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## 1.1 Context

1.1.1 The importance of Oxford's architectural heritage needs no elaboration. There is also a significant natural heritage which forms the green framework for the famous views into and out of Oxford, and also offers a concentration of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) that is probably unmatched by any other urban area.

1.1.2 Oxford has a resident population of approximately 145,000. It also has a huge housing need, even when compared with other cities in the South East region. Oxford has a large student population, with an estimated 27,000 at the two Universities alone.

1.1.3 Oxford has several important functions:

- a centre of higher education (with two universities);
- a major shopping centre;
- a tourist centre;
- a centre for public services; and
- a centre of manufacture.

1.1.4 Oxford is one of the largest employment centres in the South East with up to 100,000 jobs. It plays an important role in the South East regional economy, which in turn makes a key contribution to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

1.1.5 Oxford is well located, with easy access to international airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham and Luton), the railway network, and the M40 motorway. Oxford is within the M3/M40 wedge, and forms one end of the Oxford-Cambridge arc.

1.1.6 Oxford has a high level of in-commuting, with about half its workforce living outside its boundary. With more than 5 million visitors a year, a large sub-regional catchment area for shopping and other services, and a rapidly growing population, these have major implications for planning policy in Oxford.

1.1.7 As well as a City famous for its architecture and University, there is another, less well known Oxford, which has pockets of high unemployment, many houses in multiple-occupation, and homelessness.

## 1.2 Role and Purpose of the Plan

1.2.1 This Local Plan sets out the policies and proposals for future development and land use in Oxford for the period 2001 to 2016.

1.2.2 The Plan's objective is to promote positive measures to improve the local environment and to meet the needs of local communities. The Plan needs to control development, that might harm the environment, and also needs to encourage remedial action where damage has already occurred.

1.2.3 The purposes of this Plan are:

- to interpret National, Regional, and Strategic planning policies and to relate them to Oxford;
- to set a clear framework and policies against which planning applications in Oxford can be assessed;
- to set a clear framework for co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure and public and private investment in Oxford;
- to bring planning issues before the public for debate;
- to set clear objectives for the City Council to achieve, in terms of the development and improvement of the physical environment;
- to deliver the long-term vision for Oxford.

1.2.4 The Local Plan will be implemented by the City Council acting as Local Planning Authority in the determination of planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires that when determining an application it shall be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Oxford comprises this Local Plan, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Oxfordshire's Mineral and Waste Local Plans. Oxfordshire County Council is the Local Planning Authority for mineral extraction and waste disposal applications.

1.2.5 This Plan has been prepared under the Town and Country Planning Acts 1990 and 1991, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) (England) Regulations 1999. In preparing this Plan the City Council has also considered the changes to the planning system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (P&CPA). Under the P&CPA, local plans are replaced by Local Development Frameworks, so the City Council will need to review this Plan to meet the requirements of the P&CPA. The City Council has prepared a Local Development Scheme, which sets out a programme for the review of the Local Plan.

### 1.3 National, Regional and Strategic Context

1.3.1 National planning policy gives comprehensive general guidance on all aspects of development, and identifies issues where local plans have a role in interpreting national guidance. This Plan takes account of all relevant Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), Circulars and best practice advice. As far as possible, the Plan takes account of any subsequent review of Government advice.

1.3.2 In 2001, Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) was published. This document is to be superseded by the South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy), which has been prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly. The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out the vision and policies for the South East Region to 2026, and also provides the context for the production of the City Council's Local Development Framework.

1.3.3 The City Council in drafting this Plan has made the 'permitted assumption' (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) and has interpreted the deposit Structure Plan as though it was the adopted Structure Plan. The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 was issued with a certificate of General Conformity with both the adopted and emerging Oxfordshire Structure Plan (which was

adopted on the 21st October 2005). The Plan also takes account of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 produced by Oxfordshire County Council.

## 1.4 Using the Plan

1.4.1 The Plan consists of this Written Statement and a Proposals Map. The Written Statement begins with a description of the Core Policies, followed by sections on specific development issues and finally a section on all the major development sites. Where policies relate to specific sites or areas, they are shown on the Proposals Map. The text gives the reasoned justification for the policies, which are set in bold against a shaded background.

1.4.2 To avoid repetition, policies for particular uses or sites do not duplicate the contents of the other policies in this Plan, or the Development Plan as a whole. Individual policies set out in this Plan cannot be read in isolation, but need to be considered with other policies in this and other plans.

1.4.3 The Proposals Map defines areas that relate to specific policies and proposals described in the Written Statement. It comprises an Oxford-wide Plan and a City centre Inset Plan. The key to the Proposals Map includes cross-references to the relevant policies.

1.4.4 At the end of the Plan, a series of Appendices and a Glossary set out definitions of terms used in the Plan.

## 1.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

1.5.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide further advice on matters included in the Plan. SPDs can focus on specific sites, and also on citywide issues such as affordable housing. The City Council will prepare SPDs from time to time and will undertake consultation with the public during the development of any SPD. Planning Officers will use SPDs as a material consideration in determining planning applications, so applicants should ensure they supply enough evidence in their planning applications to demonstrate that they have considered and met the requirements of the SPDs.

1.5.2 The Council has also prepared some Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPG). Although SPGs will eventually be replaced by SPDs under the new system, during the transitional period some SPGs will still carry weight and be a material consideration in determining planning applications. Further information as to the relevant SPGs / SPDs will be provided by Council Officers at the time of a planning application. The Oxford Local Development Scheme 2005-2008 sets out the status of existing SPGs and the timetable for preparing SPDs.

1.5.3 The City Council has identified a number of sites where development is likely to come forward during the life of this Plan. Development Guidelines have been produced for some of these sites. During the life of this Plan other sites may come forward, and it is the City Council's intention to produce Development Guidelines for sites where appropriate. The Guidelines will be an important material consideration when determining a planning application on such sites.

## 1.6 Sustainability Appraisal

1.6.1 Economic, social and environmental issues are inextricably linked. The 'Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK' focuses on the simple idea of a 'better life for everyone, now and for generations to come'. The national strategy develops this concept into four objectives for sustainable development:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- effective protection of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources; and
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

Local Plans have a role in meeting these objectives.

1.6.2 This Plan must also be considered against the vision for the South East as set out in Regional Planning Guidance, RPG9. This Guidance aims to:

- encourage economic success;
- ensure a higher quality of environment through the management of natural resources;
- offer opportunity and equity for the Region's population; and
- establish a more sustainable pattern of development.

It focuses on:

- enabling urban renaissance;
- promoting regeneration and renewal;
- concentrating development in urban areas;
- promoting a prosperous and multi-purpose countryside; and
- promoting wider choice in travel options, so reducing reliance on the private car.

1.6.3 The Local Plan aims to achieve the sustainability objectives of both documents outlined above, in so far as they are relevant to Oxford. It is via the rigorous application of sustainable development principles that the economic, social and environmental well-being of Oxford can be maintained and enhanced.

1.6.4 The City Council is required to consider the environmental implications of proposals and policies in this Plan. We have used the list of 'sustainability criteria' in developing the Local Plan policies and proposals. The Sustainability Appraisal of the Second Draft Oxford Local Plan is published as a separate document.

## 1.7 City Council's Vision

1.7.1 This Plan contributes to the delivery of the City Council's vision, which aims to:

- improve the environments where people live and work;
- make Oxford a safer City;
- provide more affordable housing;
- create local prosperity and sustain full employment;
- improve transport and mobility;
- improve dialogue and consultation;
- provide more and improved affordable leisure activities.

## 1.8 Preparation of the Plan and Public Consultation

1.8.1 The Plan has been prepared following extensive public consultation. The City Council has sought to involve a wide range of stakeholders through various participation techniques. The results of the consultation indicated broad support for the main thrust of the Plan's policies. Details of how and who were consulted are included in a separate document, 'Oxford Local Plan 2001 to 2016 - Statement of Public Consultation'.

1.8.2 In addition to the public comments received, a wide of range of information was considered in determining the final content of the Plan. Planning is ultimately a balancing exercise which seeks to deliver developments that will meet the needs of the wider community while trying to protect Oxford's natural and built environment.

## 1.9 Monitoring

1.9.1 The Government requires local planning authorities to keep under review matters that may affect the development and planning of their area. Monitoring is critical in developing and implementing a sound policy framework to achieve overall land-use objectives and is key to policy development and review. An Annual Monitoring Report will detail the results and be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of December each year, starting in 2005.

1.9.2 Regular monitoring will be essential to establish how the Plan is working in practice, by assessing whether the policies set out are being sufficiently implemented on the ground and have the desired effect. Monitoring will take place continuously and may result in changes to the Plan.

1.9.3 As far as possible, the policies and proposals in this Plan are stated in a way that will facilitate monitoring and review. Monitoring will provide the information necessary to review the Local Plan, and to keep it up to date. Monitoring information should be used to determine:

- whether the policies are still appropriate to the Plan's aims and objectives;
- whether the policies are actually being implemented;
- whether the assumptions behind the policies remain valid;
- the pace of development;
- whether the policies are achieving their objectives.

1.9.4 The baseline date of information in the Plan, including the planning status of individual sites, is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001. This information will be updated annually as part of the monitoring programme.

1.9.5 Monitoring may indicate that a particular part of the Plan requires some more detailed guidance. This would be identified in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and will be addressed through the publication of SPDs, development guidelines or an Area Action Plan.