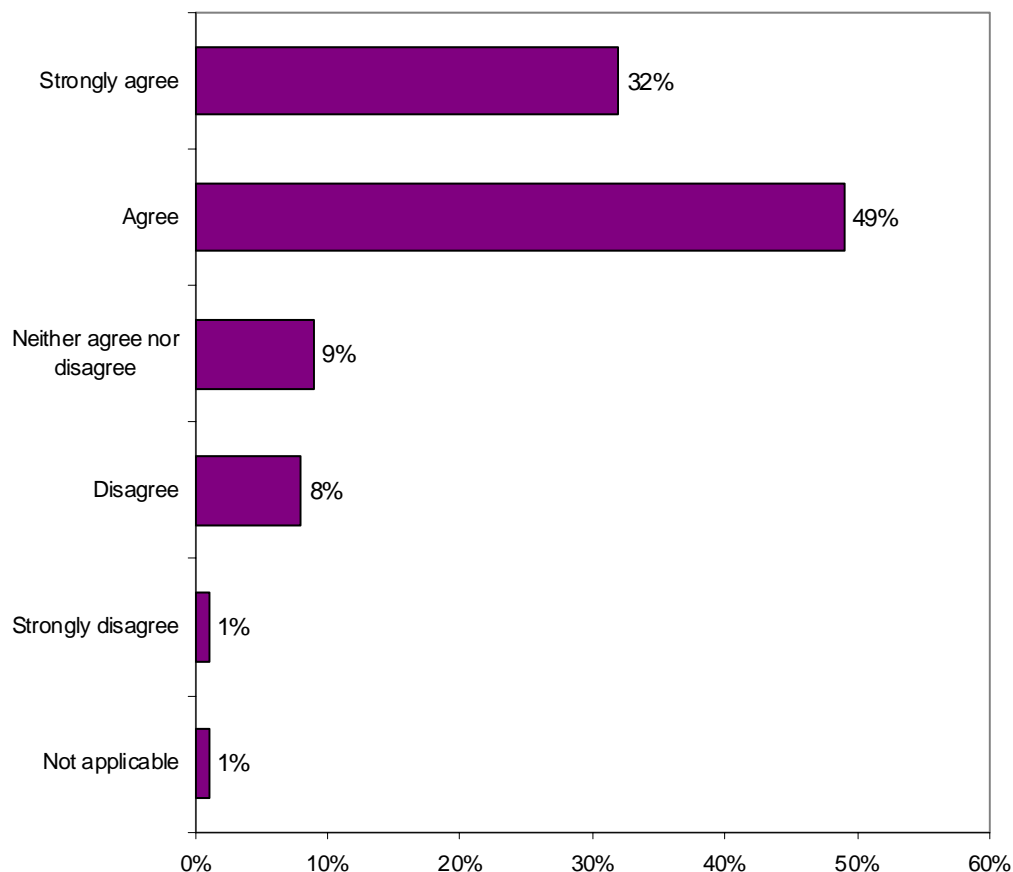
The next questions were only asked to residents who had confirmed visiting the museum. One third of respondents (34%) had visited the Museum of Oxford purposely to visit the permanent exhibition, while one quarter (26%) had visited because they were ‘just passing’ and 21% had gone to attend a temporary exhibition (Fig. 5.3).

**Fig 5.3 Why respondents have visited the Museum of Oxford**  
*(Respondents who did recall making a visit n=272)*



The majority of respondents agreed (49%) and strongly agreed (32%) that the Museum of Oxford was easy to find (Fig 5.4).

**Fig 5.4 Agreement that the Museum of Oxford was easy to find**  
*(Respondents who did recall making a visit n=277)*



**Table 5.2 Demographic variations in respondents agreeing the Museum of Oxford is easy to find (valid responses)**

Percent	Strongly agree	Total agreement	Min. Base:
17-34 years	20.0	72.4	30*
35-44 years	34.2	84.2	38*
45-54 years	28.6	78.6	42*
55+	37.7	76.7	61
Male	30.8	77.6	107
Female	33.1	85.8	166
Owner occupier	31.0	81.9	229
Private tenant	27.3	72.7	11*
Social housing tenant	41.7	91.3	24*
Have a disability	40.0	91.7	25*
White	32.4	83.3	247
Non-white	34.8	76.2	23*
In employment	30.2	80.8	169
Retired	34.3	88.4	70
Student	37.5	87.5	8*
Non-working	39.1	81.8	23*

Respondents aged 35-44 agreed most overall that the Museum was easy to find (84%) compared to 72% of respondents aged 17-34 years. Female respondents also agreed more that it was easy to find (86%) compared to male respondents (78%).

## Satisfaction with Museum of Oxford facilities

Respondents who recalled making a visit, said that they were most satisfied with the helpful staff (84% satisfied) at the Museum of Oxford, followed by the content of the exhibitions (82%) and the activities provided for children (70%) (Fig. 5.5).

Respondents were least satisfied with the hands on exhibits (55%), special events/workshops provided by the museum (56%) and the café (58%).

## Importance of Museum of Oxford facilities

Both visitors and non-visitors were then provided with a list of 12 elements and asked to say how important each one is to them in a museum visit. Overall, residents think that the content of exhibitions is of most importance (99%), followed by helpful staff (95%) and museum layout (91%). (Fig. 5.6).

Respondents placed least importance on the museum shop (51%), audio visual materials (60%) and the café (62%).

## Performance of Museum of Oxford facilities

The results of the question on satisfaction with Museum of Oxford facilities were plotted against the results of the question on importance of museum facilities. To do this the average percentage of respondents stating they were very satisfied/satisfied with facilities was calculated and the result for each facility subtracted from this average. The same was performed on the percentage of respondents stating they thought the facilities were very important/important. The result is Fig. 5.7.

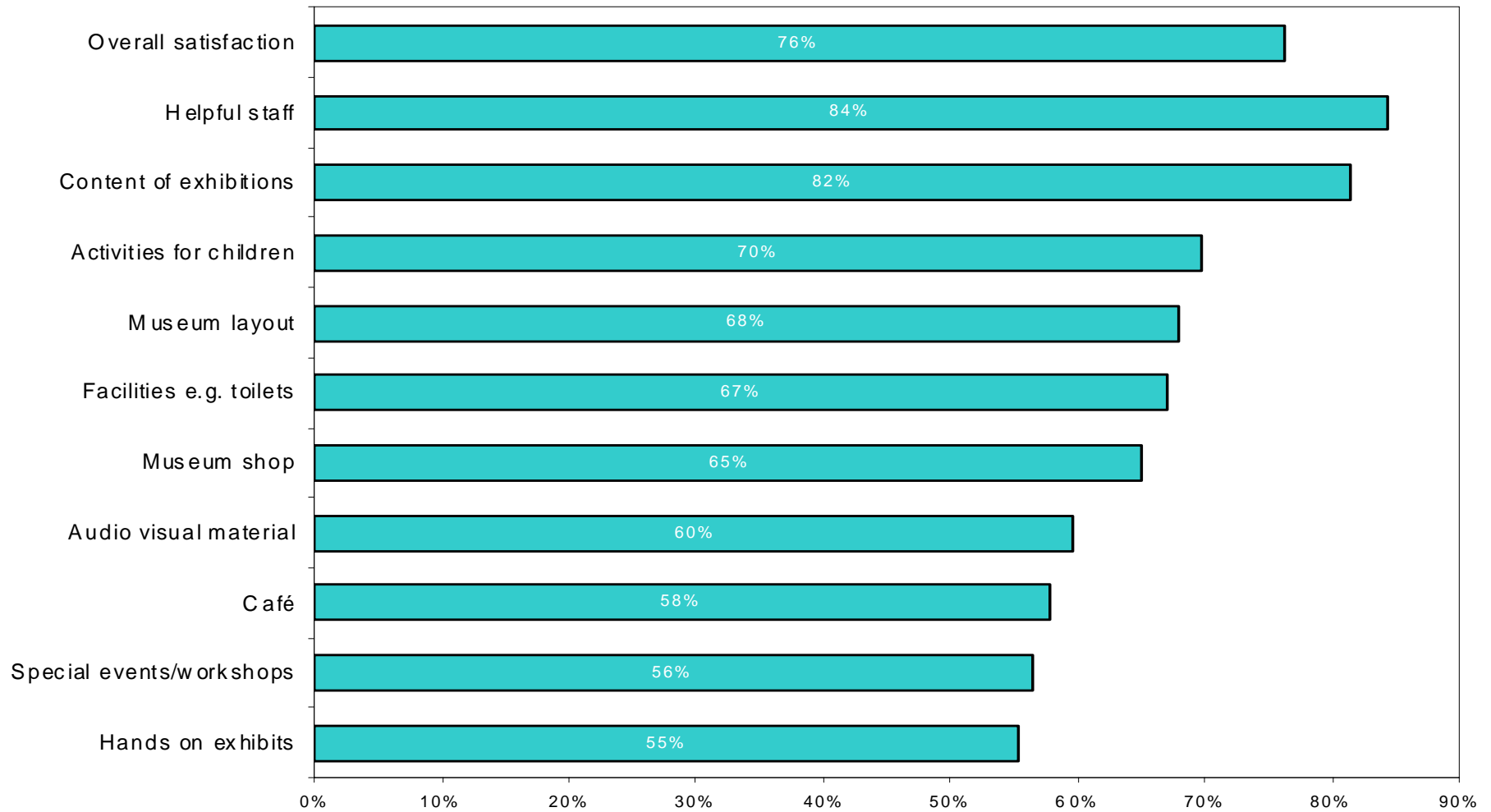
Unlike in the previous satisfaction vs. importance plot for sports/leisure facilities, satisfaction with and importance of museum facilities quite closely correlate. There are no facilities plotted in the top left section of the graph where satisfaction would be low but importance is high.

We should point out that features rated with relatively low satisfaction but given relatively low importance were:

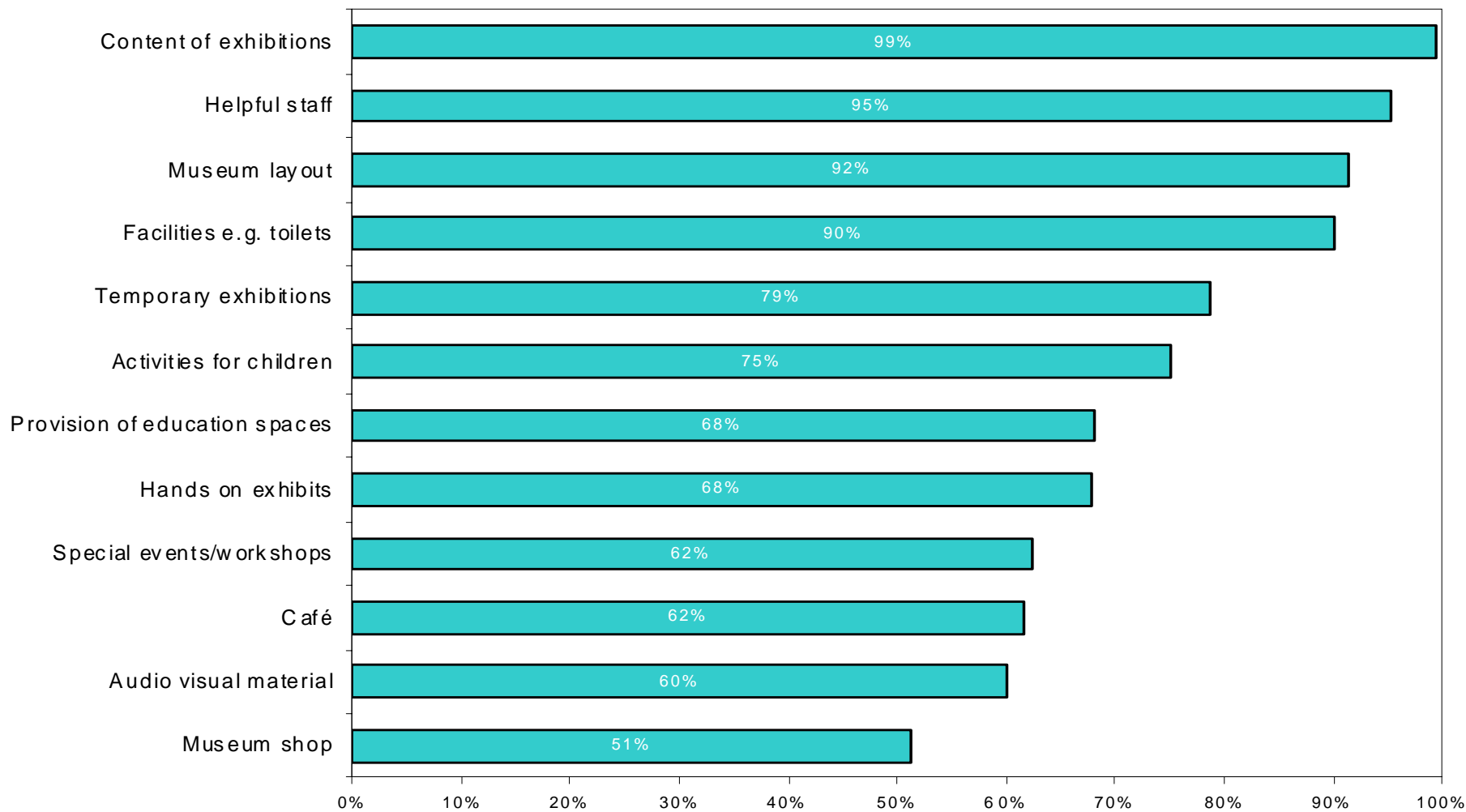
- ◆ Audio visual materials;
- ◆ The Café;
- ◆ Special events/workshops;
- ◆ Hands on exhibits.
- ◆ There is also a slight danger sign for toilets which were deemed to have a higher than average importance but received only moderate satisfaction. Reassuringly, the content of the

exhibitions had both the highest importance and highest satisfaction ratings.

**Fig 5.5 Respondent satisfaction with the Museum of Oxford facilities (Respondents who did recall making a visit, minimum n=222)**

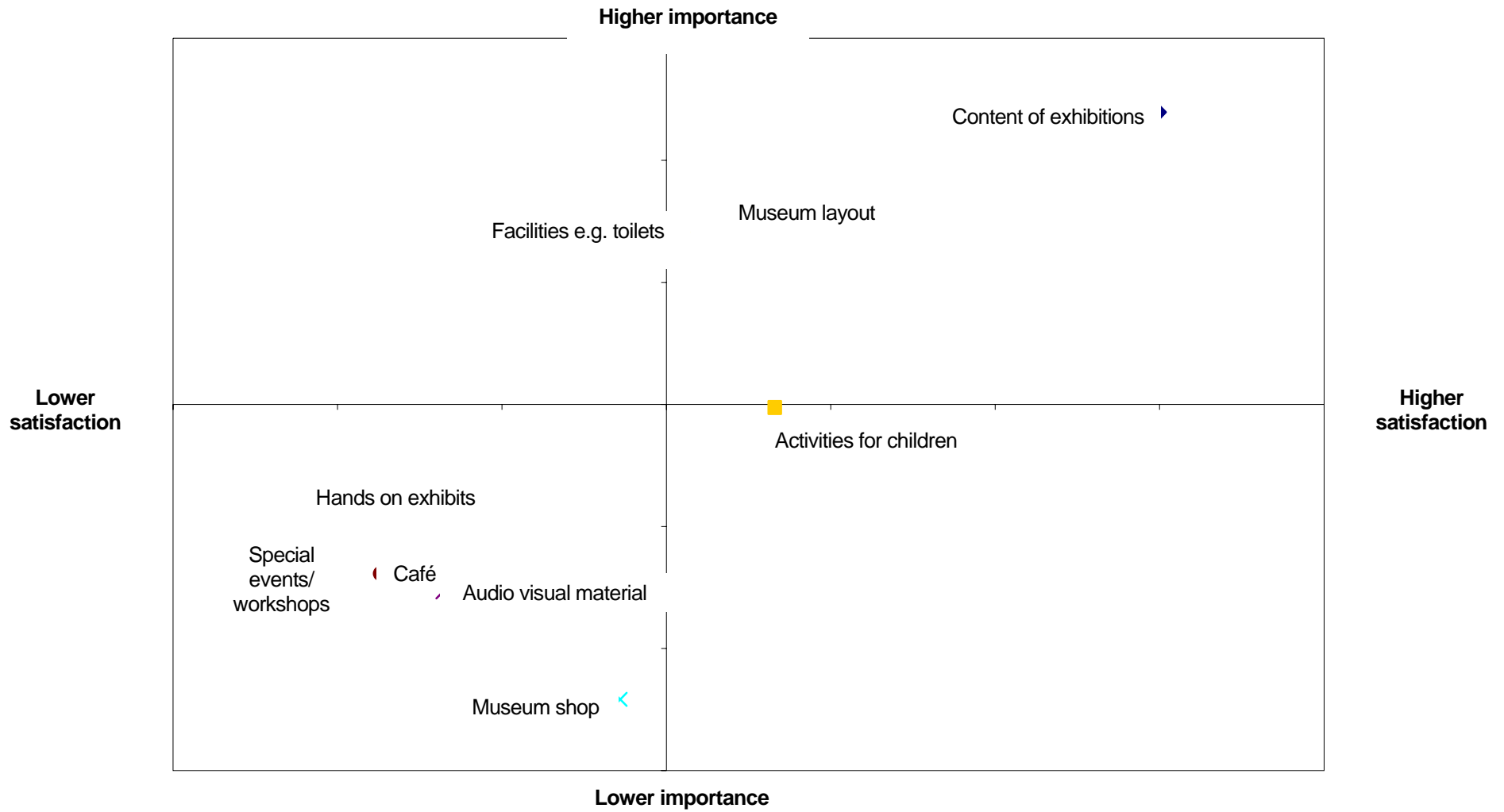


**Fig 5.6 Respondents rating of importance of Museum of Oxford facilities (all respondents n=347)**





**Fig 5.7 Respondents rating of satisfaction vs. rating of importance of Museum of Oxford facilities**



**Table 5.3 Demographic variations in satisfaction with Museum of Oxford facilities (valid responses)**

Percent	Hands on exhibits (% satisfied)	Special events/ workshops (% satisfied)	Café (% satisfied)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	40.0	53.3	53.3	25*
35-44 years	47.1	41.9	40.9	36*
45-54 years	44.8	68.2	40.9	32*
55+	55.0	56.7	62.1	45*
Male	52.8	54.8	43.1	87
Female	57.9	58.1	69.0	131
Owner occupier	50.6	50.0	52.9	182
Private tenant	33.3	60.0	80.0	8*
Social housing tenant	90.9	94.7	86.4	20*
Have a disability	93.3	90.0	80.0	16*
White	56.2	56.9	57.7	198
Non-white	50.0	60.0	50.0	16*
In employment	46.7	55.3	53.4	135
Retired	72.9	59.4	61.0	53
Student	83.3	40.0	83.3	7*
Non-working	64.7	66.7	62.5	20*
Percent	Audio visual material (% satisfied)	Museum shop (% satisfied)		Min. Base:
17-34 years	50.0	48.0		26*
35-44 years	53.1	67.7		36*
45-54 years	64.0	53.6		33*
55+	55.9	68.3		48*
Male	54.8	62.2		92
Female	65.0	68.3		135
Owner occupier	54.6	62.0		190
Private tenant	25.0	75.0		7*
Social housing tenant	95.5	86.4		22*
Have a disability	100.0	88.2		19*
White	58.3	66.7		207
Non-white	78.6	56.3		17*
In employment	56.5	61.9		138
Retired	69.1	74.1		58
Student	50.0	50.0		8*
Non-working	68.8	73.7		21*

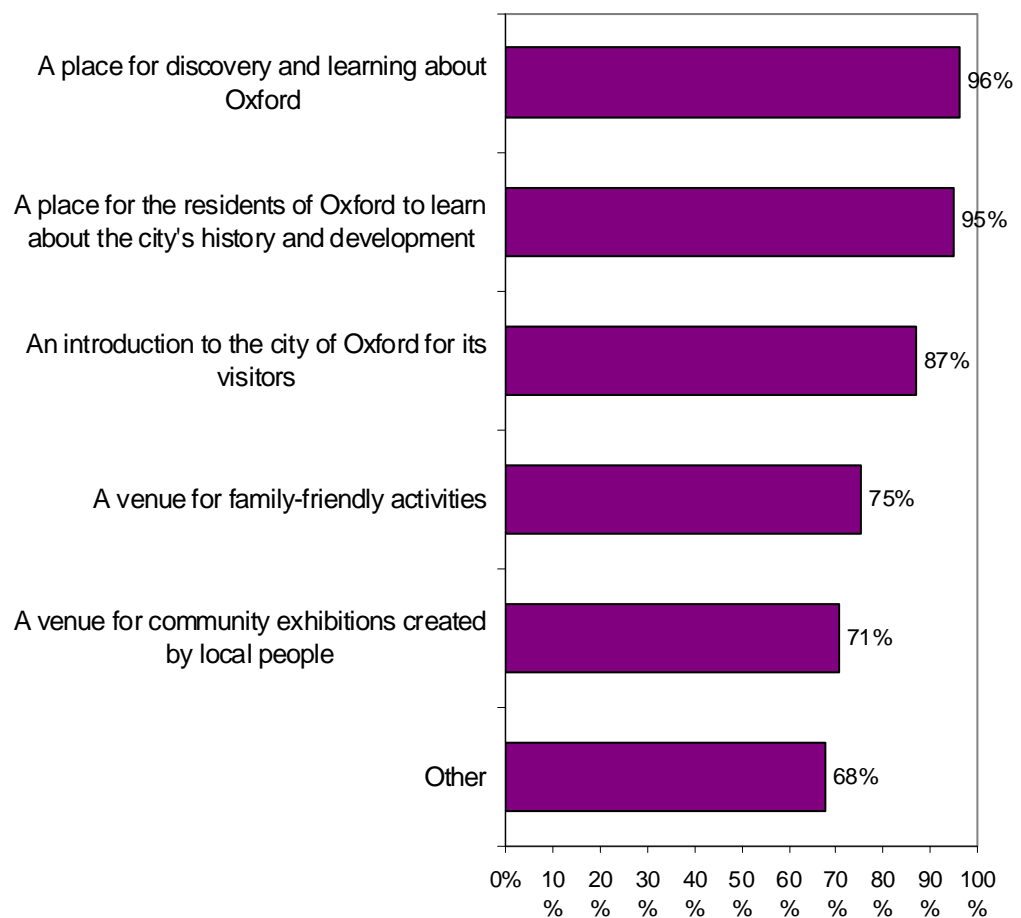
There are few clear patterns of satisfaction with Museum facilities in the demographic analysis; different people are satisfied by different aspects of the Museum.

Future role of the Museum of Oxford

It was explained that the Council are exploring the idea of developing a new vision for the Museum of Oxford, and respondents were asked what they thought the role of the museum should be.

A very large proportion of respondents thought the Museum should be ‘a place for discovery and learning about Oxford’ and a ‘place for the residents of Oxford to learn about the city’s history and development’ (Fig. 5.8). All options however proved popular with respondents, with a number suggesting other roles for the museum as well.

**Fig 5.8 Respondents opinion on the future role of the Museum of Oxford (all n=369)**



**Table 5.4 Demographic variations in the future role of the Museum of Oxford (valid responses)**

Percent	A place for the residents of Oxford to learn about the city's history and development (% important)	A place for discovery and learning about Oxford (% important)	An introduction to the city of Oxford for its visitors (% important)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	96.2	96.2	88.5	52
35-44 years	94.6	100.0	78.2	55
45-54 years	98.3	98.3	83.9	56
55+	92.5	93.8	91.1	80
Male	94.2	95.5	85.9	154
Female	95.4	96.7	87.5	209
Owner occupier	95.3	95.6	86.0	294
Private tenant	92.3	100.0	92.6	26*
Social housing tenant	93.8	96.9	90.3	31*
Have a disability	96.6	96.6	89.3	28*
White	95.3	96.7	87.4	334
Non-white	89.3	92.9	82.1	28*
In employment	95.4	96.6	85.9	234
Retired	94.2	94.1	90.4	84
Student	100.0	100.0	86.7	15
Non-working	92.6	96.3	82.1	27
Percent	A venue for community exhibitions created by local people (% important)	A venue for family-friendly activities (% important)	Other (% important)	Min. Base:
17-34 years	64.2	75.5	66.7	22*
35-44 years	75.0	86.8	58.3	18*
45-54 years	72.7	70.4	58.3	19*
55+	68.8	72.8	69.2	21*
Male	64.5	62.9	72.7	48*
Female	76.3	84.8	64.1	58
Owner occupier	69.4	73.7	66.7	84
Private tenant	74.1	81.5	33.3	10*
Social housing tenant	84.4	80.7	71.4	8*
Have a disability	79.3	72.4	80.0	6*
White	70.5	75.5	66.7	95
Non-white	75.0	70.4	70.0	11*
In employment	70.1	75.0	63.6	79
Retired	73.5	73.5	100.0	12*
Student	73.3	80.0	33.3	7*
Non-working	67.9	82.1	71.4	8*

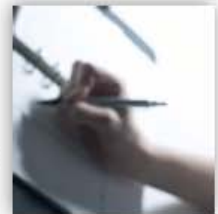
Respondents aged 35-44 years thought the most that it was important for the role of the Museum of Oxford to be a venue for family-friendly activities, possibly as respondents this age may be most likely to have children.

There were also some differences in opinion between males and females, with more female respondents stating they think the role of the museum could be a venue for community exhibitions (76%) compared to males (65%) and that it should be a venue for family friendly activities (85% of females compared to 63% of males).

# Using evidence to shape better services



Research



Public Consultation



Evaluation



Surveys



Consultancy Evaluation



Skillbuilding



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## Measurement ♦ Evaluation ♦ Learning



## Action Plans

Key

CLOSED ACTION/Risk

### ACTIONS MUST BE 'SMART'

Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound

Risk ID	Risk Title	Action Owner	Accept, Contingency, Transfer, Reduce or Avoid	Details of Action	Key Milestones	Milestone Delivery Date	%Action Complete	Date Reviewed
CEB-001-ED	Legal challenge	John Copley	R	Ensure statutory requirements for proving the case for additional licensing are met	CEB Approval	22-Jul-10		
CEB-002-ED	Insufficient income is raised to fund the scheme	John Copley	R	Ensure data and financial modelling are robust e.g. 20% margin	CEB Approval	22-Jul-10		
				Ensure resources are available to chase up applications	CEB Approval	22-Jul-10		
				Ensure staffing resource is matched to workflow	Develop flexible staffing employment approach to reduce exposure to risk			
CEB-003-ED	Too many applications are received	John Copley	R	Ensure front end is as efficient as possible	Uniform system checked and web based applications available	3-Sep-10		
				Ensure resources are available to process applications and carry out inspections	Develop flexible staffing employment approach to ensure demand can be met			
CEB-004-ED	Public expectations are too high	John Copley	R	Manage expectation whenever possible and ensure message is consistent	Develop a communications plan	30-Jul-10		
CEB-005-ED	Large numbers of prosecution cases are required	John Copley	R	Consider alternatives to prosecution e.g. shorter licence periods	Refine the enforcement procedures	3-Sep-10		
CEB-006-ED	Large numbers of appeals are made to the Residential Property Tribunal Service	John Copley	R	Ensure licence conditions are reasonable and enforceable	Refine the enforcement procedures	3-Sep-10		
CEB-007-ED	Applications are not processed quickly enough	John Copley	R	Productivity has been calculated and benchmarked	Develop performance monitoring plan	30-Jul-10		
				Ensure sufficient inspection resources are available	Develop flexible staffing employment approach to ensure demand can be met			



### Action Plans

Risk ID	Risk Title	Action Owner	Accept, Contingency, Transfer, Reduce or Avoid	Details of Action	Key Milestones	Milestone Delivery Date	%Action Complete	Date Reviewed
	Insert new row above							

**Risk ID Categories**

CRR-000	Corporate Risk Register
SRR-000	Service Risk Register
CEB-000	CEB reports
PRR-000	Project/Programme Risk Register
PCRR-000	Planning Corporate Risk Register
PSRR-000	Planning Service Risk Register

**Service Area Codes**

PCC	Policy, Culture & Communication	CS	Customer Services
CD	City Development	FI	Finance
CHCD	Community Housing & Community Development	BT	Business Transformation
CA	Corporate Assets	PS	Procurement & Shared Services
OCH	Oxford City Homes	CP	Corporate Performance
CW	City Works	LG	Law and Governance
ED	Environmental Development	CRP	Corporate Secretariat
CL	City Leisure	PE	People & Equalities

**Corporate Objective Key**

- 1: More Housing Better Housing for all
- 2: Stronger & more inclusive communities
- 3: Improve the local environment, economy & quality of life
- 4: Reduce anti-social behaviour
- 5: Tackle climate change & promote environmental resource management
- 6: Transform OCC by improving value for money and Service performance



## Form to be used for the initial assessment

<b>Service Area:</b> Environmental Development	<b>Section:</b> Health Development	<b>Key person responsible for the assessment:</b> Ian Wright	<b>Date of Assessment:</b> 9/4/2010	
<b>Is this assessment in the Corporate Equality Impact assessment Timetable for 2008-11?</b>			Yes	No
<b>Name of the Service/Policy to be assessed:</b> CEB Report: Additional licensing of HMOs			<b>Is this a new or existing Service/ policy</b>	New
<b>1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy</b>		The aim is to introduce an additional licensing scheme for HMOs in Oxford. We are proposing to license every HMO in the City within three years and introduce an annual licensing system for an estimated 4000 HMOs. The purpose is to improve the condition and management of the HMO stock.		
<b>2. Are there any associated objectives of the policy, please explain</b>		Create a level playing field for landlords in the city by implementing a system that will drive out rogue landlords.		

<b>3. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and in what way</b>	<p>The occupiers of HMOs will benefit from improved conditions.  The general population of Oxford will benefit from reduced problems created by HMOs such as their appearance and anti social behaviour.  Landlords and letting agents will benefit from an improved reputation of the private rented sector</p>		
<b>4. What outcomes are wanted from this policy?</b> Every HMO in the city will be licensed and will have been inspected prior to the licence being issued. For the first time the Council will have good data on where HMOs are situated. The compliance rate with relevant statutory obligations will be increased. The perception of the general public will be that HMOs are better managed.			
<b>5. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?</b>	This is a large task and it will depend on adequate staff resources, staff competencies and the co-operation of landlords		
<b>6. Who are the key people in relation to the policy?</b>	All staff in Environmental Development service who will be dealing with HMO licensing. Landlords, agents and tenants	<b>7. Who implements the policy and who is responsible for the policy?</b>	Ian Wright – implements John Copley – responsible officer
<b>8. Could the policy have a differential impact on racial groups?</b>	<u>YES</u>		Possibly language issues. These can be resolved through the use of LanguageLine or community translators. The Asian community are heavily represented in the private rented sector
<b>What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?</b>	Asian community leaders have stated that the proposed scheme will affect their community. Two petitions have been received from the Asian community opposing the scheme.		

9. Could the policy have a differential impact on people due to their gender?		<u>NO</u>	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
10. Could the policy have a differential impact on people due to their disability?		<u>NO</u>	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
11. Could the policy have a differential impact on people due to their sexual orientation?		<u>NO</u>	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			
12. Could the policy have a differential impact on people due to their age?		<u>NO</u>	
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?			

13. Could the policy have a differential impact on people due to their religious belief?		<u>NO</u>					
What existing evidence (either presumed or otherwise) do you have for this?							
14. Could the negative impact identified in 8-13 create the potential for the policy to discriminate against certain groups?		<u>NO</u>	<p><b>Please explain</b>  In regulating hazards in privately rented properties, owners and agents who are regulated against may feel that they have been adversely impacted upon. However there are no other ways in which the service could be provided that would achieve these aims without adverse impact. Ultimately, when working within the legislative framework, people have a right to legal redress should they feel that a decision was unfairly/unlawfully taken; this can be via an appeal process or the Council's Complaints system.</p>				
15. Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason		<u>No</u>	<p><b>Please explain for each equality heading (question 8-13) on a separate piece of paper</b></p>				
16. Should the policy proceed to a partial impact assessment		<u>NO</u>	If Yes, is there enough evidence to proceed to a full EIA	Y	N		
			Date on which Partial or Full impact assessment to be completed by				

17. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	<u>YES</u>		18. Date the Service Plan will be updated	For 2010/11	19. Date copy sent to Equalities Officer in Policy, Performance and Communication	1/7/10
20. Date reported to Equalities Board:	N/A		Date to Scrutiny and EB	22/7/10	21. Date published	

Signed (completing officer) \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Lead Officer) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please list the team members and service areas that were involved in this process:**

Ian Wright - Health Development Service Manager

In regulating hazards in privately rented properties, owners and agents who are regulated against may feel that they have been adversely impacted upon. However there are no other ways in which the service could be provided that would achieve these aims without adverse impact. Ultimately, when working within the legislative framework, people have a right to legal redress should they feel that a decision was unfairly/unlawfully taken; this can be via an appeal process or the Council's Complaints system.