

# STUDENT RESIDENCES

**DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR  
OUR OXFORD CAMPUSES**





***Oxford Brookes University has a vital part to play in the local, regional and national economy. Indeed, it has been remarked upon to me a number of times that if Oxford did not have this University, it would need to invent it.***

The economic argument is clear: we are a vital provider of key skills for the local area, from nurses and teachers to architects and motorsport engineers. Furthermore, our students support local business and we are one of Oxfordshire's largest employers. More than this, though, we contribute culturally and socially both as an institution and also through the actions and efforts of our student population, who are an integral part of the communities in which they live.

We are proud of our place in both Oxford and Oxfordshire and work hard through membership of groups such as the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, to secure successful futures for all of us. As with every city, Oxford has its challenges and key amongst those is the provision of sufficient housing. As a university we know we have a role to play in ensuring we provide adequate levels of housing for our students in the city and we remain committed to Oxford City Council's target of Oxford Brookes University students living outside university-provided accommodation. That said, there are details associated with this target which warrant further consideration – not least questions regarding competition and skills provision, which are described in more depth further on in this strategy.

A series of significant changes in higher education policy over the last few years means that the sector has become increasingly competitive. Oxford Brookes University is in a strong position in this marketplace but, in order to continue to thrive, we cannot rest on our

laurels. It is important that we continue to improve, meeting and exceeding student expectations in every area of provision.

As part of this, in 2014 we announced a ten year estate investment plan. This will now see us invest on average £22million per annum in improvements. It will also see us move all activity off the Wheatley Campus by 2021/22, focusing provision on our Headington, Harcourt Hill and Swindon campuses. This decision, coupled with the age of some of our existing student accommodation stock, is another reason why it is timely to produce a residential strategy.

I hope this document provides a clear outline of the objectives of our residential strategy as well as an overview of our current accommodation portfolio; our student number projections; our students' needs; and our plans for future residential provision.

As specific information on projects becomes available we will ensure that our local communities and stakeholders are kept up-to-date with developments.

**Alistair Fitt**  
Vice-Chancellor

## RESIDENTIAL STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

1. Meet Oxford City Council's planning policy requirement in relation to Oxford Brookes students without a place in University managed accommodation living in the defined Oxford city boundary.
2. Increase the student accommodation provision to respond to the changing demand from our students both in number and mix.
3. Match student accommodation locations to the future configuration of Oxford Brookes University's campuses.
4. Offset the loss of student beds in buildings coming to end of life or being temporarily closed for refurbishment.
5. Ensure we are providing our students with a range of accommodation choices and rent levels that offers good value for money.
6. Review with Oxford City Council and seek to agree refinements to the planning policy requirement of a maximum of 3,000 Oxford Brookes University students without a place in University managed accommodation to better meet the needs of the city, University and our students.

## SOME CONTEXT

### Student needs and expectations

Residential accommodation is an important part of a student's time at university and is one of the factors prospective students consider carefully when choosing where to study. It is clear that, across the board, expectations of the residential offer are rising.

Students also continue to have a variety of needs. Recent changes in trends include more second and third year students now preferring to live in halls of residence, where there is availability. We currently need to carefully balance this against the needs of first year students. In addition, there are more requests for studio flats for some international and mature students as well as for suitable accommodation for families.

All students expect high quality accommodation and the majority have a preference for en suite facilities. There is a market for high-end provision, which is often met through collaboration with the private sector. However, it is important that the University residential portfolio also offers cost effective options to ensure that students from lower income backgrounds are not priced out of higher education, especially given the cost of renting privately in Oxford.

It is also important to note that students frequently report difficulties with the private rental sector and this is something we are working with Oxford City Council to address.

### The importance of student accommodation to Oxford

It is well-documented that Oxford is a city with high real estate costs. This has a number of important implications for the city and region – not least the issue of affordability of housing for key workers and the impact this has on commuting into the city. Oxford Brookes University has its part to play in this and we are committed to continuing to invest in halls of residence for our students, thereby ensuring residential properties and houses of multiple occupancy are also available for the non-student rental market.

### Building student accommodation in Oxford

Real estate costs in Oxford also have implications both for students and for development projects.

High land prices and other associated development costs in the city make it necessary to work with private providers to develop affordable student accommodation options at an acceptable density and quality.

Opportunities for large, private developments in the city are limited and Oxford has little experience of larger developments which are directly let to students. Typically, these direct let arrangements allow for no control over pricing structures to ensure value for money and involve less direct management of the properties. More involved management has a number of benefits. These include security and welfare support mechanisms for students as well as mitigation of impacts associated with these sorts of developments for local communities, which is something which we know local residents value.



### The 3,000 target

We remain committed to seeking to achieve Oxford City Council's target of no more than 3,000 Oxford Brookes University students living in the defined Oxford city boundary without a place in University managed accommodation.

On 1 December 2015 there were 12,120 full-time students in need of accommodation, with 5,207 places in accommodation provided by Oxford Brookes University and 3,166 students living at home or outside Oxford. This resulted in 3,747 students without a place in university provided accommodation living in the city, exceeding the City Council's target. This is something we are working hard to address.

However, it is also important to note that Oxford is the only city in the UK which puts restrictions on its universities and their students living in the local community. In addition, these restrictions only apply to Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford, meaning other education providers operating or wishing to operate within the city have a competitive advantage in this regard. Taken together, these factors present a challenge for Oxford Brookes in competing with other institutions to recruit students – both in a national and a local sense. This also has an impact on skills provision in Oxfordshire.

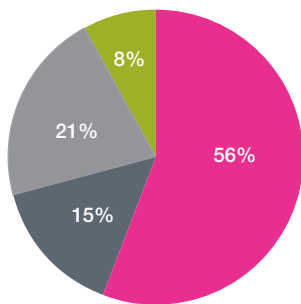
For example, in order to meet the growing needs of local NHS Trusts, Oxford Brookes would like to increase the number of students studying for degrees in nursing and professions allied to medicine. Growth on all courses is currently restricted due to the City Council's policies. One outcome of this is that nurses who could be training and going on to permanent roles in Oxfordshire hospitals are going elsewhere for their studies and subsequent employment. Another possible outcome is that other higher education providers, not based in Oxford, gain competitive advantage by offering additional nursing places in the city without restriction.

Both our nursing and teaching students in particular play an important role in the local economy as part of its workforce during their courses. The University therefore feels there is a case to be made for these students sitting outside the Oxford City Council target.

***Oxford Brookes contributes over £1million a day to the UK economy. The University's regional contributions include, but are in no way limited to, skills provision, employment and student spend in the local economy.***

## OUR CURRENT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION PORTFOLIO

Our current portfolio of halls accommodation is a combination of owned, leased and nominations agreements, with a mix of en suite and non en suite cluster flats (typically for 6 people) and some studios. The majority of accommodation is self catering with a small catered provision at Wheatley. Accommodation contracts usually run for the full academic year, with lengths varying from 38 to 50 weeks.



■ Owned      ■ 3rd Party  
■ Partnership      ■ Houses

Students living in halls are not permitted to bring motor vehicles to Oxford. To help with their travel around Oxford we provide BROOKESbus passes (offering free travel on BROOKESbuses) to the majority of students as well as bike parking facilities at each of our halls of residence.



*Our newest accommodation incorporates a number of sustainable features such as green sedum roofs which help insulate the building and manage water run-off, a combined heat and power unit and temperature controls that manage the heating when students aren't using specific areas.*

### University-owned accommodation

University-owned accommodation represents 56 per cent of the accommodation stock the University has available to students. The ages of our halls range from just under five years old through to just over 30 (see opposite for a further breakdown). Some of the older halls require refurbishment in the near future.

Cheney Halls is a partnership agreement whereby a third party developed, financed and manages the property exclusively for the University, which lets it to students.

The Lady Spencer Churchill Hall and Harcourt Residences are coming to the end of their lives, so some new accommodation will need to be developed to compensate for this reduction in student beds.

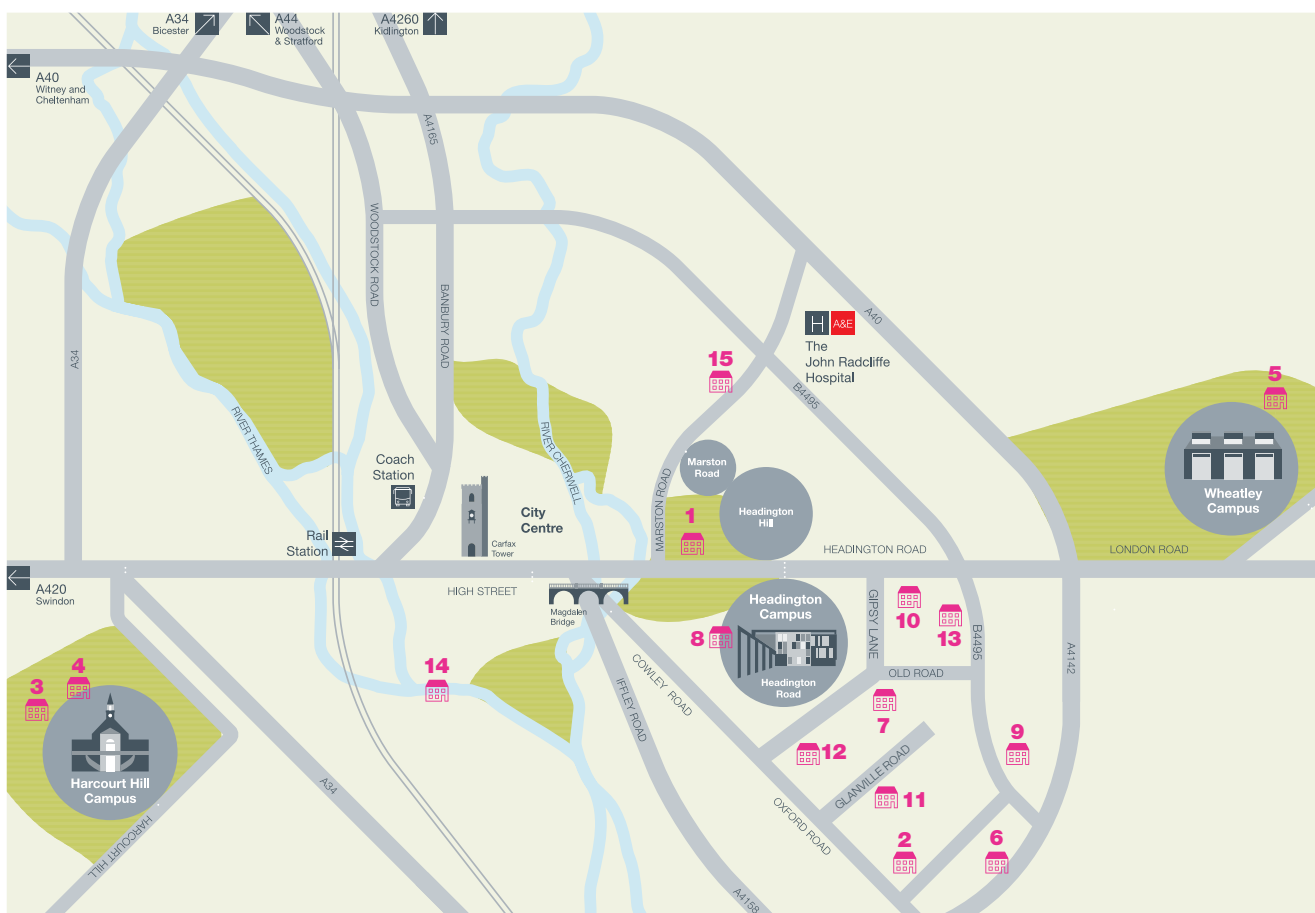
### Nominations agreement


A large proportion of the private provider accommodation in Oxford is under ten years old. Most of our private provider accommodation is contracted through nominations agreements for which the University underwrites most of the risk for a specified period. Others are leased. These partnerships account for 36 per cent of our portfolio and help us towards achieving the City Council target.

### Student housing

The Accommodation Bureau at Oxford Brookes University has run a shared housing scheme since 1972. Student housing represents eight per cent of our student bed stock. The University vets landlords and tenants and carries out regular inspections, arranges for repairs and organises any charges that are necessary. The Bureau is part of Oxford City Council's Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Student houses ensure that our students, the tenants, receive a product the University is confident in and provides the house owners with peace of mind that their properties will be leased consistently and be well looked after. A large proportion of our leased student houses are owned by Oxfordshire residents.



HALL 	OWNED (O) PRIVATE PROVIDER (PP) PARTNERSHIP (P)	CAPACITY	AGE
1. Clive Booth Halls	O	382	Under 10 years
	O	178	Under 10 years
	O	607	Under 20 years
	O	272	Under 30 years
	O	182	Over 30 years
2. Crescent Halls	O	306	Under 30 years
3. Westminster Halls	O	318	Under 10 years
4. Harcourt Residences	O	110	Over 30 years
5. Lady Spencer Churchill	O	159	Over 30 years
6. Paul Kent	O	224	Under 20 years
7. Warneford	O	249	Under 20 years
8. Cheney	P	770	Partner
9. Slade Park	PP	374	Nomination
10. Dorset House	PP	311	Nomination
11. The Mews	PP	112	Nomination
12. Sinnet Court	PP	200	Nomination
13. Windmill	PP	49	Nomination
14. Thames Street	PP	82	Nomination
15. Friars Court	PP	30	Nomination

## MEETING CHANGING NEEDS

### The estate investment plan

We intend to move all activity from Wheatley over the next five years, including closing the ageing residential accommodation on the campus. The University has aspirations to enhance its use of the Harcourt Hill Campus, which will involve rebalancing student numbers between that campus and Headington. This will ensure that the campus is a vibrant place for students to learn and will enable investment in its sport and leisure facilities so that they continue to be an asset for the local community.

### Student number growth

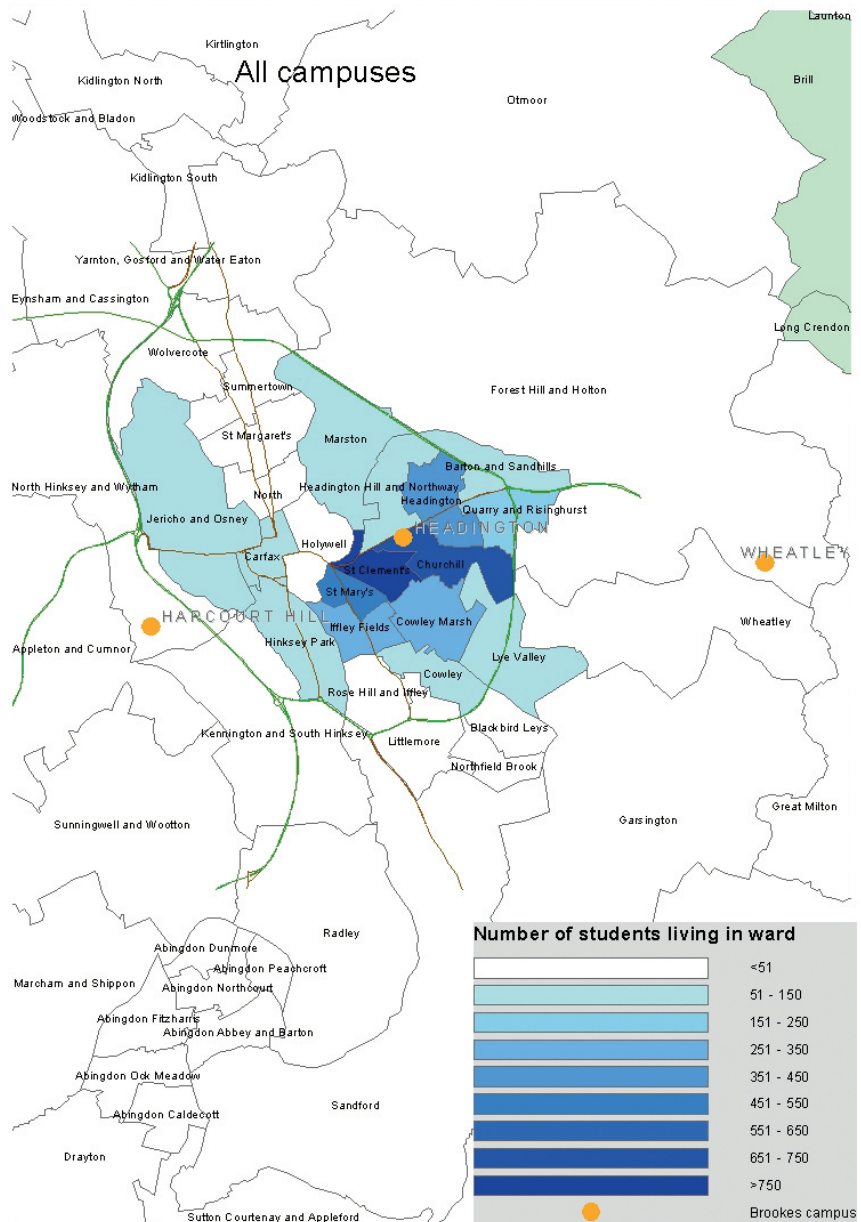
The University has modest ambitions for growth and aims to increase the undergraduate intake by 1-2 per cent annually. In 2015 there were 12,120 full time on campus students, at 2 per cent growth we would have around 14,889 students by 2025. To accommodate this growth and to continue to work towards Oxford City Council's target of no more than 3,000 students living in the community, the University needs to increase its bed stock.

### Changes in student demand for university accommodation

Analysis of data has identified that since 2010 the number of students who have decided to live in Oxford during their studies has risen from 64 per cent to 70 per cent. This shift in demand is most likely due to a decline in postgraduate students who often live at home, an increase in domestic undergraduate students who are less likely to live at home and a decline in students recruited from Oxfordshire.

Nevertheless, not all students will require accommodation. In 2015 just under 30 per cent of on-campus students already lived locally or within commuter distance from our campus when they applied.

This map shows the spread across Oxford of those students studying at Oxford Brookes and not living in University managed accommodation, as at 1 December 2014.





## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

### Rebalancing provision

We will look to rebalance our provision of student accommodation across the city to ensure any increases in student numbers at the Harcourt Hill Campus are supported by appropriate residential provision.

### Deficit in room numbers – a forecast for 2025

As at 1 December 2015, based on growing undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers, changing demand for university accommodation and the need to meet Oxford City Council's 3,000 target, Oxford Brookes needed to increase its bed stock by 2,605 by the year 2025 (calculated based on 2 per cent growth, increased demand and existing parameters around the City Council's target).

This must be met alongside the need to refurbish older halls of residence and the reprovision of some of our older accommodation.

### Addressing the deficit

We have already increased our bedstock since December 2015. In 2016 we have increased our University-managed portfolio by 147 and in 2017 we have a further 167 beds coming on line through a nominations agreement with the owners of Beech House in Headington.

To meet the current deficit in rooms and to respond to planned increases, we intend to bring more accommodation into our portfolio. This will enable us to manage the number of students who live in the local community progressively over the next ten years.

## OUR PLANS

### Early priorities

An early priority will be to roll out an extensive refurbishment programme for our older halls of residence to ensure we are providing high quality student accommodation which meets student expectations and continues to attract students to live in our halls. In some cases this may involve demolition and rebuild in order to meet the needs of today's students.

In addition, we need to address the current and predicted deficit of student residential accommodation in line with Oxford City Council's target and aim to increase bed places by 1,500 over the next five years.

### Core principles of development

We understand that delivering additional student residential accommodation in Oxford will require careful thought and close work with councils and local communities. Based on feedback received in previous consultations and conversations as part of the Headington Neighbourhood Plan, we have produced four core principles of development which will seek to ensure that any future residential construction or refurbishments are guided by the varying needs of stakeholders.

- We will aim to house more students in halls-style residences.
- We will prioritise maximising the potential density of existing, on-site residential accommodation.
- We will explore viable opportunities to build residential accommodation on our campuses.
- We will prioritise proposals we receive for student accommodation which:
  - > are close to main roads with good bus connections to our campuses
  - > enable Oxford Brookes to manage or have a degree of control over the management of the accommodation
  - > enable the university to maintain a mixed portfolio.

### Maximising the potential of the University's existing provision

It is recognised that the better use of the University's current sites could make a significant contribution to meeting the need of students.

There is the potential to intensify the use of land for student accommodation at Clive Booth Halls. This project would deal with both the need to replace the oldest accommodation and allow for expansion of the portfolio. The project would increase the number of rooms and also enhance the social space for all students living on the site.

There is potential to add a small number of extra rooms at Crescent Halls.

Early community feedback on proposals to increase usage of the Harcourt Hill Campus has indicated a strong desire for the University to consider building additional student accommodation on-campus. Once the future configuration of the campus becomes clearer, this option will be investigated by the University and discussed with stakeholders.

### Off-campus student accommodation

There are opportunities across the city to work with developers to provide additional student accommodation and we are actively pursuing a number of options in line with our core principles of development.

We currently have a nominations agreement for the Beech House development on Latimer Road, which is due to be completed in summer 2017 and provide an additional 167 rooms. This property is close to our Headington Campus, sits on a main road that is well connected by buses and has appropriate management arrangements planned.

In addition, the University is pursuing potential opportunities that are within two miles of the Headington Campus and options that will support our Harcourt Hill students' accommodation needs. We are confident that these would meet our accommodation needs over the next five years.

However, these opportunities are in the early stages of discussion. Oxford Brookes will communicate further details if they progress to more formal stages of negotiation.

We will continue to look at other opportunities for Oxford Brookes University to increase its student bed stock in line with our core principles and work with partner accommodation providers to ensure local communities are consulted and included in the development process.

The University expects these consultations to take place in line with the Oxford Brookes protocol which seeks to ensure appropriate consultation with, and information provision to, the local community.

### Student-informed decision making

We will carry out further research with students to understand what they expect from accommodation in terms of price and facilities. Student consultation is scheduled for winter 2016. This will feed into our continued evaluation of our accommodation portfolio to ensure our product mix best meets the varying needs of our students.

It will also enable us to develop a brief for student requirements to ensure rooms and social area facilities meet needs and expectations.



## A STUDENT RESIDENCES STRATEGY FOR OUR OXFORD CAMPUSES

- Our aim is that the University's accommodation will be first choice for any of our students living in Oxford. This will be achieved through a high quality portfolio providing a variety of accommodation at a range of rent levels, meeting the needs of our students and providing them with good value for money.
- We will raise the quality of our existing halls of residences by implementing a rolling programme of refurbishment and upgrades.
- A higher proportion of students is now seeking accommodation in Oxford than in previous years, which has had an impact on our plans to achieve the 3,000 target and we need around an additional 750 rooms to meet the current deficit.
- Over the next ten years we will also need to add a further 1,855 rooms to our accommodation to support changes in student numbers.
- We will bring forward a series of projects to maximise the accommodation options on our current campuses and the sites of halls of residence.
- We will identify and bring forward with partners, schemes to address any remaining gaps within our accommodation offer. These are likely to be spread over the ten year period of this strategy.