

A new Local Plan

We are taking our first steps towards producing a new Local Plan for Oxford. **The Local Plan is important** because it will shape how Oxford develops. It will set out how we want our City to look and feel; it will guide new developments to the right locations whilst protecting and improving the environment and people's quality of life; it will deliver the new homes, businesses, jobs, shops, and infrastructure needed to support the growth of Oxford over the next 20 years to 2036; and it will be used in determining planning applications and to guide investment decisions across the City. We want make sure that Oxford continues to be a successful and attractive city; the kind of place people enjoy living in, working in and visiting.

There are a number of reasons why we need a new a Local Plan, such as:

- To deliver more new homes;
- To provide for a growing population; and
- To respond to future social, environmental and economic change.
- To shape the future of Oxford

We want to know what you think

This is your opportunity to help shape the Local Plan before we begin to develop the policies. You may have seen our short consultation leaflet. This booklet gives a little more detailed background information on the key issues to help you make your comments. If after reading this booklet you would still like to know more, then we also have some detailed topic papers for each of the issues which are available on our website: www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan.

An online questionnaire is available at
www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan

If you have any questions please

email
planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk

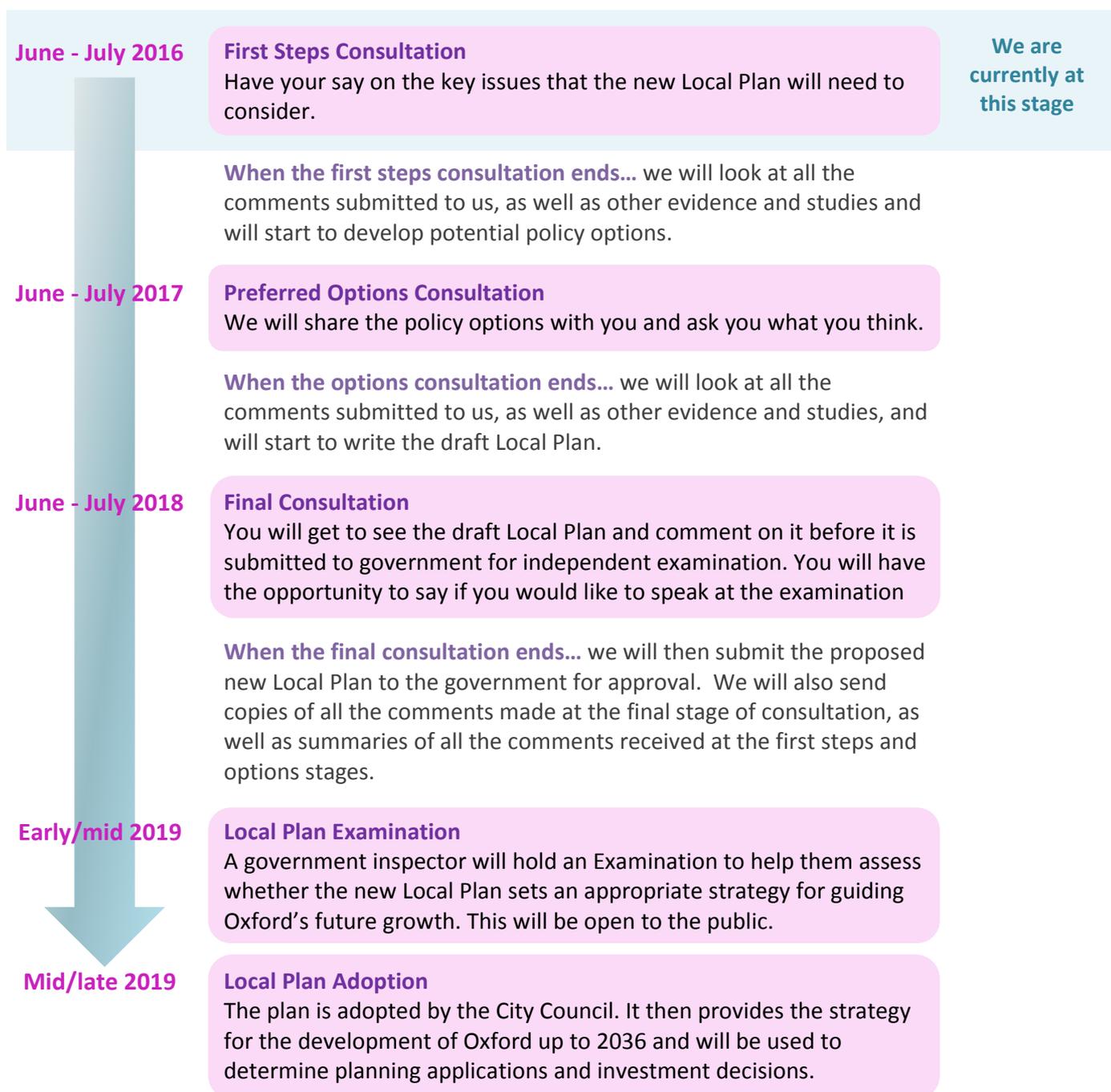
phone
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or write to
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Oxford
OX1 1DS

Please give us your comments by 5th August 2016.

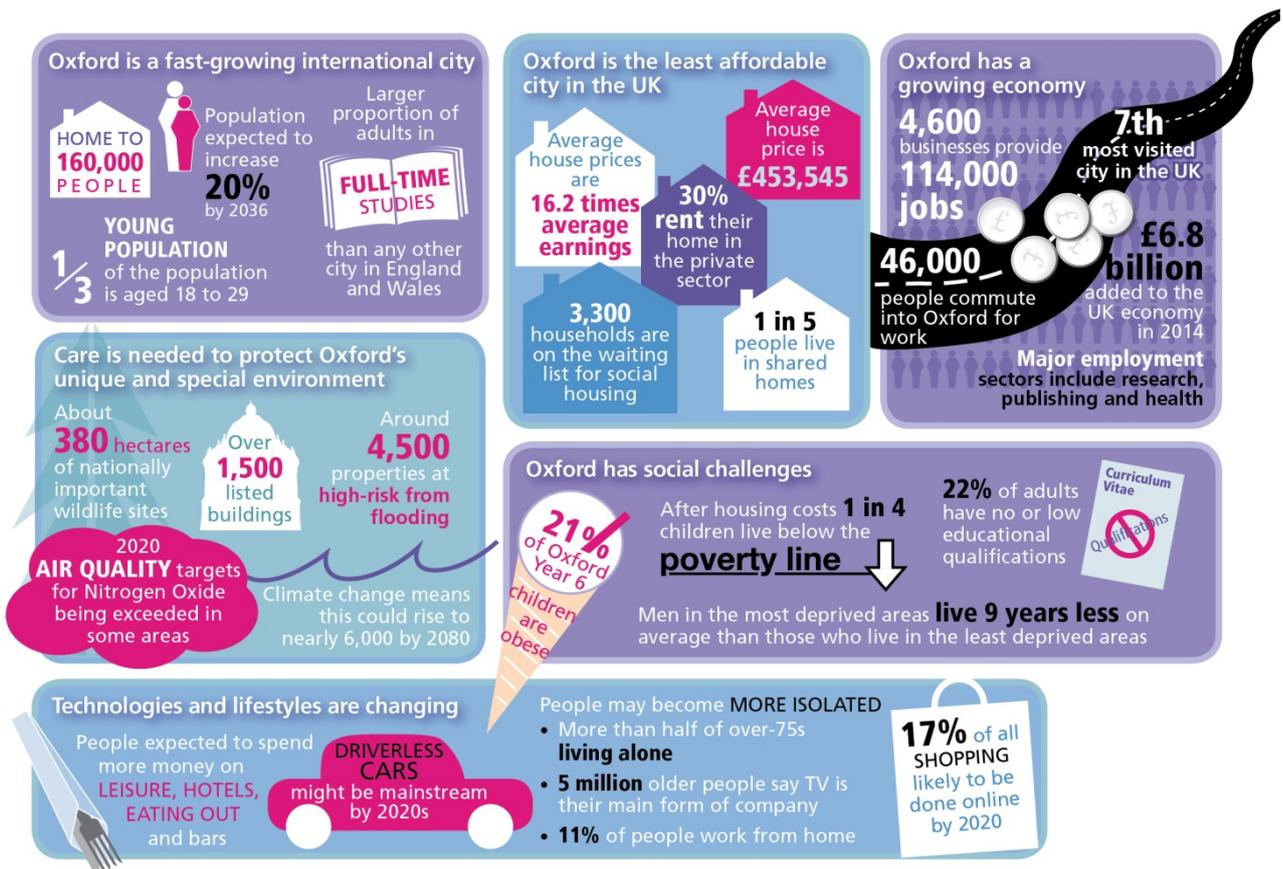
What happens next?

We will be working on the new Local Plan over the next three years. **There will be more opportunities for you to be involved as we work on producing the new Local Plan:**



A vision for Oxford's future

The Local Plan will be based on a **vision** of what we want Oxford to be like in 2036 and beyond. It is important that this vision is aspirational but also realistic. The policies in the Local Plan will aim to help make this vision a reality. To create the vision we need to understand current social, economic and environmental features and trends. Some important features and trends are shown in the diagram below. This booklet also sets out some of the key issues in more detail.



Our Plan will need to respond to these pressures and changes and look at least 20 years ahead. It will need to ensure that Oxford is:



The following sections outline some issues to consider in relation to key topics for the Local Plan. Questions are posed at the end of each section. These questions are contained in our online questionnaire, where you will be able to respond to as many or as few as you wish, and make comments on each group of questions if you want to. Please follow the link from our website at www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan.

Living and housing: where housing will go and what kind of housing it is going to be

What is the current situation?

Oxford currently has 55,000 households and 160,000 people live in the City. One of the biggest issues in Oxford is the lack of housing and the unaffordability of housing, to rent or to buy. Oxford is experiencing a housing crisis. Factors such as increasing land values and reducing land availability have led to a shortage of homes, and housing that is so expensive that it prices many people out of the market. We need enough housing, of the right type, in the right locations, that is affordable and suitable for different sectors of the community and meets varied needs.



Issues to consider

- **We need about 32,000 new homes by 2031** to meet our predicted housing needs, and we only have room for about 10,000 of those in Oxford. This means we will need to explore all possible sites to help deliver new homes. We are also working with Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, and West Oxfordshire district councils to see how they can help us to meet some of the shortfall of homes in adjoining areas, preferably close to the city.
- We need homes that are affordable to local people. **On average buying a home in Oxford costs 16x a person's salary, making it the least affordable place in the country.** This has many impacts, including on employers and key services who struggle to keep staff, such as schools and hospitals, and on families and communities who might be split up because of housing costs. High house prices mean that there is a large private rented sector in the city; however rent levels are so high that renting a home on the private market is also out of reach for many people. So 'social rent' of housing (rented from the City Council or a Housing Association (Registered Provider), at below market cost) plays an important role in meeting needs in Oxford.
- **People living in Oxford have many different living requirements** that we need to consider. We need a range of sizes of houses and flats, and a balance of owner-occupied, private rented, and social rented tenures to meet different needs. Some groups, like students and older people, also have specific requirements.
- **We need to ensure there is enough social infrastructure including school places, community space and open space to support new housing and make them good places to live.** In planning for new homes we also need to think about high quality design of homes and the spaces and places around them.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- A mix of home sizes (number of bedrooms) should be required
- Some housing sites should be protected for key-worker housing
- Having more student halls would reduce pressure on the housing market
- New student halls should be prioritised for the universities (rather than other institutions)
- Specialist housing for the elderly would encourage downsizing and release homes

A strong and mixed economy with a well-trained workforce

What is the current situation?

The contribution of Oxford's workforce to the national economy (GVA per worker) is ranked 7th out of the 54 cities in England for gross value added (£58,150). The city anchors the sub-regional economy as well as providing thousands of jobs for local people. The level of unemployment in Oxford is significantly lower than the South-East and England.

There is a clear area of divide in qualifications and educational attainment in the city. Whilst Oxford has an exceptionally high proportion (63.5%) of residents with degree level qualifications (almost twice the UK or South East averages), the attainment in Oxford's state schools remains below the UK average with only 54% of Key Stage 4 pupils achieving the equivalent of 5 A* to C GCSEs, and 22% of people aged 16 or over have either no qualifications or fewer than 5 GCSEs at C or above.



Issues to consider

- The high housing costs in Oxford, together with the very low unemployment numbers, means that the local labour market is subject to **problems of recruitment and retention of staff** in Oxford.
- The **divide in educational attainment** in the city presents skills challenges for future economic growth, and creates a barrier to local people accessing jobs in the knowledge-intensive activities that Oxford's economy is built around (approx. 67% of jobs are in this sector). **Increasing the skills of the labour force** will be important in maintaining Oxford's economic competitiveness through the Plan period. Securing contributions from developers for training might be a way to help address the mismatch in skills which otherwise might only be reinforced by the new developments,.
- It is important that a **balance of employment land and housing sites** is maintained in order to ensure that people can live and work in Oxford.
- The Local Plan will need to ensure sufficient land is safeguarded and protected to deliver **sufficient school places**, through new sites and through retaining space for existing schools to expand.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Employment sites should continue to be protected so that businesses can grow
- Live-work units and hubs for small businesses would help start-ups and creative industries
- Land should be protected to provide new and expanded schools
- Developers should be required to provide training for local people

Making best use of our limited resources



What is the current situation?

It is important to think about how we can make best use of our natural resources such as land, water and energy because we have a limited supply and our choices can have significant environmental impacts. As Oxford's population increases, there will be increasing pressure on these. It is therefore important to plan developments to minimise their use of resources. The new Local Plan provides an exciting opportunity to review how we currently use resources and to think about how we can improve on this.

Issues to consider

- Oxford is a small city with a tight urban boundary. This means that there is **limited land available for development**. We need to consider how to make best use of the land we do have to provide the homes and jobs we need. This could include some/all of the following:
 - Continue to re-use previously developed (brownfield) land wherever possible
 - Consider building on greenfield/Green Belt sites (including under-used and/or poor quality recreational land)
 - Building higher density developments (more dwellings per site)
 - Building taller buildings
 - Building on existing residential back gardens and in-between existing buildings

The need for new homes is so great that we also need to look at the potential for urban extensions beyond the city's current administrative boundary.

- We can help to reduce the amount of energy we use by **designing new buildings to be more energy efficient**. There are many ways that this can be done, for example making use of daylight to help supply heating and lighting, using natural ventilation and shading to reduce dependence on air conditioning, and through the materials used in construction. We need to think about how we can ensure new buildings in Oxford are as energy efficient as possible.
- There are many benefits to using **renewable energy sources**. Our current policies require new large scale housing and employment developments to meet 20% of their energy requirements using on-site renewable energy sources. We need to think about what would be an appropriate requirement for renewable energy usage going forward.

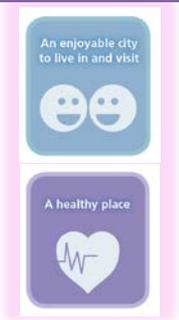
Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Some poor quality/under-used recreational areas could be partly developed for housing
- Urban extensions close to Oxford (on the Green Belt) would help meet future housing needs
- New developments should be required to include on-site renewable energy generation

Moving around the city

What is the current situation?

Oxford has the second highest proportion of those commuting to work by bike in the country. At peak times, very high bus patronage of over 1000 passengers an hour is found on 5 of Oxford's key bus corridors, and these bus corridors have over 40 buses an hour. 190 buses and coaches enter the city centre per hour at peak times. Oxford's narrow streets can contain air pollution and mean that there is more likely to be conflict between motorised traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. With the level of population and job growth expected, the way that people will move around the city in the future will be very important for the environment, health and well-being.



Issues to consider

- It is important that **new developments are located and provided for** so that sustainable ways to travel (walking, cycling and public transport) are the preferred choice. New development should be delivered in locations close to established sustainable transport networks. Growing employment areas in East Oxford and North Oxford will need good access by public transport, both within Oxford and from key commuter locations outside Oxford. Increasing buses going through city centre is not likely to be feasible, so direct services that avoid the centre will need to be encouraged.
- **Walking and cycling** create no emissions, do not contribute to congestion and are good for people's health. Current barriers to increasing walking and cycling in Oxford should be overcome, including volumes and speeds of motorised traffic, air quality and rivers and large areas of private land preventing direct routes. Safe and segregated routes may help encourage new people to choose the bike as a way to travel around the city.
- **Parking** takes up land that could be used for other uses. The availability of sustainable modes of travel in Oxford means that development with no or low numbers of private parking spaces is possible. **Car-sharing** or car clubs could be considered as a way of allowing flexibility for residents while ensuring car use and unnecessary parking spaces are minimised.
- **Roadspace** is currently not allocated in the most efficient way (e.g. parallel radials- Cowley & Iffley roads; Woodstock & Banbury roads), or in a way that encourages use of walking and cycling.
- Most **air pollution** in Oxford comes from motorised traffic. The introduction of a low emission zone for buses in the city centre has helped reduce emissions. However, levels of some pollutants are still above target levels, so more radical solutions such as a no- or ultra-low emission zone might be needed.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Numbers of parking spaces should be limited for workplaces
- Numbers of parking spaces should be limited for new housing developments
- Walking and cycling routes separated from traffic should be provided
- Road space should be reallocated from cars to buses, for example through the introduction of one-way system for cars on Woodstock and Banbury Roads
- More restrictive emissions zones should be introduced

Strong communities, health and wellbeing

What is the current situation?

A government measure of deprivation, the Index of Deprivation (2015), ranks Oxford 166 out of 326 local authority areas in England. At a local level there is significant variation across the city; 10 of Oxford's 83 local areas are within the 20% most deprived in England, whilst 17 are within the 20% least deprived in England.

There are geographical inequalities in life expectancy across the city. Men in the least deprived areas of Oxford have a life expectancy 8.8 years longer than those in the most deprived parts of the city. For females, the gap is 3.7 years. The percentage of adults classified as obese in Oxford is lower than the national average although it still affects more than half of the adult population.

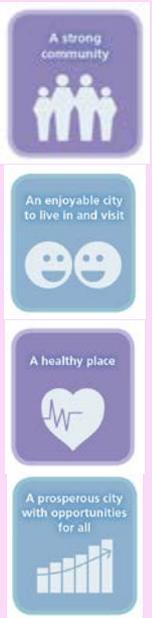
The 2014/15 Oxford Residents' Survey identified crime levels, health services, and affordable decent housing as being the most important factors that make a good place to live. The overall findings were positive, although residents in South East Oxford were less positive than, particularly regarding community life and the prevalence of anti-social behaviour.

Issues to consider

- **Oxford's population has a relatively young age profile** and population growth has been concentrated in a few age groups, particularly under 5s and 25-29 year olds. There has been a marked increase in the birth rate over the last decade, leading to a significant jump in the number of young children. The number of over 75 year olds living in Oxford has been decreasing.
- **Oxford's population is becoming increasingly diverse.** People have been moving to Oxford from all over the world. In the Residents' Survey 72% of people agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together in Oxford.
- **There are inequalities of opportunity across the city.** There are areas of Oxford where a significant proportion of the community are faced with multiple issues of deprivation (such as low income, lack of employment, lack of training and skills and barriers to housing and services).
- **There are inequalities of health and wellbeing across the city.** There is a disparity in health deprivation and sickness and disability across the city and those in the most deprived areas of the city have lower levels of life satisfaction.
- The **availability of community facilities** including healthcare and education, play a key role in the quality of life for residents and employees. It is important that existing and new residents can enjoy good access to quality facilities.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Walking and cycle routes and facilities for sport, recreation and leisure should be made available to help physical and mental wellbeing
- Local facilities such as GPs, hospitals and medical research should be strengthened to support the health services
- Provision of more key worker/staff accommodation should be encouraged as it would help support schools and hospitals
- Spaces/facilities should be provided for communities to gather and interact



Network of green and open spaces

What is the current situation?

Oxford has a range of different green spaces that perform a variety of functions. This includes: parks and open spaces, sports fields, allotments, floodplain, wildlife sites, cemeteries, private gardens and Green Belt.

These spaces provide many benefits, including opportunities for sports and recreation, habitats for plants and wildlife, contributing to the special character of the city and providing essential flood protection.

There is limited land available in Oxford. We need to think carefully and creatively to make best use of the green spaces we have, both now and in the future, taking into consideration changing social, environmental and economic needs.



Issues to consider

- How can we best **protect the city's important green spaces** and, where possible, increase the number of social and environmental benefits they provide? One approach could be to identify and protect a network of multi-functional green spaces across the city that meet a range of different needs (such as recreation, biodiversity, flood protection and cycleways). We could seek opportunities to strengthen the quality and use of this network over time.
- As Oxford's population increases there will be **more demand for outdoor sports and recreation**. It is important that we meet this need to support the long term health and wellbeing of our communities. One way we could do this is by increasing the quality and/or capacity of existing public green spaces in the city. We could also work with landowners to increase the number of private green spaces that local people have access to.
- We need to build new homes but there are not many sites available within the city. Whilst many of Oxford's green spaces need long term protection as they are very important to local communities and the local environment, we will need to consider whether there are **any green spaces that are less important that could help to provide new homes**.
- We also need to ensure that the city is able to respond effectively to the impacts of **climate change**. This includes the provision of long term flood protection and adaptable habitats for Oxford's wildlife.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- A network of green spaces should be protected
- Public access to existing private green spaces and recreation facilities should be sought
- Development on less sensitive green spaces should be allowed if it brings improvements to public open space

Design and the historic environment

An enjoyable city
to live in and visit



What is the current situation?

Oxford is famous for its history and architecture. The city contains 9 scheduled monuments, 15 Historic Parks and Gardens, 17 conservation areas and around 1,500 listed buildings. As well as the city centre, Oxford contains a number of 'villages' or local centres, each of which has its own special character and strong identity that local people value.

Good quality design of the urban environment has a big impact on how cities work, how people experience cities, living conditions and health and quality of life. It is important that any new development respects the Oxford's history and character so that the city continues to be a unique and special place, providing good environments for people to live and work in.

Issues to consider

- The increased growth expected in a small area means that higher density development is likely to be required. High quality design is essential to ensuring that new buildings and outside spaces help to maintain **Oxford's special character**, as well as making sure that Oxford continues to be a successful place where people want to live, work and visit. We need to ensure that new development is of a high quality appropriate to Oxford's history and world class status.
- **Oxford's historic buildings** are irreplaceable resources that need to be retained for future generations to enjoy. It is important to think about how these buildings will be used over time and how they might need to adapt to changing requirements, whilst at the same time maintaining their special architectural character and historic value.
- We also need to consider how new developments might affect the setting of historic buildings and how we can help to ensure a **positive relationship between new and old buildings** in the city.
- Oxford's famous skyline of 'dreaming spires' has for a long time been protected, with height limits for buildings in certain areas. It is important that buildings create an interesting roofline at all levels; it is not just the dreaming spires that are important in creating character and interest.
- Not all of Oxford's historic assets are visible. Oxford also has a rich and diverse **archaeological heritage** buried below ground level that needs to be considered when planning new development. Whilst archaeological assets do not necessary prevent development, it is important that development is undertaken in a way that conserves and protects these irreplaceable pieces of Oxford's history.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Taller buildings could be located in some areas if well designed
- Modern architecture and higher densities should be encouraged

Centres, shopping, evening entertainment and leisure

What is the current situation?

The city centre provides a good range of shopping, evening entertainment and leisure facilities. Over the past 18 months footfall in the city centre has reduced by over 6%, although this is expected to increase significantly when the Westgate centre reopens. Many residents rely on other towns and cities for some or all of their shopping and entertainment requirements.

In addition to the City Centre, there are 5 District Centres at Summertown, Headington, Cowley Road, Cowley Centre and Blackbird Leys. The district centres vary in character with some focused more on local retail (e.g. the Cowley Centre) and others more on evening entertainment and leisure (e.g. Cowley Road). In some parts of the city residents are happy that they can access the range of facilities they need locally without accessing the city centre on a regular basis.

Issues to consider

- **Significant developments are underway** or planned in the city and district centres. The Westgate Shopping Centre will open in 2017, the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter is being built, there are plans for investment in George Street and Cornmarket as well as at Oxpens and Templars Square.
- **Shopping habits are changing.** Less than 50% of sales are now on the high street (over 50% of sales are out of town and online). Online retail expenditure in the UK is forecast to reach £63bn by 2020, which would account for a predicted 17% of total retail sales. This would be an increase from the approximately 13% in 2015.
- Government policy and best practice now encourages us to see centres not as solely (or even primarily) places to shop, but as **opportunities to provide a range of other uses** including entertainment, leisure, housing and employment.
- The **quality of the local environment** is important to the experience of city and local centres. There is competition between centres with Oxford residents sometimes choosing to visit Milton Keynes or Reading for shopping and leisure for example. Improving the quality of the public realm and facilities on offer could help attract people.
- **Local centres may have a bigger role to play** in providing for the needs of local people. This could relieve some of the transport pressure caused by the number of people trying to access the city centre.

Do you agree with any of the following suggestions?

- Local centres should be enhanced to provide a greater range of facilities for local needs
- Modern high streets should include other uses alongside their traditional retail focus
- Pedestrianisation should be encouraged as a way to create a more pleasant environment for users



General questions

- What things about Oxford mean most to you?
- What things about Oxford do you like least, and how would you improve them?
- What other issues not covered in this booklet do you think we should consider?
- Do you have any other comments?

Responding to these questions

Your opinions matter in helping to shape the future development of Oxford. **We want to hear what you have to say.** Please respond to the questions contained in this booklet. All the questions in this booklet are available as an online questionnaire. You will be asked whether you strongly agree, agree, are neutral or disagree or strongly disagree with the suggestions and there is also space to comment on each set of suggestions. Please follow the link to the consultation from our Local Plan page: www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan. The online questionnaire should be completed by the **5th August 2016**. If you have any questions, or would prefer to respond to us in another way, please:

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