

To: Council
Date: 6 October 2025
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy
Title of Report: Motions and amendments received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18

Councillors are asked to debate and reach conclusions on the motions and amendment listed below in accordance with the Council's rules for debate.

The Constitution permits an hour for debate of these motions.

Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18 by the deadline of 1.00pm on 24 September 2025, as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy by publication of the briefing note are also included below.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in the glossary or in footnotes.

Motions will be taken in turn from the Liberal Democrat, Green, Independent Oxford Alliance, Oxford Community Independents, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent, Labour, groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) Planning and Infrastructure Bill (Proposed by Councillor Smowton, Seconded by Councillor Fouweather)
- b) Oxford stands for diversity, for fairer migration policy and against the far right (Proposed by Councillor Powell, Seconded by Councillor Jarvis)
- c) Bring Thames Water into public ownership (Proposed by Councillor Mundy, Seconded by Councillor Djafari-Marbini)
- d) Keep Oxford Open (Proposed by Councillor Goddard, Seconded by Councillor Smowton)
- e) Better use of Oxpens Bridge Funding (Proposed by Councillor Jupp, Seconded by Councillor Miles)

a) Planning and Infrastructure Bill (Proposed by Councillor Snowton, Seconded by Councillor Fouweather)

Liberal Democrat Group Motion

Council notes that the Planning and Infrastructure Bill¹ will, if passed, significantly change the way this council makes planning decisions. Council believes these changes will curtail local democratic oversight and reduce environmental protections.

Clause 51 gives the Secretary of State powers to decide which applications are heard at committee, and to dictate the size and composition of planning committees. This would remove opportunities for councillors to judge whether the harm and benefits of applications are appropriately balanced.

Part 3 would permit environmental obligations in relation to development to be discharged, disapplied or otherwise modified if a developer pays the nature restoration levy (called “cash to trash”² by the RSPB). This fund would be used according to a plan prepared by Natural England, not the local authority.

This council believes these measures go entirely against the spirit of effective local decision-making and evidence-based environmental protection.

Council agrees with the Office for Environmental Protection:

In our considered view, the bill would have the effect of reducing the level of environmental protection provided for by existing environmental law. As drafted, the provisions are a regression.³

Council also agrees with the 32 environmental organisations⁴ and 81 environmentalists and academics who publicly criticised the bill, calling for a “Pause to bad law”.⁵

Council also agrees with Labour MP Chris Hinchcliff, who pointed out that “profit maximisation” is the biggest barrier to development, not “clear processes that uphold democracy and nature”.⁶

Council calls for the preservation of planning committees’ current powers, and for a strong presumption towards environmental mitigation on-site or close by in preference to levy payment.

Council asks the Leader to write to Oxford’s MPs communicating these concerns with the bill.

¹ <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/61396/documents/6667>

² As quoted by Carla Denyer MP, HoC, 9 June 2025, see HC Hansard, col 689: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-09/debates/3B8E0A89-3756-49FB-8C07-CECF3B58A26A/PlanningandInfrastructureBill>

³ 1 May 2025: <https://www.theoep.org.uk/report/oep-gives-advice-government-planning-and-infrastructure-bill>

⁴ Wildlife and Countryside Link, ‘Letter to Steve Reed MP, secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs, ref Planning and Infrastructure Bill’, 8 April 2025: <https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/2025/20250408WCLJointPlanningLetter.pdf>

⁵ Justin Adams et al, ‘Joint statement: Pause to bad law- a call for meaningful consultation on the Planning and Infrastructure Bill’, 22 May 2025: see House of Lords briefing, 19 June 2025, page 53: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/LLN-2025-0025/LLN-2025-0025.pdf>

⁶ Report stage, 10-11 June 2025, backbench amendment no. 69, see HC Hansard, 9 June 2025, col 678 and 729: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-06-09/debates/3B8E0A89-3756-49FB-8C07-CECF3B58A26A/PlanningandInfrastructureBill>

b) Oxford stands for diversity, for fairer migration policy and against the far right (Proposed by Councillor Powell, Seconded by Councillor Jarvis)

Green Group Motion

Council notes:

1. Throughout the summer and into September, protests have taken place outside hotels housing asylum seekers across the UK, many directly organised by far-right groups.⁷
2. Over 100,000 people marched in London at a demonstration addressed by a number of far right figures.⁸
3. These demonstrations have also taken place on numerous occasions in Oxford outside the Kassam Stadium Holiday Inn.⁹
4. Alongside this, this summer also saw a racist attack on Central Oxford Mosque.¹⁰
5. Oxford City Council has consistently made clear that it wants to see a fairer migration system, that refugees are welcome in our city, and that policies like immigration detention and removal are harmful.¹¹ This was most recently and clearly illustrated through our obtaining of City of Sanctuary status.¹²
6. The government has recently announced new policies designed to create a more restrictive migration and asylum system, most notably through the suspension of family reunion.¹³

Council believes:

1. Oxford is a city proud of its diversity and its history of solidarity with people from all across the world.
2. The protests and attacks seen this summer are deeply worrying, and are designed to intimidate and divide our communities.
3. Attempts by politicians, media outlets and commentators to whip up hate and to blame migrants and refugees for the problems in our society should be condemned.
4. Hostile attitudes towards migrants are in part driven by central government policies which seek to create a more hostile environment for migrants and refugees.
5. Neither hotel accommodation, nor detention centres are fair, humane or suitable accommodation for people seeking asylum, and a drawn-out, lengthy process for reviewing asylum applications is harmful for those enduring it.
6. People seeking asylum should not be prevented from working while their claims are being processed.
7. Enabling family reunion is a basic cornerstone of a humane and fair asylum system and suspending it risks putting people who would otherwise be allowed to enter the UK in significant danger.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/aug/23/members-of-far-right-party-organising-asylum-hotel-protests-across-uk-facebook-posts-show>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwydezxl0xlo>

⁹ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25482399.oxford-asylum-protest-man-taken-away-police/>

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c70xnzp0ej4o>

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yj5j072ero>

¹² <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1612/oxford-city-council-awarded-local-authority-of-sanctuary-accreditation>

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c626p66d6jxo>

8. Hostile rhetoric and policies directed at migrants and people seeking asylum make many Oxford residents less safe by fueling xenophobia and racism.

Council resolves:

1. To request the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Safer Oxford:
 1. Reiterate the council's commitment to stand with and support all of Oxford's diverse communities and to oppose attempts to divide and intimidate.
 2. Write to the Home Secretary reiterating this council's opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield Immigration Removal Centre and to the decision to suspend family reunion applications.
 3. To publicly support and campaign for people seeking asylum to be permitted to work and accommodated within communities

c) Bring Thames Water into public ownership (Proposed by Councillor Mundy, Seconded by Councillor Djafari-Marbini)

Oxford Community Independent Group Motion

Thames Water has become a by-word for incompetence in utilities management. Having managed to discharge raw sewage into the region's waterways for almost 300,000 hours in 2024¹⁴, the company faced record breaking fines from Ofwat this year. In an ironic twist, Thames Water pleaded poverty when negotiating the fine downwards- committing to paying less than 20% of the £122.7 million fine within the next four and a half years. A fine made larger and of course less affordable by the £170 million in dividends paid out over the last two years.¹⁵ The failure of water companies across the country is being rewarded with huge executive salaries: The average pay for water company CEOs in 2022 was £1.7 million.¹⁶

People of Oxford are fed up of polluted waterways that used to be fit for leisure activities, fed up of aging burst water pipes flooding our streets¹⁷, and dismayed at the daft plans for an enormous reservoir which tears up local landscape and is costly and un-necessary.¹⁸

Yes, we have been here before, our Council passed a motion pushing for the nationalisation of Thames Water back in January 2023. But the government still chooses not to take bold action to take back control of our water supply, deciding

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/mar/18/thames-water-data-reveals-raw-sewage-discharges-rivers-2024> Thames Water data reveals raw sewage discharges in rivers rose 50% in 2024. The Guardian 18/03/2025

¹⁵ <https://www.itv.com/news/meridian/2025-08-27/thames-water-negotiates-payment-plan-following-record-fine> Thames Water negotiates payment plan following record £122.7 million fine. ITV Meridian 27/08/2025

¹⁶ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/money/fat-cat-water-firm-bosses-26229950> EXCLUSIVE: 'Fat cat' water firm bosses earn £15m as amount of raw sewage dumped in rivers rockets. Daily Mirror 15/02/2022

¹⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c79qr333jv4o> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwyj7ldw14eo> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr5v223epnlo> and <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-2750371/Video-Oxford-City-Centre-suffers-water-pipe-burst-UK-hosepipe-ban.html> BBC and Daily Mail Summer 2025

¹⁸ <https://theconversation.com/the-uk-is-surprisingly-short-of-water-but-more-reservoirs-arent-the-answer-243440> The UK is surprisingly short of water – but more reservoirs aren't the answer. The Conversation 01/13/2025

instead that a new regulator will solve the problems. Our Council has the opportunity to push for a rethink, to urge the government to renationalise Thames Water.

This Council resolves to:

- Request that the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council writes to Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Emma Reynolds, with Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Water and Flooding Emma Hardy, stating that water privatisation has failed the people of Oxford and that our water supplier needs to be brought in to public hands.
- Request that the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council writes to Thames Water CEO Chris Weston, seeking an explanation for the deplorable state of our water infrastructure. Asking, why our city suffered so much disruption from burst water mains this summer, and what is being done to ensure that the same won't be repeated again.
- Request that the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council writes to Chris Weston seeking a resolution of when we will see an end to routine (outside of recognised extreme wet weather conditions) dumping of raw sewerage overflow in to Oxford's local waterways.
- Request that the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Council engages with local groups such as Windrush Against Sewage Pollution and Boycott Thames Water, to establish what more the Council can do to support their campaigns and to push for better standards from our water supplier.

d) Keep Oxford Open (Proposed by Councillor Goddard, Seconded by Councillor Smowton)

Liberal Democrat Group Motion

This Council—

- Reaffirms that asylum seekers, refugees and migrants more generally remain welcome in Oxford, and that the City stands by its Local Authority of Sanctuary status.
- Believes that demonstrations outside asylum seeker accommodation are likely to convey the opposite impression.
- Calls for the asylum backlog to be addressed through increased resources and processing efficiency, not through relocation that would cause needless disruption to individuals' living circumstances.
- Believes that negative assumptions concerning an individual, and particularly regarding risk of crime, must never be based on their asylum seeker or refugee status, national origin, religion, cultural background, age, gender or any other protected characteristic, but rather must always be based on hard evidence relating to specific individuals.
- Believes that tightening eligibility for refugee status would inevitably harm people who are fleeing war and conflict, as well as triggering a race to the bottom with other countries receiving refugees, and therefore this course should not be pursued.
- Backs granting a temporary work permit to asylum seekers who face a long wait outside their control, thereby enabling them to support themselves through earnings rather than requiring public support throughout their wait.

- Believes that Brexit has substantially harmed this country's ability to handle asylum cases by weakening cooperation between different European countries' immigration services.
- Calls on the Government to recommit to the United Kingdom as an open, diverse and welcoming place, and desist from hostile rhetoric such as suggesting housing asylum applicants in unsuitable accommodation such as warehouses¹⁹, or overzealously pursuing hotel closures and backlog reduction in a manner that tonally matches those overtly hostile to asylum seekers and refugees, thereby legitimising such views.

e) Better use of Oxpens Bridge Funding (Proposed by Councillor Jupp, Seconded by Councillor Miles)

Liberal Democrat Group Motion

Council notes:

- The cost of the Oxpens bridge has substantially increased since its original approval, and is running considerably behind other Growth Deal projects.
- That government has the option to repurpose the money for use in other active travel schemes and entrust the County Council to manage this.
- Government can and does vary the rules of the Deal from time to time. Thus far, government has rightly prioritised the spirit and objectives of the Deal above the letter of the agreement.
- Doubt remains that the Oxpens bridge will be able to provide a dry route to Osney Island and thereby unlock housing, due to the low-lying railway underpass in-between.
- The Growth Board (now Future Oxfordshire Partnership) was strongly urged against pursuing the Oxpens bridge project to begin with.

Council therefore believes it would be sensible to examine alternatives, and open a conversation with the County and/or the Ministry on options that deliver greater benefits for the residents of Oxford.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Leader to write to the relevant Minister, in full consultation with the accountable body for the Growth Deal funds, requesting that in the event of the bridge not going ahead:

- That the Growth Deal be varied as necessary to permit the funds to be used for other specified purposes in Oxford;
- That other options be explored to better employ the funds, including but not limited to:
 - Resurrecting the substantive scheme for Woodstock Road improvements to mitigate the effect of housing development to the north;
 - Revisiting the pedestrian bridge across the A40 at Barton Park which was dropped at planning stage, resulting in very real and significant safety concerns for residents;

¹⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/migrant-hotels-asylum-yvette-cooper-warehouses-b2818433.html>

- Resurrecting the long-discussed plan for a foot/cycle bridge across the Thames at Jackdaw Lane, providing a safe and convenient alternative to the challenging Plain roundabout for residents of south and east Oxford.

Council notes that each of these schemes has been worked up in detail, and are thus available to re-visit, making any one of them attractive to a government which has the best interests of Oxford's residents at heart.

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