

BUILDING PRIDE IN OUR CITY

PLANNING POLICY

CORE STRATEGY - ISSUES & OPTIONS

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Oxford 2026

CORE STRATEGY

Issues and options paper

June 2006



Part 1

Responding to this consultation

We would like you to help us by telling us what you think of the issues and options set out in this discussion paper. You can do this by **filling in the separate HAVE YOUR SAY questionnaire which accompanies this paper**, and returning it to us by post at the address on the right or by scanning your response and emailing it to us. You can also complete an electronic version of the questionnaire online at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy.

The separate questionnaire may help to focus your responses. However, you can make general comments about any information that we may have overlooked, or suggesting policy options that you think should be considered, either in writing or by email. Please send your comments to us by **Friday 28th July 2006**.

What will happen to my comments?

Your views will help to inform the next stage of the Core Strategy – this will set out ‘Preferred Options’ and will be published in January 2007.



By Post:

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10 St Ebbes Street
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By Email:

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On the Web:

An electronic version of this paper is available on the City Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk/corestrategy. The questionnaire can also be completed online or downloaded from this website address.



By telephone:

To discuss any aspects of this paper, please contact:

(01865) 252847

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If you would like a copy of the Issues and Options document/questionnaire in a different language or in larger print, please contact the Planning Policy team.

Translations available

অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা আছে
提供有翻譯本
तरजमे उपलब्ध हैं
उबनमे मिल सकते वन
ترجمہ دستیاب ہے

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For further information please contact the Planning Policy team (please see details above).

INTRODUCTION

The City Council has produced this paper as part of the process of seeking your views on how Oxford should plan for, and manage, change and development over the next 20 years. The paper provides some of the background information to enable people and organisations to contribute to the debate about the future of Oxford.

How does this affect me?

Planning affects many aspects of our lives – from where we live to where we work, from where and how we shop to where and how we spend our leisure time. So it is important that we get it right.

A new planning system

The Government has recently introduced a new planning system that aims to respond more quickly to changing circumstances. At present we have a Structure Plan, prepared by the County Council, and a Local Plan, prepared by the City Council. Under the new system, these will be replaced with a folder of documents called the 'Local Development Framework' (LDF). The intention is that this will make it easier to keep things up to date. Figure 1.1 illustrates these changes to the planning system.

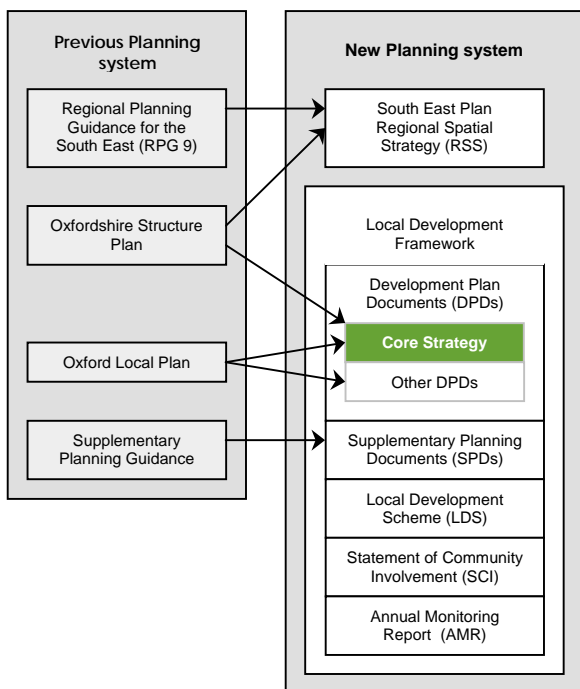


Figure 1.1 - The new planning system

Spatial Planning

The current Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, adopted in November 2005, sets out policies on what land uses are most appropriate in which locations and what can be built where. This is used to guide decisions on planning applications.

In future, however, we will go beyond that to consider how land use, design and movement should integrate with other proposals and strategies to improve the overall quality of life, including broader issues such as health, education, and community safety. This is known as spatial planning. It is not limited to things that are controlled by the City Council, so working with partners and other agencies will be vital.

What is a Core Strategy?

The Core Strategy is the document that will set out the strategic elements in the planning framework for Oxford. It is concerned with the strategic pattern of development across the City. This means that it will, for example, determine which broad areas are suitable for more housing, or require improved transport links.

The Core Strategy has to contain a spatial vision, spatial objectives and a spatial strategy. It will also include the policies needed to implement the strategy, and a system for monitoring whether the strategy is being delivered. The Core Strategy will look ahead to 2026.

The Core Strategy is a Development Plan Document (DPD), which means it will form the starting point for determining planning applications, and it needs to be considered by an independent Inspector before it can be adopted. All other DPD's must be in conformity with the adopted Core Strategy.

Land allocations, where we earmark particular areas of land for particular types of development, will be included in a later document called the 'Site Allocations DPD'. The sites chosen will need to follow the decisions taken in the Core Strategy.



The Stages of Preparation

In preparing the Core Strategy, the City Council must first develop issues and options as a starting point for discussion and community involvement. That is the purpose of this 'Issues and Options' paper. This early consultation gives the people of Oxford, and others, a first opportunity to shape and influence the Core Strategy.

There will be two further stages when we will be asking for comments, but the closer we get to the final document the less we will be able to change things. Figure 1.2 illustrates the main stages in the preparation of the Core Strategy, along with the proposed timescale. The consultation stages are shown in dark blue.

Format of this paper

This paper begins with a summary of the current policy context within which the Core Strategy has to be prepared. It then provides some background information about Oxford (the spatial portrait) and identifies the key issues facing the City. It also tries to stimulate discussion by posing some ideas about issues that Oxford might be facing in 20 years time.

The paper then seeks views on what the spatial vision and spatial objectives should be for the Core Strategy. In addition, it sets out some background information relevant to the development of the spatial strategy – i.e. what type of development is needed and where that development should be located.

Alongside this paper, we have published a separate questionnaire. This asks a number of questions about the future development of Oxford and potential spatial options that could be followed. The views gathered in this consultation process will help us to prepare the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy.



Figure 1.2 - The stages in the preparation of the Core Strategy DPD

POLICY CONTEXT

The Core Strategy will need to take into account National, Regional and Local Planning Policies.

National Policy

National policy is set out in the Government's Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), which are gradually replacing the former Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs).

The Sustainable Communities Plan – Building for the Future¹ establishes the principles and priorities for future planning, through the introduction and adoption of new actions and measures regarding sustainable communities, housing supply, decent homes, protecting the countryside and new growth areas.

Regional and Local Policy

At the Regional level the draft South East Plan² sets out the vision and the spatial strategy for the South East Region to 2026.

The Plan sub-divides the South East region into sub-regions. Oxford lies in the Central Oxfordshire Sub-region which includes Oxford City, and parts of other administrative areas – Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse.

According to the plan, the spatial strategy for this Sub-region is to “provide for development to meet the housing requirements of the area and to build on the sub-region’s economic strengths, particularly in education, science and technology”.

The South East Plan also identifies the expected housing provision for the Central Oxfordshire Sub-region between 2006 and 2026. For this period, Oxford City is expected to deliver around 7,000 dwellings (an annual average of 350 dwellings). The plan also proposes a minimum of 50% affordable housing from all new housing for this sub-region.

The South East Plan was approved for submission to Government on the 31st of March 2006. However, until its full approval and adoption, the Core Strategy must

conform with the policies set out in the adopted Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016. This document sets out the overall development strategy for Oxfordshire.

The adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001 – 2016³ contains policies and proposals to guide decisions on planning applications and appeals. Its policies will remain in place until they are gradually replaced by the Local Development Framework.

Local Transport Plan

The Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011⁴ sets out the vision for transport in Oxfordshire, and aims to improve access to jobs and services, particularly for those most in need, in ways which are both safe and sustainable. Its objectives are tackling congestion; delivering accessibility; safer roads; better air quality; and improving the street environment.

Community Strategy

The Community Strategy⁵ is prepared by the Oxford Strategic Partnership, which includes key organisations whose actions and/or services affect Oxford’s quality of life.



The Oxford’s Community Strategy “provides a foundation for developing more effective partnership working in the City. It is part of an ongoing process to link resources and capacity in Oxford across the public, business, voluntary, and community sectors”.

The preparation of the Core Strategy should take into account the Community Strategy objectives and work together with Oxford Strategic Partnership.

¹Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (2003), ODPM

²South East Plan (March 2006), SEERA

³ Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (2005), Oxford City Council

⁴ Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (2006), Oxfordshire County Council

⁵ Oxford’s Community Strategy (2004), Oxford Strategic Partnership

SPATIAL PORTRAIT OF OXFORD

Oxford is one of the most photographed, filmed and written-about cities in the world. The enduring images of architectural beauty and dreaming spires are vital to our tourist industry because it is historic Oxford that tourists visit in their millions. It is, however, only one part of the city's story.

While still with its historic core and green spaces, contemporary Oxford is a far cry from its media stereotype. It is a densely-packed urban space, which is home to a broad spectrum of communities, ethnicities, backgrounds and cultural influences. Oxford is a major centre for education, healthcare, bioscience, information technology, publishing and the motor industry and plays a significant role in the South East region.

People

The population of Oxford at 2003 was estimated at 142,400. This has resulted in high density living with an average of nearly 30 people per hectare. Due to natural change and migration, it is predicted to be 169,800 by 2028.

Oxford is ranked the 144th most deprived Local Authority out of 354 in terms of multiple deprivation indices⁶. The most deprived wards include Barton and Sandhills, Northfield Brook, Blackbird Leys, Rose Hill and Iffley and Carfax. Northfield Brook ward is in the most deprived 10% of wards in England, whereas some areas of Oxford are amongst the least deprived in England.

Life expectancy in Oxford is lower than the South East average. Health deprivation tends to be concentrated to the south of the City in areas such as Rose Hill, Blackbird Leys and parts of Barton and Sandhills⁷.

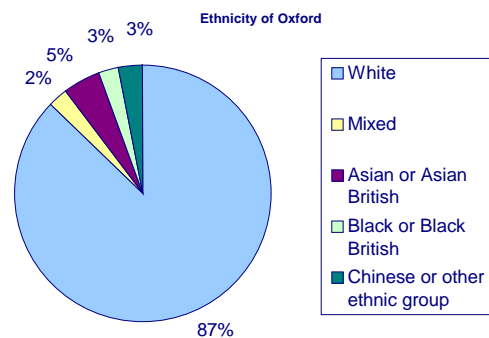
Oxford has a higher proportion of people without qualifications than Oxfordshire, the South East and England and Wales. Also, the proportion of school leavers achieving 5 GCSE's A*- C is lower than any other authority in Oxfordshire and lower than the national

⁶ Office for National Statistics (2004)

⁷ An Economic Profile of Oxfordshire (2005), Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council

average. However, Oxford has the highest proportion of residents aged 16-74 holding at least a degree⁸.

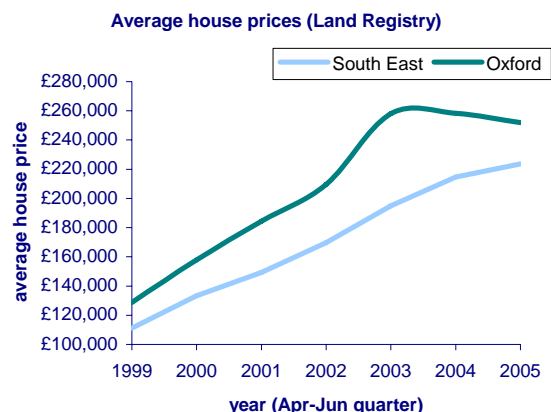
Oxford has a higher proportion of non-white ethnic groups than the average proportions in the South East and England and Wales⁹. This ethnic diversity makes Oxford a genuinely cosmopolitan city.



The number of students at both the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University is increasing more rapidly than either of the Universities had forecasted. The high number of university students (30,283 full time) boosts the proportion of 16-29 years old to 32% of the population, which is twice the national average¹⁰.

Housing

On average, house prices in Oxford are higher than the South East as a whole.



Whilst the average house price in Oxford appears to be levelling off, this level is still not matched by the average

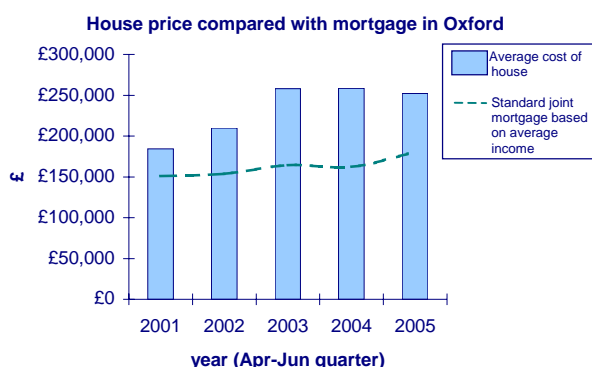
⁸ An Economic Profile of Oxfordshire (2005), Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council

⁹ Office for National Statistics (2001)

¹⁰ An Economic Profile of Oxfordshire (2005), Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council



attainable joint mortgage. Single person households are increasing and it is clearly even more difficult for single person households to purchase a property.



Aside from a general demand for more housing in Oxford, there is a shortfall of 1,700-1,800 affordable dwellings in Oxford per year¹¹. This is an insurmountable target considering that the potential for housing in Oxford is assessed to be around 452 dwellings a year (to include market and affordable) between 2001-2016¹².

Overcrowding amongst the white British Ethnic group is, at 10.5%, almost twice the South East average. Whilst amongst Asian and Asian British groups it is almost three times higher than in the white British ethnic group.

Economy

Oxford employs the greatest number of workers, but has experienced the slowest percentage increase in employment of all Oxfordshire districts between 1991 and 2001.

The unemployment figure at January 2005 for Oxford is 1.6%, which is comparable to that for the South East (1.5%). It is higher than the County at 1.0% but low in comparison to that for the UK (2.4%). The overall unemployment levels do not show the pockets of high unemployment that exist in certain parts of Oxford, as identified by Indices of Deprivation¹³.

Oxford is located at the northern edge of the South East region and has strong economic links to both London and

the Midlands. The city is central to the Oxfordshire economy as it is home to several large employers in public administration, medical research and teaching, education, publishing, car manufacturing and scientific research.

Education and Health

Education is very important to Oxford's economy, providing an estimated 13,500 jobs (nearly 20% of the total workforce). However, the economic influence of the University of Oxford extends beyond higher education and includes publishing, printing, and research and development activities. The University has calculated that over 16,000 jobs are supported directly or indirectly by the University, its colleges, Oxford University Press and spin off companies. Oxford Brookes University directly employs around 3,000 staff.

The education sector also includes more than 20 language schools and other providers, such as business schools. In addition, there is a significant teaching element within Oxford's hospitals.

The health and social work sector is also very important to Oxford's economy, accounting for over 14% of all workers. This is the fourth highest figure of all local authorities in the South East. The Churchill and John Radcliffe hospitals are major centres for healthcare research, whilst a new £35m hospital is currently being built at the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre. There are six NHS Trusts based in Oxford.

Transport

Oxford itself has extensive and frequent city-wide bus services plus services to rural areas and a train station enabling fast access to London and the Midlands. Oxford has frequent coach services to central London as well as Heathrow and Gatwick airports. It is adjacent to the M40 approximately midway between Central London (62 miles) and Birmingham (68 miles).

The 10 year period between 1991 and 2001 saw a decrease in the proportion of people travelling to work by car and an increase in the proportion using public transport. Oxford has the highest proportion of people travelling to work by bus and cycle in the whole of the

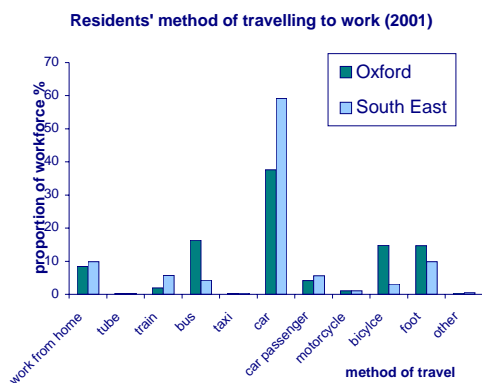
¹¹ Oxford's Housing Requirements Study (April 2004), Fordham Research Ltd

¹² Oxford Urban Potential Study (2005), Oxford City Council

¹³ An Economic Profile of Oxfordshire (2005), Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, Oxfordshire County Council



South East and one of the highest in the country. Traffic flows into the City centre dropped significantly when traffic management measures were introduced in 1999 as part of the Oxford Transport Strategy and have remained stable since. However, traffic flows in some of the City's eastern suburbs have increased in recent years.



Natural and Built Environment

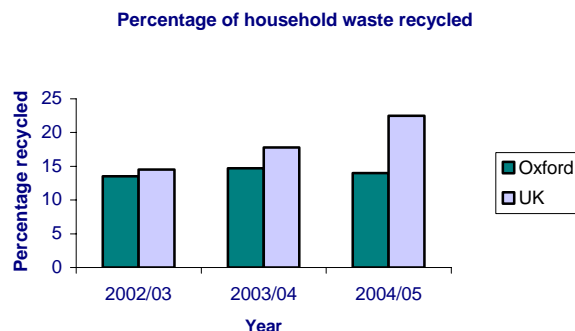
Oxford is one of the top tourist attractions in the South East and attracts visitors not only from the UK but from the rest of the world. Oxford's 'dreaming spires' are world renowned, views of which are protected from 10 view cones around the City. There are 11 Scheduled Monuments, 15 historic parks and gardens, and over 1,500 Listed Buildings in Oxford. The 16 conservation areas cover 17.3% of the total area of Oxford.

Oxford is surrounded by Green Belt and contains a Special Area of Conservation, numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and other designated nature conservation areas. Large areas of Oxford are also in the flood plain, with 3,500 properties at risk of flooding¹⁴.

Energy and Waste

Households in Oxford have been increasing the proportion of recycled waste over the past few years. Nevertheless, the overall percentage of recycled waste in Oxford (14.8% in 2004/05) was still lower than the UK average (22.5%) for that period¹⁵. Oxford does, however,

have one of the lowest amounts of waste collected per head of population.



Whilst there is no figure available yet for the amount of energy that is being generated from renewable sources, there are at least 76 properties with solar or photovoltaic panel installations in Oxford. There are also commercial developments incorporating renewable energy technology.

Crime and Safety

Considerable progress has been made in reducing crime levels in recent years. For instance, there was a 49% reduction in burglary of people's homes from 2,602 in 1998-99 to 1,330 in 2003-04 and a 32% reduction in car crime from 6,025 in 1998-99 to 4,067 in 2003-04.

However, some areas in the south of Oxford are within the 10% of areas in England with the highest crime rates. A recent survey found that in the South East of Oxford 21% of the respondents felt prevented from going out in the evenings by a fear of crime.¹⁶

The City Council's Crime And Nuisance Action Team (CANACT) has successfully targeted perpetrators of antisocial behaviour through the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, drug house closures and other interventions.

¹⁴ Oxford flood risk management study newsletter (2005), Environment Agency

¹⁵ Local Authority recycling and composting performance for 2004/05, DEFRA

¹⁶ Community Safety Audit for Oxford (2004), Oxford Safer Communities Partnership



Shopping

Oxford City centre is a popular shopping destination and performs extremely well, with a very low vacancy rate. Demand from retailers is high and the supply of floorspace is failing to keep pace.¹⁷ The Westgate site remains the principal development opportunity in Oxford's City centre to provide both the quantity and type of retail floorspace for which a need has been identified.

Tourism

It is estimated that in 2001 the number of trips to Oxford involving an overnight stay increased to about 760,000, making up approximately 3.6 million nights spent in Oxford. Total grossed expenditure generated by tourists in 2001 is estimated at some £274 million.¹⁸

Leisure, Sport and Recreation

The level of satisfaction with the cultural activities and facilities available in the city is high, with satisfaction levels in the upper quartile for museums and galleries, theatres and concert halls, and parks and open spaces. However, levels of satisfaction are significantly lower for sport and leisure facilities.

Oxford is reasonably well provided with open space, sport and leisure facilities, though there are variations in provision across the city. The quality of provision is also variable with scope for improvement on some sites.

Key Drivers for Change

In compiling the spatial portrait of the city we have identified the likely drivers of change, which the Core Strategy should seek to address and take account of. The key drivers of change can be issues that have been apparent in Oxford for some time, existing trends or new issues. All may present challenges and opportunities for the future of the City.

The key drivers of change that we have identified are set out in the following box:

Key Drivers for Change

- An increasing population forecast at 169,800 by 2028
- Increasing disparity between wealth and poverty
- Shortage of brownfield land to accommodate new development
- Expansion of the two universities
- Expansion and improvement of the hospitals
- Competition from other towns and cities for jobs and investment
- Continuing importance of Oxford to both the South East and National economy
- Information communications technology influencing work patterns - more flexible working practices and more working from home
- Increased online shopping and the implications for retail centres
- Need for significant increase in house-building in the South East
- A continued large gap between actual incomes and income needed to enter the housing market
- Increasing number of single person households
- Increasing number of tourists to Oxford and consequent employment in the tourism industry
- Greater awareness of the need to protect historic buildings, nature designations and open spaces
- Likely continued growth in car usage leading to congestion, pressure for car parking, and impact on air quality
- Proposals for the regeneration of the West End quarter of the City centre
- Expansion of the night-time economy including the impact of the new licensing laws.
- Increasing waste generation while local landfill sites are running out
- Climate change and the impact upon development in the flood plain
- Pressure on natural resources – need to reduce energy and water consumption, to develop renewable sources of energy and to recycle more waste and use more recycled/reclaimed products
- Greater focus on healthcare and healthy living
- Desire to create safer and more attractive living environments

¹⁷ Oxford's Retail Needs Study (Feb 2004), Roger Tym & Partners

¹⁸ Economic Impact of Tourism in Oxford (2001), Southern Tourist Board

SPATIAL ISSUES

This section sets out the current and future spatial issues in Oxford as derived from the spatial portrait and key drivers for change whilst also considering the likely conflicts and barriers to addressing these issues.

Key overarching issue for Oxford

Development constraints: There is a scarcity of land in Oxford to accommodate an increasing population and the development of the economy. Oxford is constrained by its tight administrative boundary, Green Belt, areas of historic and nature conservation importance and flood plain. The priorities for land uses need to be established in this context.

Housing



Insufficient market housing to meet demand: Oxford is on target to meet its housing completions target set by the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 but new housing

numbers will be set by the South East Plan. However, given the constraints in Oxford, and the attractiveness of Oxford as a place to live, it is impossible that actual need could ever be met.

Lack of affordable housing: The high house prices and shortage of land in Oxford have resulted in a lack of affordable housing for those in housing need. The Local Plan policies for delivering affordable housing, while ambitious, will still not come close to meeting the overall housing need in Oxford as it would be impossible to do so given the shortage of land.

Economy



Limited employment growth: This may have partially been influenced by many former employment sites being redeveloped for housing. The shortage of land for

development in Oxford could place added pressure on land availability for employment growth. High house prices could make Oxford a less attractive place for employers to locate as they could have trouble recruiting.

Wages in all sectors might have to be increased to attract staff, which could result in high service costs and a lower quality of life.

Differences in proportion of unemployed and long-term unemployed across the City: Whilst overall levels of unemployment in Oxford are low, the proportion of long-term unemployed is also consistently higher than the average in the South East. Even in some wards where there are low levels of people claiming unemployment, the proportion of long-term unemployed is high (e.g. Holywell, St. Margaret's and Marston). This shows that there are people deprived of access to work even within wards that have relatively low unemployment.

Need to stimulate Oxford's economy, promote diversity and prioritise regeneration areas: The overall proportion of people living in deprived areas is higher in Oxford than in other Oxfordshire Districts. This reflects the contrasts between affluence and poverty in the City. The lack of employment opportunities for people in the most deprived areas is an indicator of general deprivation.

Need to build on Oxford's strengths: Oxford is a centre of excellence for medical and scientific research, healthcare and higher education. It is also home to big employers such as publishers and the Mini car manufacturing.



Oxford should build on its strengths as far as possible. However, the shortage of land and other competing land uses could hinder their development.

Social exclusion, deprivation, education and health

High pockets of poverty, social exclusion and deprivation: Oxford might appear to be an affluent city but although affluent areas exist (mainly in North Oxford), there are also some wards that are in the most deprived 20% of the country. There are clearly disparities in the levels of wealth and deprivation across Oxford, and there is a need to consider how such disparities can be reduced so as to meet the needs of Oxford's communities and to promote personal well-being.



Need to make adequate provision for healthcare and reduce inequalities in health: Much like poverty, social inclusion and deprivation, there are disparities in health deprivation across Oxford, which need to be addressed. High levels of overcrowding in Asian British households most likely exists due to a combination of greater number of family members and having limited access to large houses. This could be because of a lack of suitably sized housing in the community where they wish to live and the overall cost of housing in Oxford.

Poor educational achievements in some areas of Oxford: There are large variations within Oxford, and some areas have a much higher proportion of those with no qualifications than the national average.

Transport



High levels of traffic flow and congestion: The reduction in vehicular traffic in the City centre is probably due to a combination of a good bus services and high parking

charges, as well as limited parking for employees who work in the City centre. Traffic has increased in some suburban areas due to increased car ownership and the location of large areas of employment. Spatial planning has a limited role in influencing car ownership but it can have a much bigger role in influencing the choices people make between various modes of transport for different trips that they make. Reducing traffic flow would reduce congestion for public transport and emergency services, as well as reducing air pollution and noise.

Further increasing public transport use: Whilst Oxford already has considerably higher levels of public transport use than the South East, a further increase could help reduce congestion and pollution. Most areas of Oxford have a very good network of bus services. However, some areas have relatively poor services in comparison to others. There is a considerable level of in-commuting to Oxford, which is probably a reflection of house prices but also the choice of people not wishing to live in Oxford. Oxford station has a fast and frequent service to London

although the limited number of platforms is recognised as hindering better services throughout the network.

Energy and Waste



Need to reduce waste generation: There is a need to reduce waste generation and increase recycling to minimise waste disposal. It is likely that recycling targets will become

more and more stringent and further efforts will be required to meet them. A reduction in waste generation would reduce pressure on landfill sites around Oxford.

Climate change: Oxford needs to contribute to reducing its impact on climate change and mitigating against its effects by reducing energy usage, increasing the level of energy generated from renewable sources and by reducing water usage. Developers are concerned that incorporating these measures into developments will be costly. However, the more widespread technologies are, the cheaper they should become.



Natural and built environment

Significant residential areas at risk of flooding: The effects of flooding can be detrimental to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment. Some areas, such as Port Meadow, need regular flooding in order to maintain their nature conservation value, but the level and duration of flooding can be critical. The development of large sites outside the flood plain may also exacerbate surface water flooding issues.

Poor air quality in the City centre: City centre levels of nitrogen dioxide are above national air quality objectives, although levels of other pollutants meet national objectives. Traffic, including buses and coaches, is the major contributory factor to levels of air pollution in the City centre.



Protecting open spaces and areas of nature conservation interest:

Oxford has a rich natural environment with landscapes of great beauty and large areas that

are of local, national or international importance for biodiversity. A high proportion of Oxford is designated as either open space, Green Belt or a nature conservation designation and there is significant value in maintaining and enhancing these areas in the face of strong development pressures.

Protection of the historic environment and view cones:

The protection of Oxford’s historic legacy is important in maintaining Oxford as a tourism destination and for creating a good environment in which people live. The increasing pressures of development in Oxford could have a negative impact upon the historic environment but there may also be opportunities to enhance it.



Improving community shopping facilities: Local shopping centres enhance the vitality of an area, create more inclusive communities and reduce the need to travel. Oxford has a variety of distinct community shopping centres and local shopping parades some of which could be improved.

Tourism

Improving tourism accommodation and facilities:

Oxford is an established centre for tourism. There is a need to improve the amount and range of short stay accommodation in the City, to provide diversity and choice for those visiting Oxford and to encourage longer stays. There are a number of established tourist attractions in Oxford but also a need to add to the range of facilities available to both visitors, residents and those working in the City. Consideration also needs to be given to the effect enhanced tourist facilities would have on transport movements in and around Oxford.



Crime and Safety

High levels of crime in some areas of Oxford: Crimes of violence against the person are higher in Oxford than in England as a whole. There is a need to reduce the disparity between crime levels in different parts of Oxford. There is, however, a large disparity within the South East generally. Public Service Agreements targets include reducing the gap between the highest crime areas and the best comparable areas. Whilst there is not always a direct link, high crime levels can contribute to a fear of crime, which can affect resident’s quality of life.

Leisure and Recreation



Providing for Oxford’s leisure and recreation needs: While Oxford has a reasonable range and distribution of leisure and recreation facilities, there is relatively little open space

provision for teenagers and in some parts of Oxford, such as Littlemore where open space provision is well below the city average. It is important for health, tourism and quality of life that the countryside in and around Oxford can be easily reached and enjoyed by residents and visitors. A facility which the city currently lacks, but which would significantly enhance recreational provision in Oxford, is a multi-purpose indoor arena that could cater for a range of leisure uses, such as conferences, performing arts, music concerts and sport events.

Shopping



High demand for retail development in the City centre: Oxford City centre remains a popular destination for shopping. There is pressure on the City

centre due to the lack of available retail floorspace. It is important for Oxford to ensure it maintains its role as a sub-regional shopping centre.



OXFORD 2026

As well as the spatial issues identified on the previous pages, new problems and opportunities are bound to emerge over the next 20 years. In order to visualise what life in Oxford might be like in 2026, it is useful to look back to see what has changed in the last 20 years. Listed below are some headlines that could have featured in the national press and the local press (bold type) since 1986.

Looking back...since 1986

- PC's to be commonplace in the home and workplace
- **BMW to take over Rover car plant**
- The internet set to revolutionise information technology
- **First residents move into Greater Leys**
- Satellite and digital television to change viewing patterns
- **Cornmarket Street to be pedestrianised**
- Next generation of mobile phones will be smaller than a human hand
- **Oxford Prison set to close**
- Multiplexes set to reverse decline in cinema audiences
- **Oxford United to move from the Manor Ground**
- Scientists warn of threat of global warming
- **Oxford firms consider long-term future (Oxford Automotives, Lucy's, Morrells Brewery)**

Looking forward...to 2026

What then might have changed by 2026? Here are a few ideas of what could change nationally and the issues that might arise for spatial planning in Oxford. Let us know your comments!

- New distance learning tools, such as holograms, to create 'virtual learning environment'
- **Will Oxford's two universities need less land?**
- Advances in information communication technology continue to change work patterns
- **Will we need less employment land? Should we be building more live-work units?**
- Increase in on-line shopping to impact on High Street retailing
- **Will High Street shopping still be important as a leisure experience? Does Oxford need more shops?**
- Advances in nanotechnology (the manipulation of tiny elements) to change the world of medicine, computers, biotechnology and manufacturing
- **What implications will this have for land-use, e.g. for our hospitals, economy, architecture and transport?**
- National road pricing scheme to be introduced
- **Would road pricing solve Oxford's traffic problems? Will new rapid transit systems be a possible solution?**
- All new housing required to be carbon-neutral
- Would innovative energy-efficient housing designs be appropriate in traditional residential areas?

Q1. Do you agree that these are the main spatial issues affecting Oxford both now and over the next 20 years?

Q2. Are there any issues that you think we may have missed?

Please use the separate questionnaire to respond.

SPATIAL VISION

The Core Strategy will set out an overall spatial vision for Oxford. This should be linked to the Community Strategy and should focus on delivery and local distinctiveness. It should explain how the area might change, both in terms of its geography and its socio-economic characteristics.

It is proposed that the Core Strategy Spatial Vision should be influenced by various existing plans and visions in order to develop a truly spatial vision. The diagram below suggests the influences we could consider in developing the Core Strategy Spatial Vision. We will be working up our Spatial Vision in more detail at the preferred options stage of the Core Strategy.



Q3. Do you agree that the Core Strategy's spatial vision for Oxford should be influenced by these existing visions?

Q4. Are there any other visions that you think we may have missed?

Please use the separate questionnaire to respond.



SPATIAL OBJECTIVES

The Core Strategy will need to have a number of Spatial Objectives, which are derived from the Issues and Spatial Vision. The Spatial Objectives will lead into the development of options for the Core Strategy.

Listed below are some existing objectives from the Oxford Local Plan and the Oxford Plan, which relate to

many of the issues already identified in this paper. We would welcome your views on whether these objectives should form the basis for the development of the Core Strategy spatial objectives, and whether there are any key issues that are not adequately covered by the objectives set out below.

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- provide decent accommodation for all, taking into account the changing household profile and housing need;
- improve accessibility for all, in and around Oxford, by modes of transport other than the private car;
- improve the range and quality of local services across Oxford;
- enhance the historic, cultural and attractive areas of Oxford;
- regenerate areas;
- reduce the consumption of non-renewable energy;
- conserve and enhance the bio-diversity in Oxford;
- promote urban design of high quality;
- conserve important open spaces; and
- minimise the opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Oxford Plan 2006-2009

- to reduce inequalities through social inclusion;
- more housing for Oxford, better housing for all;
- to improve Oxford's environment, economy and quality of life;
- to reduce and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- to tackle climate change and promote environmental resource management.

Q5. Do you agree that these should form the basis for the Spatial Objectives of the Core Strategy?

Q6. Do you wish to suggest any Spatial Objectives of your own?

Please use the separate questionnaire to respond.



A SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR OXFORD

The Core Strategy will need to set out a spatial strategy. This is essentially about land use and development, i.e. what type of development is needed and where that development should be located. It will, however, take account of the spatial implications of the plans and programmes of other agencies. The spatial strategy will not identify individual sites for development, but will give broad guidance on how development needs should be met.

Set out below is a summary of some of the major issues that will affect the spatial strategy. In the Have Your Say section at the end of this document, there are a number of questions about the possible approaches that could be followed. The aim of this is to see if we can begin to develop a consensus over our future approach, so that, at the next stage of the Core Strategy, we can set out in further detail the preferred option(s) for more in-depth discussion.

Background

Oxford faces many development pressures. These include a huge demand for market housing; a pressing need for affordable housing; enabling key employment sectors such as education, healthcare and research and development to continue to grow; and development needed to maintain the City's role as a sub-regional centre for shopping, leisure and cultural activities in the face of increasing competition from other urban centres. All of this is in the context of a scarcity of available land.

Development is constrained by Oxford's tight administrative boundaries; the Green Belt which both encircles and extends into the City; extensive areas of flood plain within the river valleys of the Thames and Cherwell; areas of nature conservation importance; and the City's outstanding architectural heritage (see constraints map on next page).

The existing Local Plan focuses nearly all the development needed up to 2016 on previously developed ('brownfield') land. Using existing brownfield land in this way, and making the most efficient use of this land by building at higher densities, helps to protect valuable open space within and around the City. However, depending on the scale, nature and precise location of brownfield developments, they can put more strain on existing infrastructure, such as roads, schools, libraries, water supply and sewerage capacity, as well as adding to traffic congestion in residential areas.

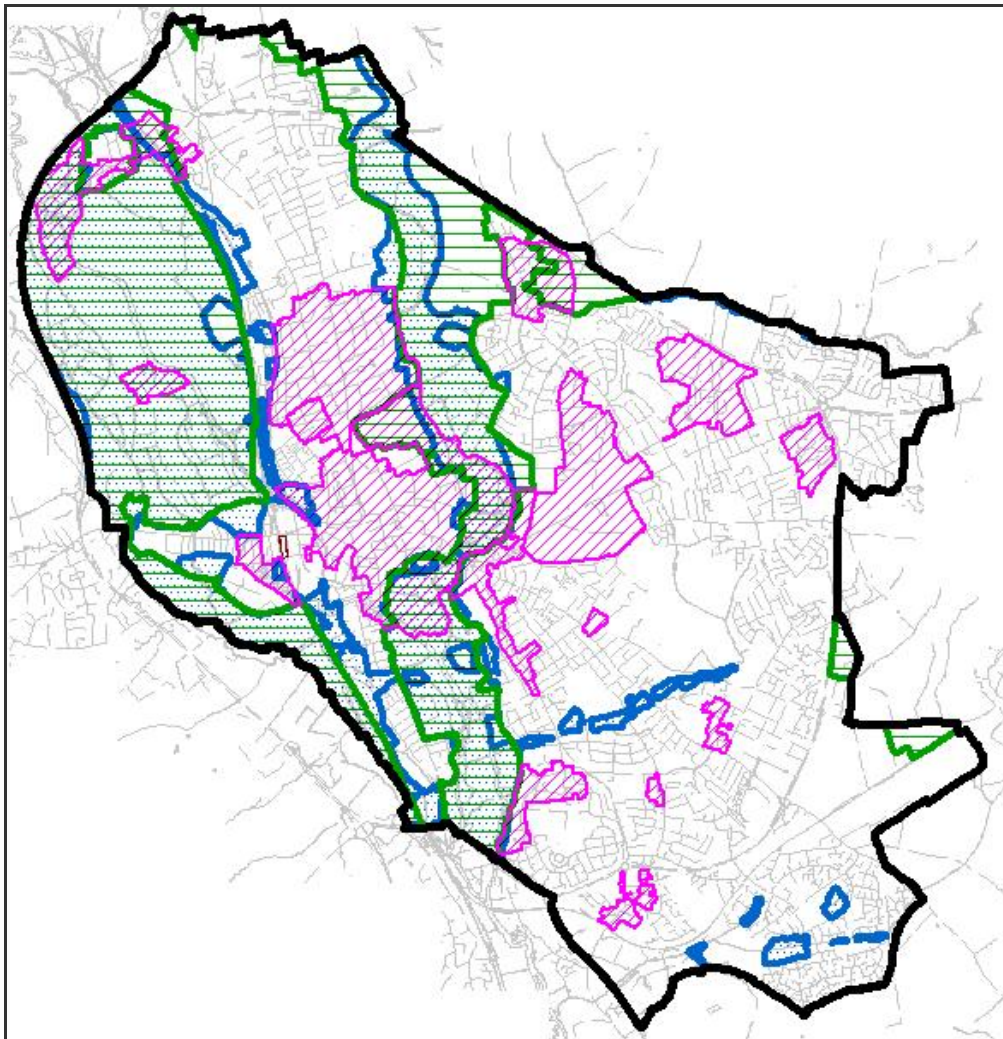
As we look ahead to 2026, we need to consider how much more development can be accommodated on brownfield land and what other options exist to cater for future development.

One potential option could be to release some of the land between the edge of the built-up area and the Green Belt that is identified in the Local Plan as Safeguarded Land to 2016. This Safeguarded Land totals about 70 hectares and is divided between three sites – at Barton, Pear Tree and Summertown.





Given the pressures for development combined with the environmental constraints in Oxford, we also need to consider whether some uses are more important than others and should therefore be given priority when allocating land for future development. In particular, the balance between housing and employment growth is a critical issue that will need to be addressed.

Decisions on the pattern of future development within the City cannot be taken in isolation from wider issues relating to Oxford's role in the sub region and the South East as a whole.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan's strategy over many years has been to direct much of the growth in the county to towns such as Didcot, Bicester, Banbury and Witney, to protect the setting and special character of Oxford.



Constraints map

-  Administrative boundary
-  Green belt
-  Flood plain
-  Conservation areas

However, the downside of this approach is that many residents of those towns still work in Oxford or travel to the City to use its services, social and cultural facilities, thereby adding to traffic congestion on the A34, A40 and other main roads.

The City's Council's alternative view has been that there are unique economic needs that can only be met within or adjacent to the City, and that an urban extension to Oxford would be a more sustainable location for new housing in central Oxfordshire than continuing to build more housing in towns such as Didcot and Bicester.

It is important to recognise that the City Council does not have a completely free hand in producing the Core Strategy. It has to be consistent with national planning policy and it will have to reflect the policies of the South East Plan. The discussion about possible options for housing and employment growth below therefore includes a brief summary of the current policy context, including the requirements of the draft South East Plan.



a) Housing Growth

Context – The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 requires 6,500 new dwellings to be built in the City between 2001-2016. The City Council's Urban Potential Study (2005) estimates that there is sufficient land available to provide nearly 6,800 dwellings over that period.

The draft South East Plan rolls forward housing numbers to 2026, and requires 7,000 new dwellings to be built in Oxford over the next 20 years - an annual average of 350. This is lower than the annual average of 433 dwellings set out in the current Structure Plan, but the South East Plan figure could increase once the Plan has been considered by the Government and tested at an Examination in Public. In the past, the City Council has exceeded its housing 'target', reflecting Oxford's role as the main urban area within the county and its level of housing need. This reduced figure reflects the fact that land is running out – even for redevelopment.

Options for future housing provision could include one or more of the following approaches – further infill developments and sub-division of family houses into flats throughout the City; identifying certain areas where higher density housing could be specifically promoted; allowing some existing employment sites to be redeveloped for housing; allocating some Safeguarded Land for housing; allowing some other Greenfield land within the City (e.g. playing fields) to be used for housing; and seeking to review the Green Belt boundary outside the City.

b) Employment Growth

Context – The draft South East Plan identifies Oxford as a Regional Hub – these are centres of economic activity that are seen as the focus for transport investment and provide opportunities to create well-designed higher density development. Oxford is also identified as a Primary Regional Centre – these are centres that will be a focus for major retail developments, large-scale leisure and office developments and other uses attracting large numbers of people.

The draft South East Plan seeks to build on the economic strengths of the Central Oxfordshire Sub-region, particularly in education, science and technology, but also to protect the setting and character of Oxford. It indicates that employment development in Oxford will take place mainly on brownfield land, or in conjunction with mixed-use redevelopment schemes. The West End of the City centre is seen as having the most significant potential for new mixed-use development.

The draft Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016, produced by the South East England Development Agency, sets out a vision for the South East to be a world-class region achieving sustainable prosperity. Oxford is identified as one of eight potential 'diamonds for growth' – cities and major towns which, with their broader hinterlands, can act as a catalyst to stimulate economic prosperity.

The Oxford Economic Development Strategy 2005-2020 contains an overall vision of enabling the City to realise its economic potential by sustaining local diversity and by an approach of managed economic growth. The Employment Land Review (2006) considers a range of options for accommodating future employment land needs, from relaxing existing protection of key employment sites through to allocating Safeguarded Land for employment space and releasing Green Belt land outside the City.



NEXT?

Please answer the questionnaire – available on paper or online – so that your views can be taken into account. The consultation period runs from June to July 2006. We would therefore be grateful if your comments could be submitted to us by Friday 28th July 2006.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT THE PLANNING POLICY TEAM
(Please see details in the inside front cover)