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5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Oxford contains a great wealth of buildings of all types and ages, and archaeological material, above and below ground. At 2005 Oxford had sixteen conservation areas, over 1,500 listed buildings, and eleven scheduled monuments. The sites, buildings, areas and their contexts are of great significance and deserve special protection. The more ordinary elements, rather than the spectacular, also help to give the historic environment its distinctiveness.

5.1.2 Decisions involving the protection and enhancement of historic buildings and historic areas should ensure that their special interest is sustained for future generations to value and enjoy. The policies in this section seek to ensure that all elements of the historic environment are considered and that there is informed analysis of any proposals that will impact on them.

5.1.3 The Local Plan is prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990). Listed buildings and conservation areas are additionally controlled by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and any proposal for development within or affecting a conservation area or a listed building will be judged against this Act.

5.2 Archaeology

5.2.1 Archaeological remains provide valuable evidence that contributes to the understanding of important elements in the development of Oxford – a Bronze Age barrow cemetery; a Roman pottery industry; an early Christian centre; an academic community; and the capital of Royalist England in the 17th century. Such remains are a finite and non-renewable resource that requires appropriate management to ensure they survive in good condition. Developers should consider the existence of archaeological remains on a site at an early stage, to allow sympathetic designs to be made.

5.2.2 Eleven scheduled monuments are physical evidence of Oxford's significance in the historical environment of the British Isles. They range in date from prehistoric to the industrial revolution. A current list of the scheduled monuments in Oxford is shown in Appendix 5.

POLICY HE.1 - NATIONALLY IMPORTANT MOMUMENTS

Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would have an unacceptable effect on a nationally important monument (whether or not it is scheduled) or its setting.

The scheduled monuments are shown on the Proposals Map.

5.2.3 The Proposals Map identifies the City centre Archaeological Area. The City Council will require an archaeological assessment, which may include field evaluation, as part of any planning application that involves significant breaking of the ground in the City centre Archaeological Area, regardless of previous archaeological information on the application site. In addition, there are known concentrations of past human activity elsewhere in Oxford and the City Council is also likely to require an archaeological assessment in these areas. Archaeological remains should be protected or investigated scientifically before development so that the information can become the base for new understanding. The City Council will seek the preservation of deposits or remains through the modification of designs, including siting and location of foundations to mitigate adverse

effects. Where preservation of deposits is not possible or feasible, archaeological investigation and recording may be an acceptable alternative. Planning conditions and/or a planning obligation may be used to ensure that the applicant makes satisfactory provision for archaeological investigation and recording prior to the start of the development. In areas where there is evidence that archaeological deposits or remains may exist, but where the extent and importance of these remains or deposits is unknown, applicants will be requested to arrange an archaeological field assessment before a planning application is determined and where appropriate, secure the archiving of the results.

POLICY HE.2 - ARCHAEOLOGY

Where archaeological deposits that are potentially significant to the historic environment of Oxford are known or suspected to exist anywhere in Oxford but in particular the City centre Archaeological Area, planning applications should incorporate sufficient information to define the character and extent of such deposits as far as reasonably practicable, including, where appropriate:

- a. the results of an evaluation by fieldwork; and
- b. an assessment of the effect of the proposals on the deposits or their setting.

If the existence and significance of deposits is confirmed, planning permission will only be granted where the proposal includes:

- c. provision to preserve the archaeological remains in situ, so far as reasonably practicable, by sensitive layout and design (particularly foundations, drainage and hard landscaping); and
- d. provision for the investigation and recording of any archaeological remains that cannot be preserved, including the publication of results, in accordance with a detailed scheme approved before the start of the development.

The City Centre Archaeological Area is defined on the Proposals Map.

5.3 Listed Buildings

5.3.1 Listed buildings are a finite and irreplaceable resource that have statutory protection because of their special architectural or historic interest. The best way to properly care for and manage listed buildings is to ensure that they remain in a use that is appropriate to their special qualities. Many listed buildings can accommodate some degree of alteration or extension to allow their use to continue, provided that the matter is handled sensitively. Only in exceptional circumstances will the City Council grant planning permission for proposals involving the demolition of a listed building.

5.3.2 Existing fixtures and fittings within or outside a listed building should be protected during the works and retained following development. Change of use of listed buildings will be considered where there is no conflict with protected land uses and other policies in the Plan.

5.3.3 The setting of listed buildings is important and can be extensive, depending on the views in and out. As well as their intrinsic value, listed buildings can have value as a group of buildings or as

part of a townscape, village street or college. This setting and contribution to the wider environment needs to be fully considered and respected when proposing extensions, alterations or new buildings. Setting should not be interpreted too narrowly and may involve long-distance views of a building, structure or open space.

5.3.4 Listed Building consent may be required to undertake any alteration or development of a listed building.

POLICY HE.3 - LISTED BUILDINGS AND THEIR SETTING

Planning permission will be granted for the re-use of redundant or unused listed buildings for new purposes compatible with their character, architectural integrity and setting.

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving demolition of a statutory listed building.

Planning permission will only be granted for works involving an alteration or extension to a listed building that is sympathetic to and respects its history, character and setting.

Planning permission will only be granted for development which is appropriate in terms of its scale and location and which uses materials and colours that respect the character of the surroundings, and have due regard to the setting of any listed building.

5.3.5 Listed buildings are often structures that have evolved over time, so they can contain important evidence about their past, building techniques, traditions in history, and the evolution of a settlement. The City Council will ensure that this evidence is recorded by attaching conditions to a planning permission or listed building consent.

POLICY HE.4 - ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS WITHIN LISTED BUILDINGS

Where the structure of a listed building is considered to conceal important archaeological evidence or remains, planning permission will not be granted for works that would have a significant effect on the structure, or offer an opportunity to better understand the building, unless the applicant has agreed a programme of investigation, recording of the structure and publication of the results, which will be secured by conditions.

Fire Safety

5.3.6 Development proposals may raise issues of fire safety and means of escape that can conflict with the need to preserve and protect features of interest (both internally and externally). These issues need to be considered early in the design process to allow a proper assessment of the impact of fire safety measures on the special interest of listed buildings. If fire escape staircases are essential, they should be located inside the building wherever possible. External staircases should not be located on principal elevations and should be designed to respect the special character and interest of the listed building.

POLICY HE.5 - FIRE SAFETY IN LISTED BUILDINGS

Planning permission will only be granted for proposals affecting a listed building which involve fire precautions, and in particular fire escapes, if the City Council is satisfied that

both design and fire safety requirements can be met without harm to the special interest of the building or setting.

5.4 Buildings of Local Interest

5.4.1 Some buildings in Oxford are not statutorily listed but are of historic interest and contribute to the area's character and local distinctiveness. While these buildings may not merit listing, they have a local interest that is valued by the local community. These buildings are included on a 'local list' that the City Council will compile, review and make available to the public.

5.4.2 When assessing buildings to be included on the Buildings of Local Interest list, the City Council will consider the extent to which they:

- are of local historical interest;
- contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the area; and
- are valued by the local community.

5.4.3 When a Building of Local Interest exists on a site to be redeveloped, its retention can enhance the design of the new development, provide historical interest, and aid the regeneration of the site.

POLICY HE.6 - BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST

Planning permission will only be granted for development that involves the demolition of a Building of Local Interest, or that would have an adverse impact on the building or its setting, if:

- a. the applicant can justify why the existing building cannot be retained or altered to form part of the redevelopment; and**
- b. the development will make a more positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.**

5.5 Conservation Areas

5.5.1 Conservation areas are designated by the City Council where there is a valued distinctive character which the City Council consider deserves special protection. Key elements of a conservation area that the City Council may include are the architectural design or historic interest of buildings; the materials, in terms of colour and texture; the contribution of green and open spaces; street patterns and spaces between buildings; and views in and out of the area. The City Council will use its planning powers to preserve and enhance the special character, appearance and setting of each conservation area. Design issues in, or affecting, a conservation area are dealt with by Policy CP.8 in Section 2.0, Core Policies.

5.5.2 The City Council will review the boundaries of existing conservation areas and will consider the designation of new conservation areas as necessary and as resources allow. Appendix 5 provides the current list of conservation areas in Oxford.

5.5.3 Conservation area consent may be required to undertake any kind of development in or development that affects a conservation area.

POLICY HE.7 - CONSERVATION AREAS

Planning permission will only be granted for development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the conservation areas or their setting.

Planning permission will not be granted for proposals involving the substantial demolition of a building or structure that contributes to the special interest of the conservation areas.

The boundaries of the conservation areas are shown on the Proposals Map.

5.6 Important Parks and Gardens

5.6.1 Oxford contains many important parks and gardens. Parks and gardens of particular historical importance are listed by English Heritage in a Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. At 2003 Oxford had fifteen historic parks and gardens, and these are listed in Appendix 5.

5.6.2 There are also locally important parks and gardens. Both registered and non-registered parks and gardens may be important because of their design or design history, the plants they contain; their historic significance; or their relationship with adjacent buildings and structures. In many cases, the designed open space is an important element of the whole building design. The City Council will resist changes that would harm the character or setting of important parks and gardens, important plant material (particularly trees), views and other features.

POLICY HE.8 - IMPORTANT PARKS AND GARDENS

Planning permission will not be granted for any development that will adversely affect the visual, historical or horticultural character of an historic park or garden or its setting, whether or not it is included on the statutory register.

Planning permission will be granted for development that avoids the loss of key features, retains the essential character of the site and assists with the protection, management and restoration of important parks and gardens.

Management plans, where appropriate, will be secured by a planning condition or planning obligation.

Historic Parks and Gardens on the statutory register are indicated on the Proposals Map.

5.7 High Buildings and View Cones

5.7.1 Viewed from the surrounding high places, Oxford may be seen as a City of dreaming spires. Viewed from within, there are fascinating glimpses of the surrounding and mostly green hillsides. Some of these views are from outside Oxford's boundaries; some are shorter views from prominent places within Oxford, but all are unique and vulnerable to insensitive intrusions.

5.7.2 The main characteristics of Oxford's skyline are:

- the tower of St. Mary's, which is the dominant point of the skyline from wherever it is viewed. When walking around the City, the respective positions of the spires and towers

change continually, but the spire of St. Mary's remains the dominant feature of the composition. Anything, that would endanger this predominance should be resisted;

- its extreme fragility - the skyline seems to be composed mainly of pinnacles; the occasional dome and spire only serve to accentuate the spikiness of the silhouette. In other words, it is a matter of scale. The scale of the elements in the skyline is extremely small in height and volume. The introduction of any bulky elements would destroy this essential character;
- its compactness - although from certain points of view the towers and spires seem to be spaced very widely, the area from which the silhouette sprouts is, in fact, very compact and does not extend far beyond the old city wall.

5.7.3 There are two aspects to the policies on the skyline:

- within the central core, no buildings will be allowed which interfere with the character of the skyline, i.e. no buildings of any considerable bulk should protrude;
- any buildings within the view cones shown on the Proposals Map must also be considered with extreme caution and similar rules applied as within the central core. Even where buildings do not intrude directly into the skyline, they will, form a frame to it and have to be designed accordingly.

5.7.4 To create more high-level visual diversity, pitched roofs and relatively short units of building are encouraged, with features to create a break in the line. A maximum ridge or parapet length of 25 metres without either a substantial vertical or horizontal break or interrupting feature, is the guideline that will be followed for Oxford's skyline. The City Council will resist the loss of any features, such as chimneys, if the loss would result in a simplification of the skyline.

POLICY HE.9 - HIGH BUILDING AREA

Planning permission will not be granted for any development within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax which exceeds 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260 ft) (whichever is the lower) except for minor elements of no great bulk. A lesser height may be considered more appropriate for buildings that have to fit into the existing townscape. If existing buildings (at, or in excess of, these limits) are redeveloped, the City Council will consider carefully whether rebuilding to their previous height is acceptable in terms of how it would affect the appearance of the existing townscape and skyline.

The area covered by the 1,200-metre radius of Carfax is identified on the Proposals Map.

5.7.5 The effect of high buildings on the townscape needs to be considered not only from points at street level but also in relation to the silhouette of Oxford as seen from high points in Oxford and from the surrounding hills. The City Council's View Cones' Policy seeks to protect ten views across Oxford, see Appendix 5.

5.7.6 The City Council will seek the co-operation of neighbouring planning authorities in opposing any development that would detract from, or obstruct, the outstanding views of Oxford, and in keeping view points publicly accessible.

POLICY HE.10 - VIEW CONES OF OXFORD

The City Council will seek to retain significant views both within Oxford and from outside,

and protect the green backcloth from any adverse impact. Planning permission will not be granted for buildings or structures proposed within or close to the areas that are of special importance for the preservation of views of Oxford (the view cones) or buildings that are of a height which would detract from these views.
The View Cones of Oxford are indicated on the Proposals Map.

5.8 Architectural Lighting

5.8.1 Lighting is important and can add interest to a building and help to display the quality of its architecture. It can also provide a more interesting night-time streetscape that will support the vibrancy and vitality of the City centre. However, developers must take care to ensure that it does not lead to light pollution of the surrounding area. Other lighting and safety issues are dealt with by Policies CP.9 and CP.12 in Section 2.0, Core Policies.

POLICY HE.11 - ARCHITECTURAL LIGHTING

The City Council will support the lighting of landmark features and buildings subject to the following criteria:

- a. the means of lighting will be unobtrusively sited;
- b. the level and type of lighting will enhance the feature itself and the character and amenity of the surrounding area; and
- c. there must be adequate safeguards to prevent light pollution and spillage.