

Draft Central (City & University) Conservation Area Appraisal

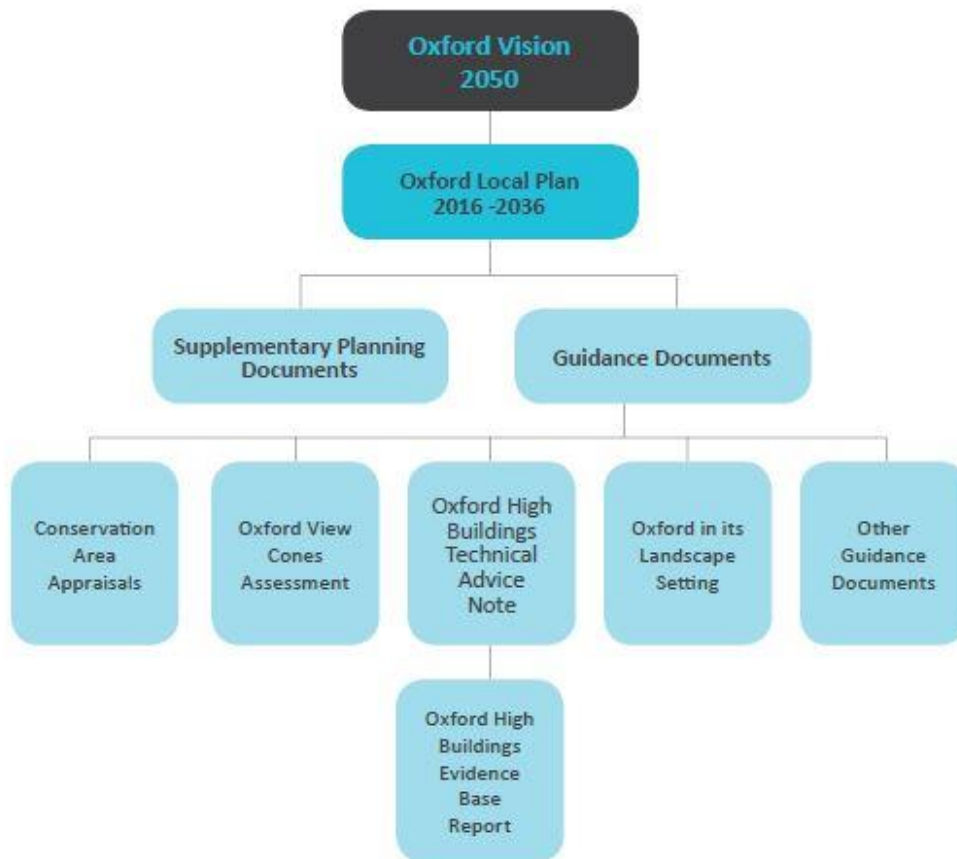
Purpose

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990 defines conservation areas as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' This is what is called a 'material consideration' for all planning and listed building consent applications within conservation areas. The appraisal is the vehicle for understanding both the significance of an area and the effect of those impacts bearing negatively on its significance.

The designation of a conservation area does not prevent change, but indicates that development within that area should be carefully managed in order to protect what makes it special. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides policies for applicants and planning authorities to use as part of the determination of planning applications; recognition is given to the importance of conservation areas and their irreplaceability.

The appraisal forms part of the Councils' Historic Environment Record and evidence base for the Local Plan, which is the application of the NPPF at a local level. At a city level, the NPPF is applied through the new Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036. This Appraisal is part of the supporting documentation for the Local Plan.

Due to the complexity of Oxford's historic environment, the Appraisal is part of a series of other guidance and supplementary planning documents. The relationship between the different components of local planning policy and guidance are shown here (hyperlinks to be added):



These documents are part of the Local Plan and will be taken into consideration by planners. It is expected that any proposals for development within the conservation area will have taken these into account and shaped the proposal around their requirements.

Designation Background

Before the creation of conservation areas, Oxford was protecting its unique skyline through the 1962 high buildings policy: the 'Carfax Tower Rule'. The 1967 Development Plan recognised the importance of the central area as being of great historic value.

This was formalised by the 1967 Civic Amenities Act and the introduction of conservation areas. The City Council designated a large part of the central area of Oxford as a conservation area in 1971.

Since designation in 1971, the conservation area has been extended five times:

1. May 1974: Folly Bridge riverside
2. Feb 1981: part of Walton Street, Fisher Row and lower St Aldates
3. Apr 1985: Cornmarket Street and Queen Street
4. Dec 1998: part of the St Thomas' area, the University Observatory adjacent to University Parks and Magdalen College School playing field.
5. May 2019: the University Science Area, part of St Thomas' and Park End Street. This extension was a result of a boundary review carried out in response to consultation on the first draft of the Conservation Area Appraisal, in autumn 2018.