

To: Cabinet
Date: 15 June 2022
Report of: Head of Regeneration & Economy
Title of Report: City Centre Action Plan (Draft) – Consultation Report and Recommendations

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To note the recommended revisions to the Consultation Report City Centre Action Plan and adopt the Plan.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Imogen Thomas, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice
Corporate Priority:	Enabling an Inclusive Economy
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020 - 24

Recommendations:	That Cabinet resolves to:
1.	Note the recommended changes to the consultation version of the City Centre Action Plan as set out within Appendix 3; and
2.	Adopt and publish the revised Oxford City Centre Action Plan.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Centre Action Plan – Final version for adoption
Appendix 2	Consultation Report – Oxford City Centre Action Plan
Appendix 3	Proposed Amendments to the City Centre Action Plan
Appendix 4	Risk Assessment
Appendix 5	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 6	Project Delivery

Introduction and background

1. Oxford City Council led the commissioning and preparation of the City Centre Action Plan (CCAP), published as a Consultation Draft on 22nd November 2021 (see Appendix 1). The Council has engaged widely with stakeholders and the community. The CCAP is intended to be a stakeholder owned plan, which will guide a partnership approach to the future of City Centre Management. It is acknowledged that the CCAP cannot be delivered in isolation and seeks collaboration across stakeholders and the community.
2. The report was first commissioned in late 2019. It was paused in spring 2020 to prioritise the Council's response to the Pandemic and to adjust the CCAP following the significant societal and economic impacts brought about. To assist with preparing the document, the opinions of the City Centre Task Force were sought. The City Centre Task Force is an advisory group consisting of representatives from businesses, and anchor institutions.
3. The CCAP was developed with partners and stakeholders, with the objective of identifying a set of actions that will strengthen the resilience of our City Centre over the next ten years. The CCAP focuses on four work-streams, each intended to focus on different thematic areas of work, these are:
 - a. Connectivity & Access
 - b. Getting the Mix Right
 - c. Public Realm & Animation
 - d. Getting the Basics Right.
4. The CCAP has been the subject of a public consultation running from 22 November 2021 to 19th January 2022.

Summary of the consultation process on the Oxford City Centre Action Plan

5. The consultation process was launched on the 22 November 2021, and closed on the 19 January 2022. The consultation consisted of a blend of methods, including one to one meetings, workshops, consultation events (see Table 1, below) and a questionnaire. By the end of the consultation period 398 responses were received; 389 via the online portal and nine by email.

Table 1: **CCAP consultation events**

Meeting	Date	Registered attendees
Joint Economic Strategy and City Centre Action Plan, Business Workshop	12.01.22	44
Talk of the Town	11.01.22	31
Oxford City Council Inclusive Transport & Movement Group	15.12.21	14
One to One meetings with stakeholders	Various	9 meetings

6. There was broad support for the identified Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing the City. The projects were accepted and there were some relatively minor changes raised for inclusion or amendment (See section 9 below).
7. A number of themes emerged from the consultation and these are shown on the Consultation Report (Appendix 2).
8. The consultation response was presented to and reviewed through: an internal officer group; a workshop for elected Members of Oxford City Council; City Centre taskforce group meeting; and a business/organisation forum i.e. Talk of the Town.

Recommended changes to the Oxford's City Centre Action Plan

9. Following analysis to the responses to the consultation, a number of amendments to the Consultation Draft Action Plan were considered (see Appendix 3). The analysis of the response to the Consultation did not find any fundamental issues with the CCAP and a final Plan is presented here for adoption (Appendix 1). The key amendments from the consultation have been drawn out and are set out below:
 - 9.1 Due to the uncertainties that exist, the CCAP should be flexible, adaptive and kept under review as a 'living document'. It is further recommended that the way in which the CCAP is 'kept under review' should be more clearly set out in the document.
 - 9.2 Governance and resourcing - a number of respondents have questioned how the ambition of the CCAP will be delivered. Partnership delivery, strong leadership and identification of all key stakeholders, including residents, is vital. Given the range of opinions expressed, the CCAP should be more explicit that there may be conflicting agendas and some disagreement over what actions are included, as well as what actions take priority.
 - 9.3 A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be considered for Oxford City Centre. Furthermore, that the KPIs should reflect the commercial viability, as well as the vitality of the City Centre, as a relevant social and civic hub available to all of the community. The KPI's need to be a light touch, relevant and easily measurable so as to add to/shape rather than detract from delivery resources.
 - 9.4 Improving the quality of the public realm and built environment in the City Centre was noted as a high priority project area.
 - 9.5 The Castle Quarter should be noted as a place of importance.
 - 9.6 Some listed projects were actually themes and those projects under the themes should have greater clarity.
 - 9.7 A more progressive approach to diversifying the Art and Culture offer should be explored, especially around live music.
 - 9.8 The spatial extent of the Plan boundary should be clearer to define what is being covered by the CCAP and should be in line with the Local Plan.
 - 9.9 Further greening of the City was noted as important and greater priority given to enhancing waterways.

These have been duly reflected in the amended CCAP (Appendix 1) and approval is sought to accept these changes and adopt the CCAP.

Financial implications

10. There are no direct financial implications from this decision. However, as projects and initiatives are brought forward through the usual processes, the financial implications, and indeed resource implications, of these will need to be considered on a case by case basis. Please see Appendix 6 for project delivery.

Legal issues

11. There are no legal implications arising from this decision.

Level of risk

12. The completed risk register is attached at Appendix 4. A number of key risks are identified and mitigations are put in place.

Equalities impact

13. The EqIA is attached at Appendix 5. Positive impacts on equalities, diversity and inclusion will be sought to try and ensure we have a world class city centre for everyone. Equalities Impacts will be monitored annually.

Environmental and Carbon Considerations

14. The Environmental Sustainability Service has been closely involved in development of the CCAP, which is closely aligned with Oxford's Economic Strategy's commitment to transitioning to Net Zero as one of its three key pillars of the strategy. The CCAP is aligned with the city's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency. In 2019, Oxford was the first UK city to hold a Citizens Assembly on Climate Change. This representative sample of Oxford's residents concluded that Oxford should decarbonise faster than national targets. The City Council has a target to achieve Net Zero across its own operations by 2030. Projects developed through the Plan will all be assessed for their impact on Carbon reduction targets. There are many projects, proposed and in progress, which make inroads into the net zero and wider sustainability agenda around including; the Zero Emission Zone, the West End development, Oxford Station, Park and ride enhancements and the Public Realm and Movement Strategy.

Conclusion

15. A lengthy process of development has been undertaken for the CCAP, taking account of available evidence and the impacts of the Pandemic. This has been followed by a two month period of consultation for the CCAP.

Given the level and positivity of responses, stakeholder interest and the need to drive the plan forward, it is recommended that the changes are approved, that the CCAP is adopted, published and that resources are now geared towards delivering the aims and objectives alongside stakeholders.

Report author	Matt Peachey
Job title	Economic Development Manager
Service area or department	Regeneration & Economy
Telephone	01865 252 879
e-mail	mpeachey@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

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