

Appendix A
Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of
the Climate and Environment Panel of the Scrutiny Committee

The document sets out the draft response of the Cabinet Member to recommendations made by the Climate and Environment Panel on 27 June 2023 concerning the DRAFT Carbon Reduction and Sustainable Retrofit Guidance for Historic Buildings Technical Advice Note (TAN). The Cabinet is asked to amend and agree a formal response as appropriate.

Recommendation	Agree?	Comment
1) That the Council reviews the language used in the TAN to ensure it is accessible to residents and incorporates a glossary to explain technical terms.	Yes	<p>The policy team will review the wording in the TAN and implement a simple glossary in line with the recommendations. The topic of retrofitting heritage assets in itself can be very technical, as is the legislation and guidance within national policy, not only because of the fast evolving nature of retro-fit technologies and practices but also because of the additional sensitivities that come with redevelopment associated with our most special heritage assets. As such, it will invariably require some level of technical expertise to fully address certain elements when it comes to this type of development.</p> <p>Whilst we have made every effort to explain the terminology and concepts in plain English within the text, we would agree that a glossary could be a helpful addition and are happy to add this in. The objective of the guidance in the TAN is to convey simple advice to assist applicants in approaching the design of retrofit projects for historic buildings so that their application has the best chances of</p>

7

		success and we want to ensure that this is as effective as possible.
2) That the Council includes more examples of successful domestic scale retrofit projects, including for non-listed buildings in conservation areas, as well as in listed buildings.	Yes	<p>The original intention of this updated TAN was to be published as an interim measure that could help address a gap in guidance on our website and to better align this with the city's net zero objectives. The TAN currently references a variety of best practice guidance in the appendix to provide further information and flags that this would then be supported by additional guidance including specific case studies from the city that could help illustrate best practice in an Oxford context.</p> <p>In order to not unnecessarily delay the publishing of the helpful information within the TAN we propose to progress with the examples in the draft, and update the document in the future with useful and illustrative case studies, noting that the range of different sensitivities within the city will mean that they will only be able to indicate possible solutions rather than provide a blue print for other applicants.</p>
3) That the Council challenges its existing assumptions around customer experience in relation to retrofit applications and seeks to engage with organisations and individuals who have gone or are currently going through the retrofit process to understand their experiences and feed those into the TAN and the broader planning process to improve usability and overall customer experience.	Yes	<p>The policy team and planning services more widely will continue to do its part in critically assessing its own performance and interactions with our broad customer base. Where there is scope to improve our services and the support we can provide, we will endeavour to incorporate this into our work. This may include future updates to the TAN as well as our wider resources and processes where appropriate.</p>

4) That the Council reviews its existing Article 4 Directions to see whether they create unnecessary obstacles to applicants wanting to install carbon retrofit measures.	No	Whilst it is accepted that the Article 4 Directions were set up at a time predating the current net zero objectives in the city, a review of these is an extensive piece of work which will need to be considered in the longer term alongside other commitments, such as the extensive work related to the production of the 2040 Local Plan. Such commitment is beyond the scope of this TAN.
5) That the Council, looking at the approach taken by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, considers using Local Development Orders to make clear that certain low carbon approaches will be approved by the Council.	No	We are aware of the approach undertaken by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and will consider the pros and cons of this and other approaches in liaison with key stakeholders such as heritage colleagues and Historic England in due course. The current priority is the new Local Plan and we have set out our intention to try to go further than current policy as part of our preferred options consultation, though the final approach is still under consideration and will need to align with national policy to be found sound by the inspector and pass examination.
6) That the Council makes it clear in the TAN and broader messaging that it supports retrofit applications in heritage and conservation areas and will actively support applicants to go through that process.	Yes	<p>The genesis of this TAN was to more clearly support applicants in making the right choices when it comes to retrofitting their properties. The review agreed to in Recommendation 1 will help to amplify this. It is important to note that Technical Advice Notes have no statutory powers unlike the Local Plan. The role of these documents is only to provide additional guidance that supports interpretation of existing policies in the Local Plan - they are unable to go as far as establishing new policy for the city which is not in the Local Plan 2036.</p> <p>Ensuring we get the right balance between what can be set out in the TAN at present, what can help us move towards net zero objectives and support applicants, as well as what is required of us more broadly under national policy</p>

		<p>(including our statutory duty for conserving our important heritage assets as much as securing reductions in carbon dioxide emissions) is a challenging issue we have sought to address.</p> <p>The planning service provides a channel for actively supporting applicants as part of its pre-application service and through this service they are able to benefit from the advice of planning officers but also colleagues in the heritage team – we flag this clearly in the TAN in a couple of places as well as on our website.</p>
<p>7) That the Council takes a much clearer approach to setting out for householders and applicants what its response will be to proposals for specific retrofit measures, being clear about how that might vary from conservation area to conservation area.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The policy team will explore how we can be clearer in the guidance set out in the TAN, however there are limits to how simplified any high-level guidance such as the TAN can provide, especially in a city that has such a rich and varied historical context.</p>