

Oxford City Council

Local Development Scheme
2025 - 2030

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Introduction

- 1.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced the requirement for councils to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS specifies which local development documents are to be development plan documents and sets out the work programme for the preparation of documents to be included in the Development Plan. This document supersedes first version of the Oxford 2025-2030 LDS.

What is the Local Development Scheme?

- 1.2. This LDS is a five-year project plan for preparing documents and provides the starting point for the local community, businesses, developers and other interested parties to find out what the City Council's current planning policies are for the area. It includes 'milestones' to inform the public about opportunities to get involved with the plan making process and to let them know the likely dates for involvement. The LDS is published on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/lds.

Oxford's Development Plan

- 2.1. Oxford's Development Plan contains a range of documents to guide development within Oxford. Applications for planning permission are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Council-produced documents within the statutory Development Plan are subject to community and stakeholder involvement, and an independent examination by an Inspector to ensure that the necessary legal requirements for the preparation of the document have been met and the document is 'sound'. All these documents are subject to the European Strategic Environment Assessment Directive and will incorporate a sustainability appraisal to ensure that they accord with the principles of sustainable development. They must be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.2. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide further details and guidance to supplement policies. SPDs are adopted by the City Council following public consultation, and are not part of the statutory Development Plan.

Documents in Oxford's Development Plan

- 2.3. Currently, the statutory Development Plan consists of:
 - Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 (June 2020)
 - Barton Area Action Plan (December 2012)
 - Northern Gateway Area Action Plan (July 2015)
 - Headington Neighbourhood Plan (July 2017)
 - Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Plan (April 2019)
 - Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan (June 2021)

Oxford Local Plan 2036

- 2.4. The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 was adopted in 2020 and superseded the following documents:
- Saved policies of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (November 2006)
 - Oxford Core Strategy (March 2011)
 - Sites and Housing Plan (February 2013)
- 2.5. The Adopted Policies Map (2020) illustrates graphically the policies and proposals of the adopted Local Plan. The Policies Map (2020) reflects the policies of the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.6. The Localism Act introduced new rights and powers to enable communities to get directly involved in planning for their areas. Neighbourhood planning allows communities to come together through a parish council or formal neighbourhood forum and produce a neighbourhood plan. Neighbourhoods can decide what they want to cover in their neighbourhood plan. They may allocate land for development, or influence the type and design of development that comes forward. Neighbourhood plans must however be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies already adopted by the City Council. They should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan and/or undermine its strategic policies. They are also subject to an independent examination and need to be approved by a majority vote in a local referendum.
- 2.7. Once plans are adopted they will become part of the Development Plan. To date, Oxford City Council has formally designated five neighbourhood areas where plans are being led by neighbourhood forums. Three Neighbourhood Plans, Headington, Wolvercote and Summertown and St Margaret's, are made. Two more are being prepared: Blackbird Leys and Littlemore

Other Documents

- 2.8. In addition to the Oxford Development Plan there are several other important planning documents:
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (July 2025)
 - West End SPD
 - Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (June 2021)

Statement of Community Involvement in Planning (SCI)

- 2.9. The Statement of Community Involvement in Planning sets out how the Council will involve the community in the planning process, including Local Plans and Development Management. It sets out the activities that the Council will undertake to reach stakeholders and the public during the various stages of preparation of Local Plan documents. The most recent SCI was adopted at Cabinet on 16th June 2021. It can be viewed at www.oxford.gov.uk/sci.

Annual Authority Monitoring Report

- 2.10. Each year the City Council produces an Authority Monitoring Report, which is approved at the City Cabinet in the autumn. The Authority Monitoring Report has the following main functions:

- to measure progress made in respect of the planning documents being prepared;
- to review the effectiveness of the adopted planning policies;
- to monitor the extent to which policies and targets in adopted documents are being achieved against a range of indicators.

2.11. The most recent Authority Monitoring Reports produced by the City Council can be viewed on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/amr.

CIL Charging Schedule

2.12. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area, based on the principle that most development has some impact on infrastructure and should contribute to the cost of providing or improving infrastructure. Oxford City Council is the charging authority for the Community Infrastructure Levy in Oxford, meaning it sets and collects the levy, coordinates the spending of the funds and reports on this spending annually.

2.13. Oxford City Council commenced charging CIL on 21st October 2013. The Charging Schedule sets out the tariff per M² of various development types. A partial review of the CIL Charging Schedule, focused on employment floorspace, was adopted on 14th July 2025.

Work Programme for 2025-2030

- 3.1. During the period covered by this LDS, the City Council will commence / continue work on the following documents:

Development plan documents

- Oxford Local Plan 2025-2045
- Neighbourhood Plans

Other documents

- Annual Authority Monitoring Report

Development Plan documents

Local Plan 2025-2045

- 3.2. Government guidance expects that all Plans are reviewed every 5 years. That is to say that the Plan must have been reviewed by the date 5 years after adoption in order for there to be an up-to-date plan. The Local Plan 2016-2036 was adopted on 8th June 2020 and contains policies based on relatively recent evidence. Given that a Local Plan takes considerable time to produce, a review was started a relatively short time after the adoption of the Local Plan 2036. Work began on the Oxford Local Plan 2040 in 2020, with an Issues consultation taking place in 2021. The timetable for this document was set with the intention that it would be adopted by June 2025, five years after the adoption of the Oxford Local Plan 2036. The Oxford Local Plan 2040 was submitted for examination in March 2024, with a recommendation after an initial set of hearings that it be withdrawn.
- 3.3. The withdrawal of the Oxford Local Plan 2040 means that that plan in the form it was previously agreed no longer exists. It must be reviewed, and that review means it is, in legal terms, a different document that must therefore follow all statutory processes. That means that the statutory consultations (Regulation 18 and Regulation 19) must be repeated. However, all the work that went into the Oxford Local Plan 2040 can be built upon, rather than starting again from scratch.
- 3.4. The Regulation 18 consultation took place in June-August 2025. Since that time, the decision has been made to change the plan period from 2022-2042 to 2025-2045. This has necessitated an update to the evidence base, which has led to a slight delay. The Regulation 19 consultation is now scheduled to begin in January 2026, rather than November 2025, with a subsequent 2-month delay to all other milestones.
- 3.5. The Government published a revised NPPF in December 2024. The revised plan will need to follow the new NPPF. Key features of the revised NPPF that are relevant include the move to use only the revised standard method to assess housing need, and the introduction of Grey Belt.
- 3.6. Only plans submitted by December 2026 can be examined under the Planning Act 2004. Changes to the Planning Act 2004 could require a radical new approach that Oxford Local Plan 2045 and its production process may not comply with. There are many other reasons to attempt a very quick turn-around of Regulation

18 and Regulation 19 consultations, not least that it minimises the chance of the evidence-base becoming out of date and needing to be re-done and it minimises the time for which there is no local plan in place that was adopted within the previous 5 years. Within the 5 year period, a plan is considered up-to-date unless it can be shown otherwise. After 5 years, a plan does not automatically become out-of-date, but a review needs to determine the policies are still in-line with national guidance and relevant local circumstances. Undertaking a new plan will help this review process, and the further advanced it is, the greater it will show what in the Local Plan 2036 is still relevant.

- 3.7. The Oxford Local Plan 2045 will replace the Oxford Local Plan 2036. This document, as well as any neighbourhood plans, will form the statutory Development Plan. Following the council meeting to approve the pre submission draft, that draft will be used as a material consideration for development management decisions on planning applications; its weight will be limited initially, but increases as it proceeds towards adoption.
- 3.8. The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 has sufficient flexibility to deal with a twenty-year period and the policies within it place Oxford in a strong position to effectively manage growth and change that will face the city over this period. The Local Plan 2036 Inspector's report in paragraph 39 says that: 'the examination hearings took place before the Covid-19 epidemic. Whilst the short-term effects are here for all to see, there is currently no evidence that the fundamental assumptions and requirements of the plan in respect of housing need, or indeed any other strategic matter, will be affected to the extent that its soundness will be undermined.'

Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.9. Two neighbourhood plan areas have been defined but do not yet have a made neighbourhood plan, which are Littlemore, and Blackbird Leys. Work on these will take place during this LDS period. The Summertown and St Margaret's neighbourhood forum is also considering a review of its neighbourhood plan.

Other documents

Annual Authority Monitoring Report

- 3.10. Each year the City Council produces an Authority Monitoring Report. This will be taken for Cabinet approval in December 2025 for publication in December 2025. The Authority Monitoring report published in December 2025 will be reporting on the monitoring year 2024/25.

Appendix 1: Gantt chart of the LDS work programme 2025-2030

	2025	2026											2027											2028	2029		
	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		
Local Plan 2022-2042																											
Annual Monitoring Report																											

Start	
Publish	
Preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18)	
Proposed Submission Consultation (Reg 19)	
Submit	
Inspector's Report*	
Adopt*	

*These are estimates- once the plan is submitted, the timetable is in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate.