

Why do an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)?

1. Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is part of Oxford City Council's **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010)**.

The General PSED enables Oxford City Council to:

- a. **identify and remove discrimination,**
 - b. **identify ways to advance equality of opportunity,**
 - c. **foster good relations.**
2. **An EqIA must be done before making any decision(s)** that may have an impact on people and/or services that people use and depend on.
 3. An **EqIA form is one of many tools** that can simplify and structure your equalities assessment.
 4. We are passionate about equalities, and we highly recommend that **Corporate Management Team (CMT) reports and all projects must attach an EqIA.**

A good EqIA has the following attributes:

1. **Comprehensively considers the 9 protected characteristics.**

1. Age	6. Race & Ethnicity
2. Disability	7. Religion or Belief
3. Gender Reassignment	8. Sex
4. Marriage & Civil Partnership	9. Sexual Orientation
5. Pregnancy & Maternity	Socio-economic inequalities (voluntary adoption)

2. It has **considered equality of treatment** towards service users, residents, employees, partners, council suppliers & contractors, and Council Members
3. Sufficiently considered **potential and real impact** of proposal or policy on service users, residents, employees, partners, council suppliers & contractors, and Council Members.
4. **Systematically recorded and reported** any potential and real impact of your proposal or policy on service users, residents, employees, partners, council suppliers & contractors, and Council Members
5. **Collected, recorded, & reported sufficient information and data** on how your policy or proposal will have an impact.
6. Offers **mitigations or adjustments** if a PSED has been impacted.
7. Provides clear **justifications** for your decisions.
8. It is written in **plain English** with simple short sentence structures.

Section 1: General overview of the activity under consideration

1.	Name of activity being assessed.	Local Government Reorganisation: A Three Unitary Authorities proposal.	2.	The implementation date of the activity under consideration:	May 2028
3.	Directorate/Department(s):	Corporate Services Directorate	4.	Service Area(s):	Corporate Services
5.	Who is (are) the assessment lead(s):	Lucy Cherry Corporate Policy & Partnerships Officer Law, Governance and Strategy lcherry@oxford.gov.uk	6.	Contact details, in case there are queries:	Mish Tullar Transition Director Corporate Resources Directorate mtullar@oxford.gov.uk Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.	Is this a new or ongoing EqlA?	NEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8.	If this is an extension of a previous EqlA, please indicate where the previous EqlA is located and share the link to the said EqlA.	N/A
9.	Date this EqlA started:	16 October 2025			
10.	Will this EqlA be attached to Corporate Management Team (CMT) reports/updates, which will be published online?	Attached to a report to the Cabinet, 10 November 2025	11.	Give a date (tentative or otherwise) when this assessment will be taken to the CMT.	Not known

Section 2: About the activity, change, or policy that is being assessed.

12.	Type of activity being considered:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Budget	<input type="checkbox"/> Decommissioning	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Changes to an existing activity	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Others. On 5 February 2025, the Government issued to all councils in Oxfordshire a statutory invitation to prepare proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).			
13.	Which priority area(s) within Oxford City Council's Corporate strategy (2024-2028) does this activity fulfil?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good, affordable homes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong, fair economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thriving Communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Zero Carbon Oxford	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Well run council
14.	Which priority area(s) within Oxford City Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (2022) does this activity fulfil?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Responsive services and customer care.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Diverse and engaged workforce.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leadership & organisational commitment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Understanding and working with our communities.	
15.	Outline the aims, objectives, & priorities of the activity being considered.	<p>Oxford City Council's proposal for three unitary authorities aims to create a governance model that is locally responsive, efficient, and inclusive.</p> <p>The objectives are to improve local public services through early intervention, support sustainable housing and economic growth, and protect the unique character of rural communities.</p> <p>Priorities include delivering equitable access to opportunities, addressing housing and infrastructure challenges, and ensuring that all communities - urban and rural - benefit from growth.</p> <p>This approach embeds equality considerations at every stage, ensuring that diverse needs are reflected in planning and delivery.</p> <p>Aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create three unitary authorities that strengthen local governance and deliver services closer to communities. To align with Government's ambition for modern, efficient, and locally responsive structures. <p>Objectives</p>				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve service delivery through early intervention and prevention, ensuring equitable access for all residents. • Support sustainable housing and economic growth while protecting rural character and environmental assets. • Foster strong partnerships with communities and stakeholders to co-design solutions. <p>Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver inclusive growth that benefits urban and rural areas equally. • Address key challenges such as housing affordability, transport connectivity, and climate resilience. • Ensure decision-making reflects the diverse needs of Oxfordshire's communities, and those in West Berkshire.
16.	Please outline the consequences of not implementing this activity.	<p>Missed Opportunity for Local Government Reform Failure to align with Government's ambition for modern, efficient governance could result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced influence in shaping future policy, housing, growth, etc. • Potential loss of funding or support tied to reform initiatives. <p>Continued Fragmentation and Inefficiency Existing or alternative proposal models might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain duplication of services and administrative costs. • Limit ability to deliver streamlined, cost-effective public services. <p>Slower Economic Growth Without a unified approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and infrastructure development may remain uneven. • Opportunities for inward investment and innovation could be missed. <p>Inequitable Access to Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current disparities between urban and rural areas may persist or worsen. • Vulnerable groups could face barriers to accessing timely, inclusive services. • Changes within other proposals could widen gaps in Oxford. <p>Reduced Capacity to Address Strategic Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate resilience, transport connectivity, and housing affordability may remain under-addressed. • Lack of coordinated planning could hinder long-term sustainability. <p>Weaker Community Engagement Other LGR proposal governance models may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit opportunities for co-design and partnership working. • Reduce trust and participation from residents and stakeholders. • Make residents feel disconnected if decision make shifts to a broader unitary structure. <p>Risk to Regional Identity and Collaboration Failure to create complementary structures could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undermine historic and economic links with neighbouring areas (e.g., West Berkshire). • Lead to inconsistent policy approaches across Oxfordshire, and neighbouring authorities.

Section 3: Understanding service users, residents, staff and any other impacted parties.

17. Have you undertaken any consultations in the form of surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups?	<p>Engagement has been central to shaping the proposal and continues to inform how the Council collaborates as the proposal develops and governance arrangements are refined. Early, inclusive engagement has built trust and strengthened the quality of the proposal, reflecting a clear appetite for localised governance that meets community needs. Stakeholders have consistently highlighted the importance of transparency and co-design in shaping future governance, alongside clear communication on service delivery, cost efficiencies, and democratic accountability. These priorities have helped embed a more responsive and informed approach. Fuller details of engagement activities and feedback from specific groups are provided in Appendix One: <i>Engagement Detail</i>.</p> <p>The Council have undertaken an extensive, inclusive and impactful engagement programme across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. This engagement was facilitated through a variety of channels, such as meetings, online surveys, social media, roundtable discussions, community-based events across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, and short-form video content. This breadth of engagement ensured a representative and inclusive understanding of public and stakeholder views.</p> <p>The Council has engaged in wide-ranging and inclusive consultation to understand what people across Oxfordshire, and West Berkshire want from this once in a generation opportunity to reshape how local government is structured, to ensure that the proposal is responding to their priorities.</p> <p>This includes universities, developers, major businesses, parish councils, Members of Parliament, statutory bodies, and the Council's Residents' Panel. These discussions have been instrumental in shaping the final three unitary proposal. The representative views from across the city contribute a more representative city-wide view, balancing the narrower perspectives often found in self-selecting consultations.</p> <p>Businesses, the voluntary sector, MPs, parish councils, universities, residents, and community groups responded positively to the increased local representation and engagement this model would offer, while businesses welcomed the potential for economic growth and streamlined services.</p> <p>The engagement programme reached thousands of people through multiple channels, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 surveys with over 1,580 responses• 340 residents engaged through 11 drop-in events• Engagement with more than 75 stakeholder organisations and statutory bodies• Surveyed local businesses to inform the Council's proposal, and how Oxford and Oxfordshire can meet its housing needs while supporting business growth and sustainable development. <p>Through digital engagement, the Council achieved significant reach and high engagement across six social platforms, connecting with thousands of residents and stakeholders.</p>
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- Delivered 32 content pieces and 11 Facebook events, driving both online and in-person engagement.
- Targeted communications reached audiences in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, averaging 2.8 views per person, with TikTok generating standout engagement among 18 to 34 year olds.
- 2.6M+ impressions and 38.8K link clicks
- 1,650 hours of video viewed
- 8.3K reactions, 2.7K comments, 1.5K shares, 1.1K saves.

The Council worked through established partnerships and networks across Oxford, Oxfordshire, and the wider region to ensure the proposal reflected a shared, informed approach.

Locally, it engaged with the Oxford Strategic Partnership – uniting public, private, and voluntary sector leaders to shape city priorities - and collaborated with the Oxford Economic Growth Partnership, and other county-wide forums to align with growth and investment strategies.

Regionally, the Council drew on its membership of the Fast Growth Cities Group (consisting of Oxford, Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Norwich, Peterborough, and Swindon) and the Cathedral Cities Group (consisting of Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter, Gloucester, Ipswich, Lincoln, and Norwich).

Feedback from these partnerships refined the proposal by highlighting shared ambitions, identifying challenges, and shaping actions that address local needs while aligning with regional and national priorities.

Key findings from a Resident's Panel Survey in February 2025, which had 266 responses, found:

- **82%** think the current two-tier local government arrangements could be improved; **7% disagreed**
- **67%** think councils should not be too large, so they better meet the needs of residents; **11% disagreed**
- **61%** think a single council covering the greater Oxford area would best meet the needs of residents; **17% disagreed**
- **37%** think a single council covering the whole of Oxfordshire would best meet the needs of residents; **40% disagreed**

Key findings from the main public engagement survey in July and August 2025 show:

- **69% agree** "councils are most effective when they are smaller and closer to the people they serve, enabling them to respond and adapt more easily to local needs"
- **80% agree** "urban and rural areas often require different approaches to housing, transport, education and skills, and other key council services"
- **88% agree** "councils have an important part to play in supporting the local economy, including through housing, infrastructure and transport policies"

These are the foundation principles of the council's three unitary proposal.

Two additional questions were asked in the Councils annual Residents Survey 2025 in relation to Local Government Reorganisation:

- The majority of residents **(62%) agree** that councils are most effective when they are smaller and closer to the people they serve, enabling them to respond and adapt more easily to local needs
- **An even bigger majority (72%) agree** that urban and rural areas often require different approaches to housing, transport, education and skills, and other key council services
- **A substantial majority of 90% agree** that the council should prioritise good quality services and responding to local need.
- Whilst **levels of agreement (43%) and disagreement (40%) were fairly equal** on the council prioritising cost savings.

The City Council sought the views of local businesses and employers to help inform the shape of Local Government Reorganisation that best supports future planning for housing and economic growth in and around Oxford city. Insights from this short survey contributes to ongoing work to understand how Oxford can meet its housing needs while supporting business growth and sustainable development.

35 responses were received to the City Council survey, across the Health, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Education, University, Property, Retail and Voluntary sectors.

- **Over 80%** of respondents said being located in or near Oxford is very or extremely important to their business success.
- **Around 68% strongly agree** that Oxford should go beyond government's housing delivery targets.
- **Almost 85% agree** that affordable housing near Oxford is important for business growth.
- **46% favour** building additional homes close to the city, including suitable locations within the Green Belt. (23% would prefer development beyond the Green Belt)
- **Over half (54%) believe** future development should balance new homes with employment space.

The comprehensive public engagement programme has been central to the development of the three-unitary proposal. Feedback from this process demonstrates strong support for councils that are smaller, closer to their communities, and more responsive to local needs.

Responses from residents, businesses, and partners consistently indicate a preference for a locally responsive governance model that:

- Delivers tailored services
- Strengthens local representation
- Balances economic growth with heritage and environmental priorities

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to Local Voice. <p>This feedback underpins the Council's commitment to enhancing democratic participation through formal engagement structures that reflect both urban and rural perspectives. Each new authority will be rooted in its community, preserving local identity, enabling distinctive service models, and creating councils that residents recognise, trust, and feel part of.</p> <p>The three Unitaries proposal reflects these priorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserving Oxfordshire's historic and cultural identity while aligning governance with community boundaries. • Empowering residents through stronger local voice and participatory governance. • Supporting economic growth and delivering affordable housing in sustainable locations. • Integrating health, education, and social care services. • Embedding principles of transparency, co-design, and tailored strategies for urban and rural needs <p>This approach ensures responsive, resilient, and equitable governance - safeguarding community identity while enabling Oxfordshire to thrive.</p>
18.	List information and data used to understand who your residents or staff are and how they will be impacted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizon Scanning and Insight. • Third-party research • Reports • Discussions and support from Locality Managers • Partnership and Stakeholder liaison • Statistics about Oxford • Population data including density and projections • Demographic and socio-economic data • Required levels of council tax equalisation • Housing and homelessness data • Public health metrics • Skills data • GVA and business rates • Financial data • Predictive modelling on spends on key services.
19.	If you have not done any consultations or collected data & information, are you planning to do so in the future?	<p>The Government's formal consultation process for Local Government Reorganisation is a statutory requirement. This process ensures that any proposed structural changes to local governance are subject to transparent and inclusive public scrutiny. Following the submission of reorganisation proposals, the Government initiates a public consultation inviting feedback from affected councils, stakeholders, and the wider community. The Secretary of State is obligated to consult with councils not submitting proposals and any other relevant parties. Responses gathered during this consultation are carefully considered before any</p>

final decisions are made, ensuring that equality, community impact, and diverse perspectives are integral to the decision-making process.

Section 4: Impact analysis.

20.	Who does the activity impact?	Service Users	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
		Members of staff	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
		General public	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
		Partner / Community Organisation	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
		City Councillors	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>
		Council suppliers and contractors	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/>

21.

Does the activity impact positively or negatively on any protected characteristics as stated within Equality (Act 2010)?

Protected Characteristic	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Don't know	Data/information/evidence supporting your assessment	Analysis & insight Mitigations
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No adverse impact identified; Inclusive service design will be maintained.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried

					Older and younger residents may benefit from services designed around local structures.	out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Disability (Visible and invisible)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opportunities exist to improve physical and digital access through more responsive structures.	As with other characteristics, it is expected that work can be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.
Gender re-assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No specific impacts identified at this stage.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No specific impacts identified at this stage.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Race, Ethnicity and/or Citizenship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No specific impacts identified at this stage.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No adverse impact identified; Inclusive service design will be maintained. Potential for positive impact through better local access to services (e.g., Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Maternity)	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No adverse impact identified; Inclusive service design will be maintained.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.

					Continued engagement with diverse communities will help address any specific local access needs.	
					No differential impacts identified.	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No adverse impact identified. Inclusive service design will be maintained.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Socio-economic inequalities such as: This was voluntarily adopted by <u>Oxford City Council on the 13th of March 2024.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	The new unitary authorities may have the freedom to tailor social and economic policies (e.g., on housing, employment, welfare support) to better reflect the unique socio-economic needs of their populations. Commissioning and procurement practices can be redesigned to prioritise local jobs, apprenticeships, and inclusive economic growth, with a more direct link between service planning and economic regeneration. There is also the potential that more localised services would mean a possible reduction in travel costs associated and reduced distances being travelled by residents. As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis,

						including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Council of Sanctuary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No adverse impact identified; Inclusive service design will be maintained.	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take
Children and Young People (SEND, education, early years)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	The three unitary authorities' proposal highlights the opportunity for better place-based delivery of education and early years support, particularly for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Smaller Unitaries will allow for closer working with schools and care providers. Localised oversight is likely to reduce transport times and increase inclusion in mainstream settings. As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Adult Social Care and Independent Living	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	Unitary authorities will have clearer accountability for social care. The proposal references greater opportunities to integrate adult social care with housing, healthcare and voluntary support services. This has specific benefits for older residents, disabled people, and carers through improved service navigation and responsiveness.

						As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Transport and Access to Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	<p>Transport data shows variation in access to employment and education opportunities across Oxfordshire. Smaller councils with local insight are better positioned to advocate for improvements on critical routes and to enhance rural connectivity. This is likely to benefit those without access to private transport, such as older adults and low-income families.</p> <p>As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.</p>
Health and Inequalities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	<p>Localised Health Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving to three smaller Unitaries in Oxfordshire would allow each authority to design health initiatives that reflect local needs. • Oxfordshire has diverse communities - urban Oxford, rural areas, and market towns - each with different health challenges (e.g., access to services, lifestyle-related conditions). Smaller units could better target these variations.

Addressing Wider determinants of Health

- The three unitary proposal could enable more integrated planning around housing, transport, healthcare and employment, which are key determinants of health.
- For example, rural areas might prioritise transport access to healthcare, while urban areas might focus on air quality, housing conditions, alongside healthcare.

Tackling Health Inequalities:

- Oxfordshire has pockets of deprivation (e.g., parts of Banbury and Oxford city) alongside affluent areas.
- Smaller Unitaries could focus resources on these high-need areas, reducing barriers for people with long-term conditions and mental health needs.

Equalities Implications:

- A more localised governance structure could improve engagement with vulnerable groups, ensuring services are culturally appropriate and accessible.
- This aligns with the goal of reducing barriers for those with chronic conditions or mental health needs.

As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried

						out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Community Safety and Cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No adverse impact identified; Inclusive service design will be maintained.</p> <p>The three unitary authorities' proposal will continue and could better enable consistent local partnership working on community safety, including safeguarding, anti-social behaviour, and hate crime prevention. This is relevant to all protected groups but especially to women, younger people, and LGBTQ+ communities who may be at greater risk of targeted harm.</p>	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, will be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Carers and Unpaid Carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.</p> <p>Smaller authorities may be more attuned to local carer needs and able to provide more tailored support (e.g. localised carer breaks, peer groups, or training).</p> <p>A closer partnership between local authorities and voluntary/community sector organisations may make carer services more accessible and better coordinated with community assets</p>	As with other characteristics, more detailed and through analysis, including engagement with impacted residents, can be carried out later as implementation plans take shape and are delivered.
Homeless population	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.	As with other characteristics, it is expected that work will be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.
Council employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be impacts on working practices and changes to staffing as we transition to the new council/s.	Further work can be done to understand the specific impacts on

204					As with other characteristics, it is expected that work will be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.	<p>select groups of staff from across the different services.</p> <p>As implementation plans are developed and closer working continues throughout the process, the council will continue to analyse the potential impact of LGR on staff across all the council, and policies for the new authorities will ensure greater levels of consistency.</p> <p>As with other characteristics, it is expected that work will be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.</p>
	Cabinet Members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.</p> <p>As with other characteristics, it is expected that work will be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.</p>
	Council suppliers & contractors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No disproportionate impact identified. Monitoring through service redesign processes will ensure fairness.</p> <p>As with other characteristics, it is expected that work will be done to align policies, and thus until these proposals are developed it may be difficult to pinpoint specific examples of potential impact.</p>

Section 5: Conclusion(s) of your Full Impact Assessment

22.		Conclusions.					
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stop and reconsider the activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust activity before beginning the activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No major change(s) or adjustments	<input type="checkbox"/> No major change(s) or adjustments and continue with the

			and continue to monitor.	and continue with activity but continue to monitor.	activity. No need to monitor in the future.
23.	Please explain how you have reached your conclusions above.	<p>The reorganisation of local government is a once in a generation opportunity. This gives a key moment both locally and nationally to restore trust in local government by creating organisations which are fit for the future while reflecting their people and place.</p> <p>Oxford City Council's three unitary authorities' proposal for Oxfordshire, presents three distinctive places with different opportunities, different demographics, different geographies, and different challenges. The greatest challenge is the demand for growth in housing to enable more people to be able to live – and live well – in Oxfordshire. The greatest opportunity is to unlock Oxfordshire's nationally significant economic growth potential at a scale that will help meet the Government's number one mission.</p> <p>The proposed Greater Oxford area stands out from the rest of the county. Its population is younger, much more diverse, and more densely housed. The average age in Oxford is 31 years.¹, the youngest of any settlement across the three areas, compared to averages in the 40s elsewhere. Oxford is the fifth most densely populated district in the South East of England, and Greater Oxford is the most densely populated of the three unitary authorities, with an estimated 626 residents per square kilometre². It has an estimated population of 240,000.</p> <p>Young adults aged 15–24 years, make up 19% of Greater Oxford's population, which is above the national average of 12%³,. This is largely due to the student and postgraduate population in Oxford, where nearly a quarter (23%) of residents fall in this age group. These factors, combined with the area's thriving knowledge economy, contribute to Greater Oxford being one of the most highly educated areas in England: 47% of residents hold qualifications at Level 4 or above, compared to 42% across Oxfordshire and 34% nationally⁴,.</p> <p>As a result of its younger profile, Greater Oxford has the lowest proportion of older residents, with just 15% of the population aged 65 or over; lower than England (19%), Northern Oxfordshire (19%) and Ridgeway (20%)⁵,. Conversely, it also has the smallest proportion of children under 15 (16%) of the three unitary authorities, which compares to 19% in Northern Oxfordshire and 19% in Ridgeway⁶,.</p>			

¹Census 2021.

² Census 2021.

³ ONS mid-year population estimates 2022

⁴ Census 2021

⁵ ONS mid-year population estimates 2022

⁶ ONS mid-year population estimates 2022

Housing tenure reflects this demographic profile. Only 56% of residents in Greater Oxford own their home (with or without a mortgage), compared to 65% across Oxfordshire. Private renting is more common, with 27% of households renting privately or living rent-free, compared to 20% countywide. Greater Oxford also has higher rates of social renting (17% vs 15% countywide), rising to 21% in Oxford and 37% in Berinsfield, which lies in the south of the Greater Oxford area⁷.

Of the three unitary authorities, house prices are highest in Greater Oxford, averaging £542,800⁸. This is driven largely by Oxford's average of £556,900, making it the least affordable of the three unitary authorities.

Greater Oxford is the most ethnically diverse part of Oxfordshire. Only 76% of residents identify as White, compared to 87% countywide. The proportion of Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh residents is 13%, more than double the county average (6%). Just 70% of Greater Oxford residents were born in the UK, compared to 83% across England, 86% in Northern Oxfordshire, and 88% in Ridgeway.⁹

This diversity underscores the need for inclusive representation and services that engage with and reflect the needs of different communities.

As with many prosperous areas, Greater Oxford experiences stark inequalities. While overall health outcomes are better than the England average, there is a 10-year gap in male life expectancy between different areas.¹⁰ Wealthy wards within Oxford, like Jericho, Marston, and Summertown are among the least deprived in the country, but they exist alongside areas such as Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill, which face long-standing challenges including low income, long-term unemployment, and poor health. In other more deprived parts of Greater Oxford such as Berinsfield, 21% of children live in absolute poverty, more than double the county average (10%) and 26% of households claim Universal Credit, compared to 16% in Oxfordshire as a whole.

To tackle these disparities, the new authority must take an integrated and coordinated approach, bringing together public health, housing, education, and wider community engagement into a single system of delivery. Localised decision-making will be crucial in ensuring services are shaped by and for communities, particularly those experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

The proposed Northern Oxfordshire authority includes towns such as Banbury, Bicester, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Witney, and Woodstock. The area is a mix of market towns and rural villages, with a more dispersed population than Greater Oxford. Banbury and Bicester serve as larger urban centres, while towns like Chipping Norton, Witney and Woodstock retain a more rural character. The population of the Northern Oxfordshire area is approximately 265,000.

⁷ All tenure figures are from Census 2021

⁸ Land registry data; September 2024 to August 2025

⁹ Census 2021

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics. Life Expectancy tables

With around 222 residents per square kilometre, Northern Oxfordshire is the least densely populated of the three unitary authorities, well below the national average of 425 residents per square kilometre. There is wide variation across the area in terms of diversity and affluence between rural communities to more urban and diverse towns like Banbury and Bicester.

Residents in the Northern Oxfordshire area are generally older than Greater Oxford, with most towns having average ages in the 40s. Conversely, Northern Oxfordshire has the highest proportion of children under the age of five (6%), and 19% of the population are under 15, higher than Greater Oxford (16%) but similar to Ridgeway (19%).

Home ownership is high, with 67% of residents owning their homes. This is above the Oxfordshire average (65%) and higher than Greater Oxford (56%). Northern Oxfordshire also has the highest proportion of people living in houses (88%) of the three unitary authorities. This compares to the England average of 77%.

As is the case for Greater Oxford, there are clearly inequalities within the Northern Oxfordshire area. Towns such as Banbury and Carterton face high levels of deprivation, lower qualification levels, and significant private renting. Banbury has six areas ranked among the 20% most deprived in England. By contrast, places like Woodstock, Burford, and Standlake are among the least deprived.

Child poverty is higher in Northern Oxfordshire than Ridgeway, with 10.5% of children living in absolute poverty, compared to 8.5% in Ridgeway, although both have lower child poverty rates than Greater Oxford at 11%. Within the Northern Oxfordshire area, Banbury has child poverty rates as high as 17%, compared to just 6% in Woodstock.

Just over 36% of residents who are aged 16 and older, have level 4 and above qualifications. Whilst this is the lowest of the three unitary authorities, it is higher than the England average of 34%. Additionally, 15% of adults in Northern Oxfordshire have no qualifications, the highest proportion of the three areas but lower than the country average of 18%.

Ethnic diversity is lower than Greater Oxford, with 91% of residents identifying as White, compared to 76% in Greater Oxford and 87% countywide. The largest ethnic minority group is Asian (4%), though this remains below the Oxfordshire average (6%). Greater diversity exists in towns such as Banbury and Bicester.

These characteristics call for a place-based and locally responsive approach. While much of the area is relatively affluent, inequalities persist, particularly in the more urban centres such as Banbury. A joined-up system that brings together housing, education, health, and infrastructure will be essential. Tailored solutions for isolated rural communities, older residents, and disadvantaged towns must be informed by the voices of local residents.

The proposed Ridgeway authority area stretches from the outskirts of Reading across the hills of the North Wessex Downs and includes a mix of towns, villages, and rural communities. Larger settlements include Abingdon, Didcot, Henley and Newbury; market towns such as Wantage and Wallingford; and smaller villages across West Berkshire, South Oxfordshire, and the Vale of White Horse. It has the largest population of the three unitary authorities, at approximately 430,000 residents.

While some towns such as Abingdon, Didcot, and Henley act as commuter and economic hubs with strong rail and road links, much of Ridgeway is rural, with lower-density settlements and open countryside. Population density is approximately 248 people per square kilometres, higher than in Northern Oxfordshire but still below national and Greater Oxford figures.

Ridgeway shares many similarities with Northern Oxfordshire, including a market town and rural profile that contrasts with the more urban Greater Oxford.

Residents in Ridgeway are older on average than Greater Oxford, with most settlements having average ages in the 40s. It has the highest proportion of people aged 65 and over, of the three unitary areas (20%), compared to 19% in Northern Oxfordshire and 15% in Greater Oxford. However, Ridgeway also has a higher proportion of children under 15 (19%) than Greater Oxford, pointing to a mixed-age population with intergenerational needs.

Home ownership is highest in Ridgeway, with 70% of households owning their home outright or with a mortgage. This is above both Northern Oxfordshire (67%) and Greater Oxford (56%). Only 16% of households rent privately (compared to 27% in Greater Oxford), and social renting is also lower, at 14%, versus 17% in Greater Oxford.

Ridgeway is the least deprived of the three areas, with a higher overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score. It has the highest proportion of residents who fall in social grade AB (35%), and the lowest level of children in absolute poverty overall (8.5%) of the three unitary authorities.

However, as is the case for both Greater Oxford and Northern Oxfordshire, Ridgeway is not an homogeneous area. While child poverty rates are low overall (around 5% in many areas within Ridgeway), there are places where poverty levels are much higher. In parts of Abingdon, Didcot, and Calcot for example, up to 16% of children live in absolute poverty.

Ridgeway is the least ethnically diverse of the three unitary areas. Around 92% of residents identify as White, compared to 87% countywide and 76% in Greater Oxford. The largest ethnic minority group is Asian, making up 3% of the population. However, more diverse populations exist in Didcot and Abingdon, where 80% of residents identify as White.

The area's large geographic spread and varied settlement types mean services must be tailored to a wide range of needs. Coordinating transport, health, housing, and education at a local level will be vital to ensuring equity. Engaging directly with communities, particularly in areas facing disadvantage, will help shape responsive and inclusive services across Ridgeway's diverse social and geographic landscape.

Oxford itself is also the second most unequal city in the UK, while the city alongside areas of Banbury and Abingdon have a number of wards in the bottom 20% of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.¹¹

The proposal for three unitary authorities is fundamentally designed to deliver the best possible outcomes for the people, places, and economy of Oxfordshire. It is a direct response to the clear needs and ambitions of the area, providing a blueprint for a modern, effective, and equitable model of local government.

In developing the case for a three unitary council – a city unitary with expanded boundaries, a northern unitary and a southern unitary including West Berkshire – the council have compared the preferred option to alternative proposals to ensure they are proposing the best option for the Oxfordshire region. Each option has been appraised and scored against the Government's LGR criteria.

Based on the Councils assessment, the three unitary proposition with modified boundaries for Greater Oxford represents the option which best meets the government's LGR criteria, its wider growth mission and, most importantly, the needs of the residents and communities of Oxfordshire.

The three unitary model empowers locally accountable, place-based leadership to deliver services which are tailored to the needs of communities and creates significant benefits of size and scale.

Greater Oxford, Northern Oxfordshire and Ridgeway would represent, co-produce with and serve areas which have their own distinct identities, context and existing partnerships. Three Unitaries represent a model of councils with a sustainable scale and geography to work with a Mayoral Strategic Authority with a balance of voices which truly represent the communities for which they advocate.

The council's proposal for three unitary authorities is fundamentally designed to deliver the best possible outcomes for the people, places, and economy of Oxfordshire, and West Berkshire. It is a direct response to the clear needs and ambitions of the area, providing a blueprint for a modern, effective, and equitable model of local government.

The three Unitaries will deliver a future where Oxfordshire achieves its full potential across six critical dimensions:

- where **prosperity** is unlocked through Oxford's economic engine;
- where good **homes** are available to all, and fit well into Oxfordshire;
- where **quality of life** is enhanced through preventative, integrated services;
- where community **identity** is strengthened rather than diluted;
- where democratic **voice** is empowered at every level; and
- where governance is **future-fit** and financially sustainable.

For Oxfordshire, and West Berkshire communities, the implementation of proposed three unitary authorities is expected to deliver significant benefits through more streamlined governance and improved coordination of services.

¹¹ <https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/cities-outlook-2017/city-monitor-latest-data/>

		<p>As the county's economic and cultural hub, Oxford would gain from a governance model that prioritises housing delivery, transport connectivity, and infrastructure investment, supporting inclusive growth and addressing long-standing affordability challenges.</p> <p>Enhanced collaboration between councils and partners would enable better integration of services for diverse communities, including students, ethnic minorities, and low-income households. The proposal emphasises equitable distribution of opportunities and active engagement with all communities to ensure that Oxford growth complements, rather than overshadows, the wider county.</p> <p>The three unitary authorities model has at its core communities, the councils, and partners working together to co-deliver early intervention and preventative outcomes in efficient and inclusive ways. This proposal strikes the balance of Oxfordshire's diverse needs in serving three distinct geographies and their communities across the county and into West Berkshire, which shares long historic links with southern Oxfordshire. It enables complementary and connected co-existence into the future.</p> <p>The proposal delivers three local authorities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are of significant size and scale; • Have economic opportunities which can unlock new homes, new skills and new jobs for local people in the most sustainable way, anchored in the character of Oxfordshire's distinct historical city, towns and villages; • Have different communities and geographies with distinct needs which are best served by locally tailored and delivered public services which ensure local voices are heard and identity retained; and • Are financially sustainable, safe and legal, with real opportunities to drive efficiencies, savings and local benefit not only through economies of scale but meaningful reform which reduces demand for services and ensures the most people have access to fulfilling lives.
Section 6: Monitoring and review plan.		
The responsibility for maintaining a monitoring arrangement of the EqlA action plan lies with the service/team completing the EqlA. These arrangements must be built into the performance management framework such as KPIs or Risk Registers.		
24.	Who or which team or service area will be responsible for monitoring equalities impact?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Services Directorate. 2. Law, Governance and Strategy Services.

25.	Who (individual, team, or service area) will be responsible for carrying out the EqIA review?	1. Corporate Leadership Team. 2. Transition Director. 3. Corporate Policy and Partnerships Officers.		
26.	How often will the equality impact be reviewed for this activity?	At least annually	27.	Date when the EqIA will be reviewed again.
				Spring 2026

Section 7: Sign-off

Name: Mish Tullar

Job Title: Transition Director

Signature:

29 October 2025

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Name: Sally Hicks

Job Title: Business Intelligence Lead

Signature: Sally Hicks

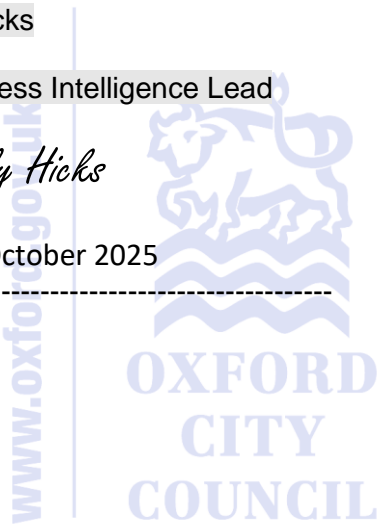
29 October 2025

Name: Sobia Afridi

Job Title: Diversity and Inclusion Specialist

Signature: Sobia Afridi

23 October 2025



APPENDIX ONE: ENGAGEMENT DETAIL

Stakeholder engagement is ongoing. The Council have worked with thousands of stakeholders from across Oxford and Oxfordshire's diverse communities and partnerships including citizens, businesses, public services, voluntary sector, employees, MPs and neighbouring councils.

The Council has engaged with, amongst others:

- Residents across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire
- Oxfordshire businesses
- Police & Crime Commissioner and Oxfordshire Police Commander
- Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Universities
- Oxfordshire MPs and Berkshire MPs
- Healthwatch Oxfordshire
- ICB and health trusts
- Oxfordshire voluntary and community sector stakeholders and partners
- Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
- Oxford Civic Society
- Oxford City Council employees and their representatives, Unison and Unite.
- Our Partnerships Fast Cities (Oxford, Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Swindon, Norwich Peterborough) and Cathedral Cities (Oxford, Cambridge, Norwich, Exeter, Lincoln) Groups
- Multi-Academy Trust education partners
- Parish Councils
- Conference of Colleges (Oxford) in particular landowning colleges
- Oxford Growth Commission
- Oxford Bus Company
- Leaders of 6 other local authorities within the proposed geography, and Leaders of 3 neighbouring councils in Berkshire and Swindon

In addition, the Council has engaged and listened through a range of media including:

- Meetings and calls
- Workshops
- Inviting letters of support
- Online surveys
- Social media
- Round table events
- Community based venues across Oxfordshire
- Short-form videos
- Bus shelter posters
- Public events.

Three Unitary Authorities engagement programme

The engagement programme launched in June 2025 with a [website](#), special edition newsletters, [press release](#), [short-form video](#), bus shelter posters and, Facebook and Instagram advertising. The goal was to raise awareness for 3 Unitary Authority proposal Oxford and drive traffic to the website.

In July 2025, the online survey and drop-in events were launched. The Council issued a [press release](#), Facebook events, Facebook and Instagram advertising and TikTok advertising. The Council also created a series of short-form videos, with Cabinet Members inviting residents to visit drop-in events in [Berinsfield](#), [Botley](#), [Kennington](#) and [Kidlington](#).

A series of short-form videos explored themes of 3 Unitary Authority proposal: [transport](#), [housing](#), [local identity](#) and the [economy](#).

Drop-in Events and Community Forums

A series of drop-in events were held across Oxfordshire in Oxford, Abingdon, Banbury Berinsfield, Botley, Didcot, Kennington, Kidlington, Wheatley and Witney, and one in Newbury (West Berkshire).

These events provided opportunities for residents to ask questions, share concerns, and engage directly with council officers and elected members. Engagement took place with approximately 340 citizens across all eleven events.

Public responses to the proposals reflected a wide range of perspectives, highlighting both areas of support and concern across key themes.

Many respondents expressed uncertainty regarding future council tax levels, councillor representation, and election timelines. There were notable concerns about the potential loss of local identity, particularly in rural communities. A recurring theme was the need for greater clarity on the role of parish councils and how local voices would be incorporated under the new governance structure.

Feedback on transport and infrastructure was strong, with widespread concern about currently inadequate public transport links. Respondents called for improvements to Park & Ride services and raised issues around congestion, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), and road closures in and around Oxford. Many expressed a view that transport decisions about the city were being made by councillors representing distant parts of the county. Some felt that current infrastructure capacity may be insufficient to support the scale of proposed growth.

Views on housing expansion were mixed. While some welcomed growth and the potential for increased availability of affordable housing, others expressed concerns over the potential for overdevelopment, particularly in areas lacking adequate services. Concerns were raised about building on flood plains and contaminated land, and there was a clear desire to preserve rural character.

Some respondents questioned the alignment of the proposals with climate goals and expressed concern that a focus on science and innovation could come at the expense of community identity. There were calls for deeper grassroots engagement and reforms to welfare systems to ensure social equity.

Concerns were voiced about council tax revenues being disproportionately allocated to urban centres, and questions were raised regarding job security for existing local authority staff. However, there was also interest in opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and a strong desire for equitable service provision across districts.

Three major surveys of residents were conducted:

- The Council held an initial online Residents Panel survey in February 2025 that focused on gauging public appetite for change and understanding priorities, using its standing representative panel of Oxford citizens.
- The Council held an open survey on its consultation portal about local government reorganisation between 1 July and 12 August 2025. The survey was promoted via social media, local media, and community networks across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. It explored public preferences for different governance models and gathered detailed feedback on the three-unitary proposal.
- A second survey of the Oxford Residents Panel was undertaken between 23 July and 15 September which added questions on LGR to the standard annual survey of residents' satisfaction with Council services.

Key findings from our surveys:

February 2025 Oxford Residents Panel Survey

In February 2025, Oxford City Council conducted a survey on the interim proposals using its Residents' Panel. The panel is a representative sample of Oxford residents managed on the Council's behalf by independent polling company Beehive.

The survey, which had 266 responses, found:

- 82% think the current two-tier local government arrangements could be improved; 7% disagreed
- 67% think councils should not be too large, so they better meet the needs of residents; 11% disagreed
- 61% think a single council covering the greater Oxford area would best meet the needs of residents; 17% disagreed
- 37% think a single council covering the whole of Oxfordshire would best meet the needs of residents; 40% disagreed

A press release was issued on the survey results: [Greater Oxford: The survey results are in](#)

July – August 2025 Public Survey on LGR

Over 1,580 people participated in the Council's main public survey on LGR, with a strong representation from across Oxfordshire's diverse communities and West Berkshire residents.

Table 1: Survey responses by current District and percentage of total responses

	Total	Percentage
Cherwell	153	9.68%
Oxford City	611	38.67%
South Oxfordshire	236	14.94%
Vale of White Horse	294	18.61%
West Berkshire	115	7.28%
West Oxfordshire	120	7.59%
Other	51	3.23%

Key survey findings include:

- 69.4% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “Councils are most effective when they are smaller and closer to the people they serve, enabling them to respond and adapt more easily to local needs;” 17.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 80.0% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “Urban and rural areas often require different approaches to housing, transport, education and skills, and other key council services;” 12.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 75.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “Housing, transport, education and skills need different approaches between urban and rural areas;” 16.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 68.0% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I want to see more housing built in the right places to meet local needs (including affordability, proximity to family/friends, and access to jobs);” 16.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The Council also asked residents whether councils should prioritise “good quality services and responding to local need” or “cost savings.” The results showed a strong preference for “good quality services and responding to local need.”

A total of 914 comments were collected in response to this open-ended question, representing 58% of the 1,581 overall survey responses.

A press release was issue on the survey results: [Residents prefer smaller, more responsive councils, survey finds](#)

July-September Oxford Residents Panel Survey

Two additional questions were included in the 2025 survey specifically to inform the Council’s LGR submission. These questions explored views on:

- The effectiveness of council structures in relation to size and proximity to communities.
- The need for differentiated service approaches between urban and rural areas.
- Preferences regarding service quality versus cost-saving priorities.

406 responses were collected from the representative sample of Oxford residents, using a structured survey format, with participants asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale. The data was analysed to produce net agreement and disagreement scores, providing a clear indication of overall sentiment and areas of divergence.

October 2025 Oxford Housing and Growth – Business Stakeholder Survey

The Council is seeking the views of local businesses and employers to help inform the shape of Local Government Reorganisation that best supports future planning for housing and economic growth in and around Oxford city. Insights from this short survey will contribute to ongoing work to understand how Oxford can meet its housing needs while supporting business growth and sustainable development.

1. Council Size and Local Responsiveness

A majority of respondents (62%) agreed that councils are most effective when they are smaller and closer to the communities they serve. This reflects a clear preference for governance models that enable responsiveness and adaptability to local needs. Only 22% disagreed, indicating broad support for more localised decision-making. Some residents expressed reservations, potentially reflecting concerns about fragmentation, reduced economies of scale, or inconsistencies in service delivery across different areas.

2. Differentiated Approaches for Urban and Rural Areas

An even larger proportion (72%) agreed that urban and rural areas often require distinct approaches to housing, transport, education, skills, and other key services. This supports the strategic case for place-based policy design and delivery. A minority (12%) disagreed, suggesting some concerns about fairness or the risk of unequal service standards, particularly in areas that straddle urban-rural boundaries.

3. Service Quality vs. Cost Savings

When asked about service priorities, 90% of respondents expressed a strong preference for councils to prioritise good quality services and responsiveness to local need. In contrast, views on prioritising cost savings were more divided, with 43% in agreement and 40% in disagreement.

Stakeholder and Organisational Feedback

Engagement with key stakeholders provided valuable insights:

- University, Colleges and developers: Interested in the scale of growth proposed and opportunity to address Oxford's housing crisis, highlighted the need to maintain strong links across the knowledge spine and noted the context of Devolution placing responsibility for strategic transport and skills with an MSA.
- Business and Community Groups: Generally supportive of streamlined services, delivery of affordable housing, local accountability, and economic development opportunities.
- Healthwatch Oxfordshire: Emphasised the importance of safeguarding public health and social care integration, and ensuring local voice in health governance
- Parish and Town Councils: Expressed mixed views—some welcomed the opportunity for greater localism, while others sought clarity on powers and funding

Insights and Lessons Learned

The engagement process highlighted several key lessons:

- Early and inclusive engagement builds trust and improves proposals
- There is a strong appetite for localised governance that reflects community needs
- Clear communication about service delivery, cost savings, and democratic accountability is essential.
- Stakeholders value transparency and co-design in shaping future governance

Three Unitaries engagement

Between June and August 2025, the three Unitaries engagement programme achieved strong digital visibility and engagement across six platforms over the period. A total of 32 unique content pieces were shared across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn and X, with 11 Facebook events were created to support in-person activities. The communications targeted the messages to Oxfordshire (763,218 residents) and West Berkshire (163,367 residents). This means everyone in our region saw our social media posts on average 2.8. times. A significant proportion of the views were on TikTok, where 74% of our audience is 18 to 34 years old.

Key outcomes included:

- 2.6M+ impressions – broad reach and visibility
- 38.8K link clicks – strong interest in content
- 1,650 hours of video watched – high engagement with video formats
- 8.3K reactions, 2.7K comments, 1.5K shares – active user interaction
- 1.1K saves – content perceived as valuable by users

The communications successfully combined reach with meaningful engagement, particularly through video content and link-driven actions. These results suggest a well-targeted strategy that encouraged both awareness and interaction. Content output included:

- 32 unique content pieces shared across six platforms
- 11 Facebook events created for in-person activities
- Performance Highlights (4-month period):
 - 2,613,111 impressions – total times content was displayed to users
 - 8,358 likes/reactions – user engagement through likes and other reactions
 - 2,771 comments – direct user responses and discussions
 - 1,476 shares – content redistributed by users
 - 1,100 saves – content bookmarked for later
 - 38,874 link clicks – users clicking through to external content
 - 1,650 hours watched – total video watch time across platforms (video content only)

TikTok and Instagram were especially effective in driving saves and shares, indicating strong audience resonance.

Key themes from verbatim feedback:

- Transport and Housing videos sparked the most discussion, with users expressing both support and concern
- Positive sentiment focused on solutions like the Cowley Branch Line to ease congestion
- Concerns included scepticism about housing developments respecting the Green Belt and fears of increased traffic
- Emerging narratives included:
 - *Need genuinely affordable housing*
 - *Avoid additional housing leading to more congestion*
 - *LTNs are the core issue*
 - Suggestions for tram lines and critiques of bus commuting costs.

Oxford City Council Member workshops

Four Member workshops were delivered as part of the Council's 3 Unitary Authority Local Government Reorganisation proposal. Each workshop focused on key themes, were led and facilitated by one of the Council's senior officers and were open to all Members.

- Housing delivery and economy
- Transport
- Social Services, communities and housing integration
- Governance and local representation.

The Council's core LGR team supported the workshops, and the discussions helped the Council to develop the overall proposals for a three-unitary arrangement across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

Oxfordshire Parish Council engagement

Two parish council engagement events have been held to consider each of the LGR proposals. The first organised by the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils, with about 50 parish councillors attending. The second organised by Beckley Parish Council in the form of a public meeting, with many parish councils represented. Key issues raised include rural identity and concerns about villages becoming urban extensions, the scale of development, and the need for improved bus and rail services. There was a need for better engagement, increased resources and a clearer voice for parishes with new unitary councils – with a hope that they might be co-opted onto proposed new Neighbourhood Committees.

Voluntary and Community Sector engagement

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners were engaged through an LGR briefing session organised by the umbrella body Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action and through participation in focus groups organised by Oxford City Council. The engagement confirmed that smaller, place-based councils would help build local connections between residents, groups and local authorities. There was strong support for a more place-based approach highlighted strong support for community-led, locally responsive services, alongside several key concerns and opportunities for improvement.

VCS organisations included those from working in cultural, careers, social care, environmental, mental health, housing older people, children and local community groups. A summary of feedback is set out below.

Community Strengths and Assets

- Strong support for **hyperlocal, community-centered, and thematic engagement**, with smaller VCS partners seen as agile, responsive, and central to prevention and wellbeing.
- **Existing community activity and partnerships** are valued, and building on these will improve prevention, resilience, and connections across Oxfordshire.
- **Neighbourhood hubs and community centres** are key touchpoints, particularly where the co-location of staff has already shown positive outcomes.

Collaborative Action and Governance

- **Local partnerships and subgroups** (e.g., nature partnerships, community associations) demonstrate the power of collaborative working. Sustaining and expanding these is a priority.
- Clear appetite for **participatory governance models** such as neighbourhood budgeting and community-led decision-making.
- Strong support for the **three-unitary proposal** as more responsive to local needs, with a focus on long-term outcomes rather than just cost savings.

Support for Vulnerable Residents and Communities

- Rising demand for services for **SEND children, young carers, and families** is placing pressure on small charities, who face funding gaps and capacity strains.

- Ongoing need for **sustainable support and funding models** for VCS, including reforms to commissioning and contract processes with a much more engaged and local approach, connecting residents to more local and bespoke support in their communities.

Nature, Culture, and Identity

- Enthusiasm for **green and blue spaces** as drivers of health and wellbeing, antisocial behaviour reduction, and community cohesion, with alignment to **Local Nature Recovery strategies**.
- **Align environmental and cultural priorities** across planning—embed nature recovery, green space protection, and cultural amenities in housing and transport growth.
- Protecting **Oxford's cultural identity** and ensuring cultural amenities and activities are distributed across new housing developments is vital to community cohesion and reducing travel pressures.
- **Align environmental and cultural priorities** across planning—embed nature recovery, green space protection, and cultural amenities in housing and transport growth.

Services and Accessibility

- Broad support for **person-centered, locally accessible services**, with blended digital and face-to-face delivery.
- Concerns about gaps in **basic local facilities** like GP surgeries, swimming pools, and community centres.
- **Transport and connectivity**, especially in rural and outlying areas, is a major concern. Better links to Oxford are needed for access to jobs, education, and healthcare. Integration with housing and support for sustainable transport is essential.

Opportunities and Next Steps

- Strengthen and scale up **local VCS partnerships**, especially within prevention and wellbeing work.
- Explore **participatory budgeting and neighbourhood governance** to increase community autonomy.
- Align transport, housing, and environmental planning to ensure **growth directly benefits local communities**.
- Ensure **clear protections for green spaces** and transparent communication of plans.
- Build **capacity in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector** through revised funding processes that address gaps and better link investment to local growth.

Public Meeting on Local Government Reform – September 2025

Beckley and Stowood Parish Council hosted a public meeting in September 2025 to discuss proposals for Local Government Reform. Oxford City Council was invited to present, alongside representatives from other councils and local stakeholders.

The meeting provided an overview of the three proposed Unitary Authority models, outlining their respective implications and potential benefits for the community. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion.

Presentations were delivered by:

- The Leader of Oxford City Council (Three Unitary Authorities proposal)
- The Leader of Oxfordshire County Council (Single Unitary Authority proposal)
- The Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council (Two Unitary Authorities proposal)

Approximately 90 people attended, including residents, Parish Council representatives, and local activists.

Stakeholders expressed significant interest in the implications of Local Government Reorganisation, raising a range of questions and concerns. Key themes included financial clarity and sustainability, with queries about funding arrangements and long-term financial resilience.

Governance and representation were also prominent, particularly regarding the future role and capacity of councillors, the balance between efficiency and effective representation, and the preservation of local identity. The importance of maintaining local identity and ensuring accessibility to council services - including the ability to speak to someone in person in an office-based environment - was highlighted, particularly in the context of a potentially larger, or more remote unitary authority.

Environmental issues featured strongly, with calls for robust greenbelt protection and clarity on how environmental sustainability would be prioritised amid planning and housing pressures.

Partnership working was another area of focus, with questions about integration with key partners such as Thames Valley Police, the BOB Integrated Care Board, and South-Central Ambulance Service. The need for clear communication and engagement with Parish Councils was also highlighted.

Finally, concerns were raised about whether public views, such as opposition to congestion charges, are genuinely considered in decision-making, transport and connectivity, and 'Will Parish Councils really be involved and listened to'.

October 2025 Oxford Housing and Growth – Business Stakeholder Survey

The City Council sought the views of local businesses and employers to help inform the shape of Local Government Reorganisation that best supports future planning for housing and economic growth in and around Oxford city. Insights from this short survey contributes to ongoing work to understand how Oxford can meet its housing needs while supporting business growth and sustainable development.

35 responses were received to the City Council survey, across the Health, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, Education, University, Property, Retail and Voluntary sectors.

- Over 80% of respondents said being located in or near Oxford is very or extremely important to their business success.
- Around 68% strongly agree that Oxford should go beyond government's housing delivery targets.
- Almost 85% agree that affordable housing near Oxford is important for business growth.
- 46% favour building additional homes close to the city, including suitable locations within the Green Belt. (23% would prefer development beyond the Green Belt)
- Over half (54%) believe future development should balance new homes with employment space.

Summary findings from the Business Stakeholder survey:

Location Importance

How important is being located within or near Oxford to the success of your business? - Please explain why being located within or near Oxford is important (or not) to your business, and any benefits or challenges you experience.

Being located within or near Oxford is generally considered highly important for most stakeholders, with significant benefits in client proximity, community engagement, academic and professional networking, and operational efficiency.

Challenges such as congestion, cost of living, and planning complexity are acknowledged but often seen as manageable trade-offs for the strategic advantages of an Oxford location.

30

responses received.

Housing Delivery Target

To what extent do you agree that Oxford should go beyond the government's target for delivering new homes in and around the city?

- 26 Responses received on this question.

Stakeholders generally support additional housing in and around Oxford, with a strong emphasis on affordability, accessibility, and community integration. Many highlight the need to ensure housing supports the local workforce, including essential and lower-paid employees, while avoiding sprawl or unsustainable development.

Some stakeholders also stress that housing growth must be carefully managed to protect green spaces, historic areas, and the city's character, and be accompanied by supporting infrastructure such as transport, schools, and community facilities.

Importance of Affordable Housing for Business Growth

To what extent do you agree that the supply of affordable housing near Oxford is important for business growth?

- 21 responses received.

Stakeholders consistently highlight that affordable housing is essential for attracting and retaining a full spectrum of workers, supporting local businesses, and sustaining Oxford's broader economy. Without access to reasonably priced housing, recruitment and workforce stability are significantly constrained, which can impact productivity, service delivery, and the city's research and innovation ecosystem.

Affordable housing is also seen as important for community cohesion, sustainable commuting, and supporting public services, such as schools, while helping create a diverse and vibrant city centre that sustains businesses and the wider economy.

Priorities for Housing Locations

Alongside sites within the city, where should we prioritise building the additional homes Oxford needs?

- 19 responses received.

Overall, stakeholders support a balanced approach: densifying the city, making use of brownfield and greyfield sites, carefully extending into areas with good transport links, and avoiding or minimally impacting Green Belt land and existing green spaces.

Priorities for Future Development

How should future development be prioritised?

- 17 responses received.

Stakeholders emphasise the need for a balanced, mixed-use approach that supports both housing and economic growth. While there is strong support for new homes, particularly to address affordability and workforce recruitment, many also stress the importance of preserving and providing commercial, office, and research space to sustain Oxford's economy, including the arts, leisure, and high-tech sectors.

Commercial Development and Jobs Near Oxford

What do you feel about delivering more commercial development and jobs close to the city of Oxford, in suitable locations in the Green Belt?

- 19 responses received.

Stakeholders support strategic commercial development near Oxford, particularly to support the knowledge economy and sustainable commuting, but stress that Green Belt land should generally be protected, brownfield sites prioritised, and housing provision integrated to support the workforce.

Stakeholder Engagement register

Stakeholder	Sector	Format
GP Partner - Clinical Director - Oxford	Health	Meeting
Boundary Commission for England	Public administration and governance	Meeting
3 Unitary Authority - Survey	Public	Survey
Key Oxford City Stakeholders	Cross-sector strategic collaboration - Oxford	Letter
Oxford Civic Society	Civic registered charity	Meeting and
Oxford Residents Panel	Public	Survey
Oxford Growth Commission	Economic development and infrastructure	Meeting
Oxford Strategic Partnership: - Public Sector - Business Sector - Community Sector - Health Sector - Education Sector - Thames Valley Police - Voluntary Sector	Cross-sector strategic collaboration - Oxford	Meetings
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils	Public administration and governance	In-person. (All Oxfordshire proposals represented)
Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action workshop - 23 VCSE organisations were represented	Third Sector	In-person. (All Oxfordshire proposals represented)
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Public administration and governance	Meeting
Oxfordshire County Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Cherwell District Council	Public administration and governance	Meeting
South Oxfordshire District Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Vale of White Horse District Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
West Oxfordshire Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
West Berkshire County Council	Public administration and governance	Meeting
Abingdon (Vale of White Horse District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Banbury (Cherwell District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Berinsfield (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Botley (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Didcot (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Kidlington (Cherwell District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event

Newbury (West Berkshire Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Oxford (Oxford City Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Wheatley (South Oxfordshire District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Witney (West Oxfordshire District Council)	Public - In the community	Drop-In Event
Beckley and Stowood Parish Council - Public & Parishes	Public - In the community	Public meeting
Oxford City Council - Corporate Policy Officers Group (internal)	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford City Council - Employees	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford City Council & Oxford Direct Service - Employee Focus Groups	Public administration and governance	Focus Groups
Oxford City Council - Leadership Conversation	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford City Council - Internal Officer groups	Public administration and governance	Workshops
Oxford City Council - Internal Framing Groups	Public administration and governance	Workshops
Oxford City Council - Leaders Group	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford City Council - Group Leaders	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford City Council - Elected Member sessions - Social Services, Communities, and Housing Integration - Transport - Governance and Local Representation - Housing and Economy	Public administration and governance	Workshops
Lee Dillon MP (MP for Newbury)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Calum Miller MP (MP for Bicester and Woodstock)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Charlie Maynard MP (MP for Witney)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Freddie Van Mierlo MP (MP for Henley and Thame)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Layla Moran MP (MP for Oxford West and Abingdon)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Olly Glover MP (MP for Didcot and Wantage)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Rt Hon Anneliese Dodds MP (MP for Oxford East)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Sean Woodcock MP (MP for Banbury)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Olivia Bailey MP (MP for Reading West and Mid-Berkshire)	UK Parliament	Meeting
Matt Rodda MP (MP for Reading Central)	UK Parliament	Discussion
Yuan Yang MP for Ealrley and Woodley)	UK Parliament	Discussion
Thames Valley Police Crime Commissioner	Public administration and governance	Meeting
Thames Valley Police Chief Superintendent	Public administration and governance	Meeting
Unison and Unite	Public Service Unions	Meeting
Healthwatch Oxfordshire	Health	Written feedback
Secondary Education	Education	Meetings

Voluntary and Community Stakeholders - 3 sessions, with representation from 13 organisations.	Third Sector	On-line Drop-In Events
Oxfordshire County Council - Service Transformation for Adult Social Care	Teach-In Session	Briefing
Oxfordshire County Council - Service Transformation for Children's Services & SEND (Teach-In session)	Teach-In Session	Briefing
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Teach-In Session	Briefing
Conference of Colleges - University and landowning colleges	Higher Education	Meeting
Oxford Housing & Growth - Business Stakeholders	Oxford Business Stakeholders	Survey
Oxford Business Stakeholders	Oxford Business Stakeholders	Meetings
Oxford Brookes University (Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University)	Higher Education	Meeting
Oxford Bus Company	Public Transport	Meeting
Fast Cities Group: - Cambridge City Council - Milton Keynes Council - Norwich City Council - Oxford City Council - Peterborough City Council - Swindon Borough Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust	Health	Meeting
Cathedral Cities Group: - Cambridge City Council - City of Lincoln Council - Exeter City Council - Gloucester City Council - Ipswich Borough Council - Norwich City Council - Oxford City Council	Public administration and governance	Meetings
District Councils Network	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Mayoral Strategic Authority - Summits	Public administration and governance	Meetings
Reading Borough Council	Public administration and governance	Meeting
Swindon Borough Council	Public administration and governance	Meeting