

Education, skills, and employability/training

This topic addresses:

SA Objective:

(6): To raise educational attainment and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work.

(14): To achieve sustainable economic growth (including the development and expansion of a diverse and knowledge-based economy)

Introduction

Traditional land use planning is fairly limited in terms of directly influencing education, skills, and employability/training beyond allocating land for delivering new or expanded educational facilities such as schools or university academic space. However the planning system does play an important role in creating the conditions for economic growth, and can be used as tool to promote the use of local labour and help to provide training and employment opportunities for local residents.

Increasingly Local Plans are looking beyond land use, and councils are seeking opportunities at both the construction and end-user phases of development, to contribute towards a range of employment, skills, and training measures, to mitigate the impacts of development to ensure that local people can better access job opportunities arising from new development¹.

Furthermore other strategies and organisations which work closely with planning, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and broader corporate objectives, are putting in place measures to address education and skills, which will help the local plan to achieve influence in these areas.

Plans, policies and programmes

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF seeks that Local Plans should make appropriate provision for education and school places:

*37. Planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure, **education** and other activities....*

*72. The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a **sufficient choice of school places** is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

- *give great weight to the **need to create, expand or alter schools**; and*
- *work with schools promoters to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.*

¹ SPD's on contributions towards skills & training by Reading Borough Council (2015) , Lancaster, and Arun District Council

Infrastructure

162. Local planning authorities should work with other authorities and providers to:

- assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure for transport, water supply, wastewater and its treatment, energy (including heat), telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, **education**, flood risk and coastal change management, and its ability to meet forecast demands;

The NPPF does not directly reference training but encourages growth to create jobs. This in turn relies on the premise that employment and skills training should be maximised, and that local planning authorities should have a clear understanding of business needs:

*“Local planning authorities [LPAs] should have a clear understanding of business needs within the economic markets operating in and across their area [including] ... working closely with the business community to understand their changing needs and identify and **address barriers to investment**, including a lack of housing, infrastructure or viability ... Local Planning Authorities should use this evidence to assess ... locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action” (NPPF para 160-161).*

There are also several locally-specific plans and strategies related to economic growth in Oxford and Oxfordshire, which include sections on training and education, including the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, the Oxfordshire Skills Board Strategy, and the Oxford City Council Corporate Plan.

Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, March 2014)

Oxford City Council is a board member of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) prepared by OxLEP covers the whole LEP area.

The plan highlights the challenges, in particular: the mis-match of skills needed for high-technology businesses; retaining University graduates; and labour shortages in service roles particularly in many STEM-based sectors [science, technology, engineering and maths], as well as health and social care, retail, and hospitality and the logistics sectors.

To address these, it identifies strategic objectives and interventions relating to skills and training:

- Increase the proportion of the working age population qualified to level 2 and above to 90%
- Ensure our further education capital stock meets the needs of 21st century learners and employers
- Improve school attainment above the national average of 60.4% of GCSE students achieving at least five A* to C grades including English and Maths
- Increase the amount of Skills Funding Agency funding that supports our STEM sectors by 15% to better reflect our economic profile
- Deliver 1,150 more apprenticeships for young people with a focus on our priority growth sectors
- Retain our graduate talent and encourage more Oxford graduates to stay
- Maximise our environment to encourage sustainable living, enhancing quality of life and a range of opportunities for people to learn, improve their skills and improve health and well-being.

Some of the specific actions which the SEP identifies to achieve these are outside the remit of planning and rely on other sectors or partners to deliver, but some are directly influenced by the planning system, such as:

- Embedding ‘employment and skills plans’ into major employment-generating developments, and working with developers to deliver skills and training outcomes for all, especially those most marginalised from the workforce.
- Capital projects to enhance the Further Education portfolio, to meet the needs of 21st century learners and employers, and provide better support for our knowledge rich sectors, including STEM sectors.

Oxfordshire Skills Board Strategy (2014)

The Oxfordshire Skills Board supports the work of OxLEP. It provides a strategic and coordinated response to skills development in the county. In its Skills Strategy to 2020 it sets out the following five Strategic Priorities to 2020:

- **“SP1: To meet the needs of local employers through a more integrated and responsive approach to education and training: developed in partnership with our provider network, to encourage more training provision in priority sectors - both current and projected - to meet the needs of employers or to train future entrepreneurs, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).**
- **SP2: Creating the ‘skills continuum’ to support young people through their learning journey: The ambition is to develop integrated, seamless services that support young people through school and on into training, further education, employment or business, where they understand the full breadth of career options, including local demand, and the training path to succeed in that career.**
- **SP3: Up-skilling and improving the chances of young people and adults marginalised or disadvantaged from work Based on moving them closer to the labour market.**
- **SP4: To increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities, particularly those offered by small to medium sized businesses.**
- **SP5: To explore how we can better retain graduates within Oxfordshire to meet the demand for the higher level skills our businesses need”.**

Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal Agreement (2013)

The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal is a joint partnership strategy between all of the Oxfordshire districts, the County Council, the LEP, and the two universities.

It aims to unlock a new wave of innovation-led growth by maximising the area’s world-class assets, such as the universities of Oxford and Oxford Brookes, and the “big science” facilities such as those at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. It acknowledges the region’s strong track record of delivering growth and seeks to support those existing, and new, businesses in achieving their full potential. The ambition is to create the conditions that make Oxford and Oxfordshire the location of choice for the world's leading science and technology businesses.

City Deal partners are committed to increasing connectivity along the ‘knowledge spine’, connecting people to jobs, opening up a choice of housing to skilled workers and enabling specific sites. The City Deal will bring around £55.5 million of government funding that can be used locally to boost innovation and business growth, create jobs and help secure Oxfordshire’s place as a world leader in technology, knowledge and expertise. In total the deal is expected to be worth over £1.2billion when private sector investment is taken into account. In Oxford, key sites to delivering these commitments are the BioEscalator at Old Road Campus, and Northern Gateway.

Oxford City Council Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020

The Oxford City Council Corporate Plan includes two objectives related to skills and training:

“Residents in Oxford will be able to acquire the range of skills they need to join our world-class workforce and meet employers’ needs” and “Young people in Oxford will have a positive transition to adulthood through good education, skills training and opportunities for work and leisure”.

These highlight the need to address the current mis-match which sometimes occurs with skills and jobs in Oxford, and the blocks to people accessing the specialist hi-tech, knowledge-based jobs that are so important to the Oxford(shire) economy.

Current situation

Oxford is consistently identified as one of the top performing economies in the UK. However this strong economic growth, especially in B1 high-tech and knowledge-based industries, masks a city of contrasts in qualifications and skills.

Qualifications and educational attainment are one clear area of divide, for example:

- whilst Oxford has an exceptionally high proportion (63.5%) of residents with degree level qualifications (almost twice the UK or South East averages)²,
- the attainment in Oxford’s state schools remains below the UK average with only 54% of KS4 pupils achieving the equivalent of 5 A* to C GCSEs³, and
- 22% of people aged 16 or over have either no qualifications or fewer than 5 GCSEs at C or above⁴.
- These disparities are disproportionately seen in the most deprived areas.

Collectively this 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 sector⁵).

This inequality affects parts of the city more than others. Education & skills deprivation is particularly concentrated in the communities to the east and south east of Oxford, as illustrated in the following maps:

² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157324/report.aspx?town=oxford#tabquals> 2015 data

³ 2013/14 Department for Education

⁴ 2011 Census

⁵ Jobs in ‘knowledge-intensive’ industrial sectors, Business Register and Employment Survey 2014, Office for National Statistics. This is a broad definition which includes financial services, information technology, hi-tech services, education, health services and hi-tech manufacturing.

Figure 6.7.1 Education and skills deprivation across Oxford

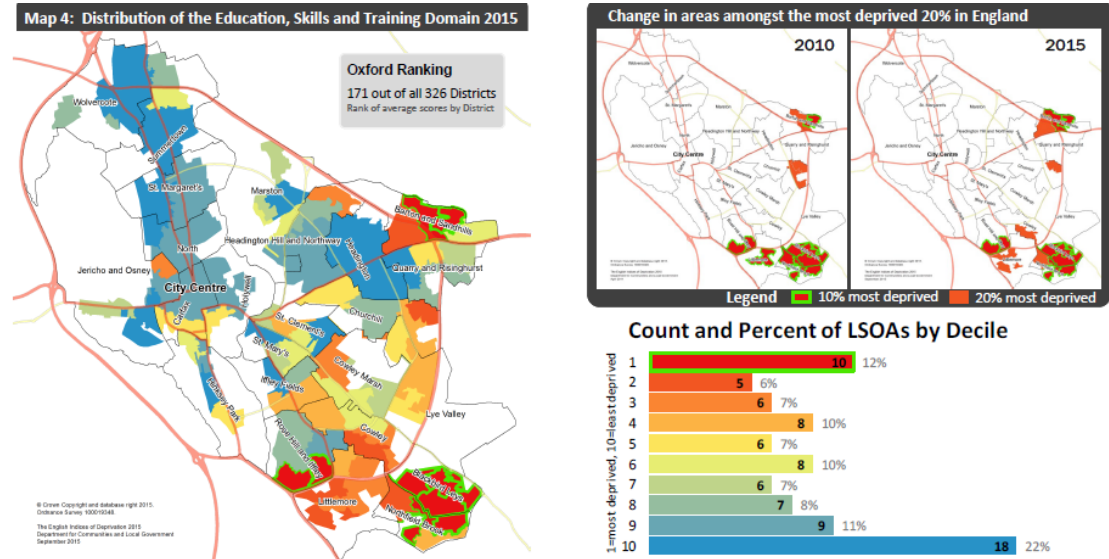


Figure 6.7.2 Employment deprivation across Oxford

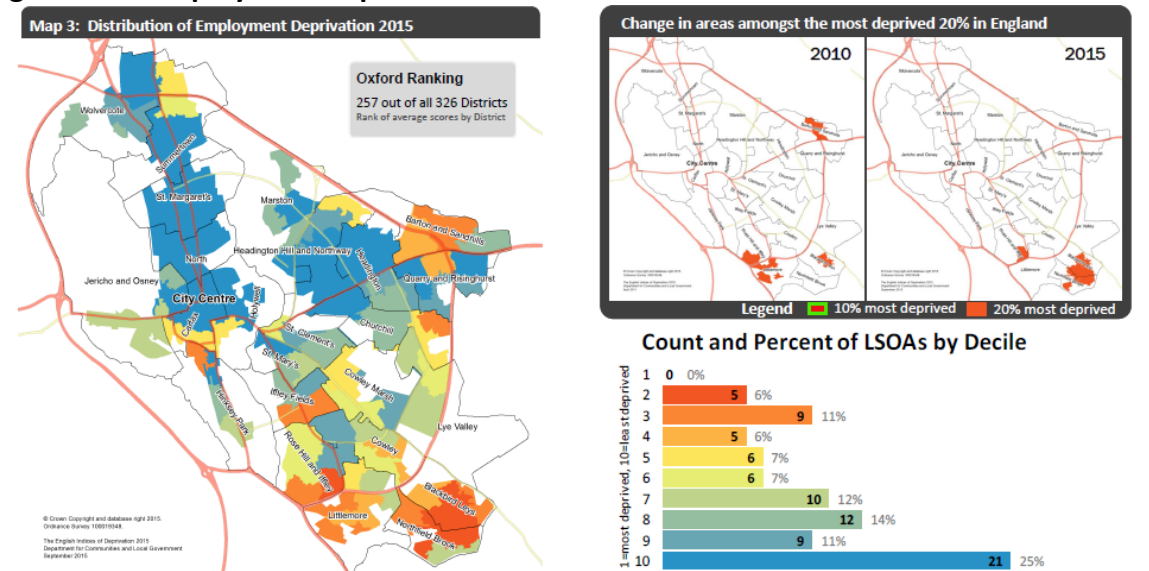


Figure 6.7.3 Skills deprivation across Oxford

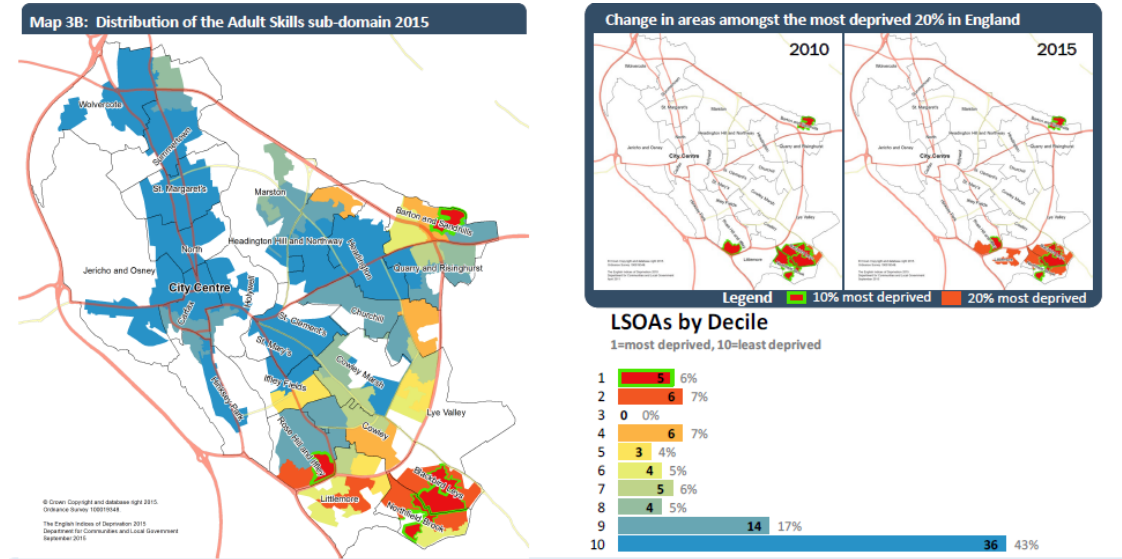
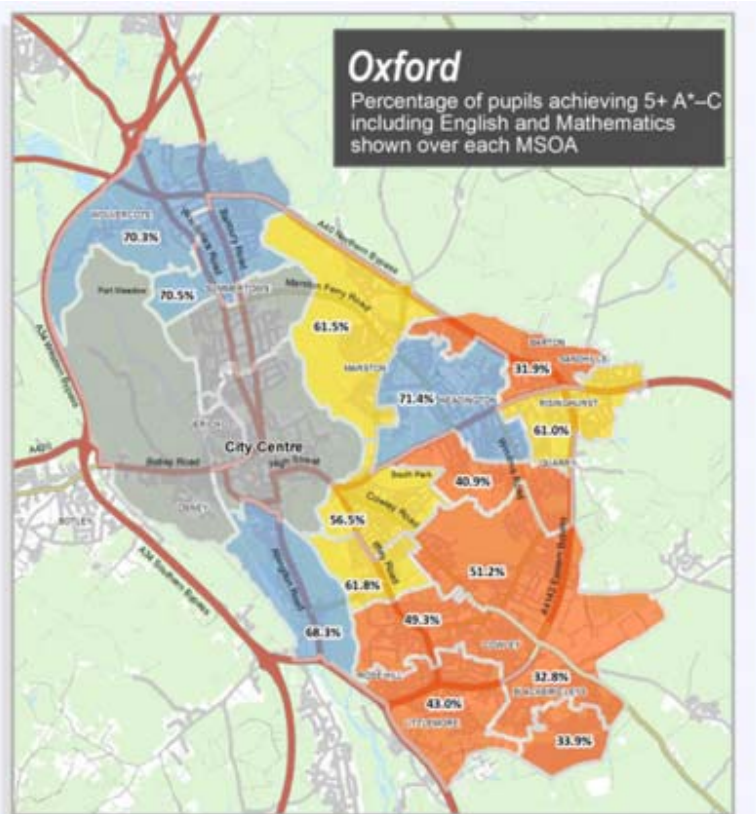


Figure 6.7.4 Education deprivation across Oxford



Source: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20125/education_and_skills/455/education_and_skills_in_oxford

Upskilling the labour force will be important in maintaining Oxford’s economic competitiveness through the Plan period. A better, appropriately skilled local workforce will help to provide a pool of talent to both developers and end occupiers. This will reduce the need to import skills, and in doing so reduce congestion and unsustainable travel to work modes. Furthermore some new developments or employment growth can exacerbate existing skill shortages if labour is brought in from outside, or if it attracts specialist knowledge from further afield.

Driving up the skills capacity of the local population will help to ensure a more flexible and productive workforce which in turn is a key driver of productivity improvements. For young people in particular, it can lead to better employment opportunities, improved pay prospects and a better quality of life. For business, it means success with improved productivity, innovative practice and quality products. For the county, it represents sustained future prosperity.

Training, skills, and apprenticeships will also be important in addressing the divides between the prosperous and the deprived parts of the city. It can bring wider benefits in terms of income equality and potentially a reduction in child poverty and social exclusion by reducing the potential for economic and social disparity.

Likely trends without a new Local Plan

There are two longer-term trends in Oxford (also reflected in the UK as a whole,) which are likely to drive inequalities in the City rather than narrow them over the Plan period.

Oxford has an increasingly polarised labour market in which there are many high-wage, high-skill jobs and low-wage, low-skill jobs, with fewer jobs at intermediary levels. Growth is most likely to be in the key sectors of education (university-related), bioscience, healthcare, and retail sectors, and there is also likely to be an increase in corporate R&D linked to the universities, the most likely being biomedical, engineering, and computing. These jobs may not be accessible to local people, unless the skills and training gap is addressed. In addition there is the increasing divide between those who have access to good quality housing (and wealth associated with owner-occupation,) and those who do not⁶. This has knock-on effects for those wishing to access jobs in Oxford, in that they may not be able to afford to live close to the jobs.

To some extent, the strategies and plans outside of the planning system, such as the Strategic Economic Plan, will continue irrespective of the Local Plan. However their impact can be enhanced and maximised by integrating the ambitions into the Local Plan, and into planning decisions. For example incorporating commitments for skills and training for local people, into developer contributions agreements.

With significant predicted jobs growth locally and sub-regionally during the Plan period, there is opportunity for local people through securing contributions from developers to help address the 'skills mismatch' which otherwise might only be reinforced by the developments, and skills shortages.

Obligations are already being secured by the City Council on a number of developments now, so that both the construction and end user phases of development contribute towards a range of employment, skills, and training measures. This helps to mitigate the impacts of development to ensure that local people can better access job opportunities arising from new development. This is particularly relevant in a city like Oxford, where the development of new homes or employment space, may not be currently accessible to many people who do not have the skills or finance to access them. A recent example is Barton Park, where the contractors have recruited locally for construction and groundworks jobs.

The other important aspect for the Local Plan will be 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. In recent years some school playing fields in particular have come under

⁶ Our Changing City, Social Trends in Oxford (Oxford Strategic Partnership, February 2015)

pressure for residential development, and without safeguarding policies in the plan then those areas may be at risk from development in a piecemeal way. The nature of most housing growth in Oxford is through small scale brownfield infill sites, so there is rarely opportunity or requirements for entire new schools to be provided, rather provision is made via existing capacity or growing existing schools. Therefore the existing sites must be protected to ensure there is room to accommodate the additional pupil places generated by small scale developments during the plan period.

Sustainability/Plan issues

- Skills mismatches increase in-commuting, exacerbating congestion issues.
- Employment growth in Oxford is most likely to be in the key sectors of education, bioscience, healthcare, and retail sector. There is also likely to be an increase in corporate R&D linked to the universities. Without appropriate skills & training, those jobs will not be accessible to local people.
- Small scale brownfield development across the city is more likely to put pressure on existing school places, and will not in itself provide new school sites. State schools across Oxford, and particularly in deprived areas, generally under-perform compared to regional and national averages.