

Local Plan 2042 Health Impact Assessment Screening Report

Regulation 18 Preferred Options consultation

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Enabling positive health and wellbeing has been a fundamental driver of the modern planning system since its establishment after the Second World War. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies that *planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places* (para 96). Yet [evidence](#) suggests that health outcomes for people in England are no longer improving as they have been in previous decades, indeed life expectancy for women in the most deprived communities in the country has begun to drop; the time spent living in poor health throughout the country is now increasing for everyone; and health inequalities are growing.

The way we design and build the places we live and work in can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of local people. Social, environmental and economic factors within the built environment like the availability of safe and appropriate housing; access to shops selling quality food and goods; good schools and employment; open space to socialise and be active in, as well as the ease with which we can move around and between these spaces can all have an influence on our health and wellbeing. Sometimes these factors are referred to as the ‘[wider determinants](#)’ of health, and they can all have an influence on behaviours which promote higher risk of disease and general ill health. For example, living somewhere without easy access to shops or open space makes it more challenging to engage in regular physical activity, which can lead to increased risk of a variety of health problems.

The Local Plan 2042 will set out the policies that will influence how the city’s built and natural environment develops over the coming years. These policies will have a direct role in shaping the design of new development and as such will play an important role in addressing many of the wider determinants of health highlighted above. The way such policies are written and presented can determine how subsequent development in the city might positively or negatively support health. The Council is keen to ensure that wherever possible, it has maximised opportunities to formulate policies that support positive health outcomes for people in future, whilst mitigating potential negative impacts wherever possible. Indeed, this was a key theme from the early engagement survey (17 March-28 April 2025) which highlighted health and wellbeing as a key area of concern from respondents throughout, with particular emphasis on access to green space and the need for affordable housing.

In order to do this, a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is being undertaken to help inform the new Local Plan’s development.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the overall HIA process is to help review the emerging proposals set out in the Local Plan through the lens of health and wellbeing, assess potential impacts and, where necessary, help to identify actions that can help to respond to these. In this way, it is intended to help inform the development of the Local Plan in relation to the impacts on health and wellbeing that could arise as a result of its proposals. This offers the greatest opportunity to not only identify and mitigate potential risks or negative outcomes, but also to maximise positive opportunities to improve health and equality for communities across Oxford. The goal is to create sustainable, inclusive and safe environments that empower individuals to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

The aims and objectives of this Regulation 18 screening report are to set the context of health and wellbeing in the city and identify key issues that will need to be considered. Then to begin to review the emerging Local Plan proposals and identify the key policy areas that can help to address these issues. This will help set an important foundation on which to develop a fuller HIA to accompany the Regulation 19 Local Plan later in the year.

1.3. Relationship with the Sustainability Appraisal process

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) evaluates the Local Plan proposals for likely significant effects by assessing them against twelve sustainability objectives encompassing economic, environmental, and social factors, including inequalities such as health disparities. While the emerging Local Plan and its various proposals has been reviewed through the SA process, this HIA provides a more detailed focus on health and wellbeing, recognizing it as a key concern in Oxford—particularly in relation to health inequalities. As such, the HIA process is intended to be a supplementary review process that can help inform the emerging Local Plan alongside the wider SA process.

1.4. Structure of this report

This screening report is broken down into several key sections which are outlined below:

- Section 2 – sets out the key context of relevance to the assessment and is broken down into sections which summarise the key health and wellbeing issues in Oxford; and then go on to summarise key strategies of relevance.
- Section 3 – sets out the methodology that the Council is following in undertaking its Health Impact Assessment process at this stage and in following stages.

- Section 4 – sets out the initial conclusions for the screening assessment and is broken down into each of the assessment framework topics.

2. Key context

This section sets out some key context helping to inform the Local Plan Health Impact Assessment process, beginning with a snapshot of health and wellbeing in the city (summarised from the more detailed background paper). This is followed by a summary of key national and regional guidance and other research.

2.1. A snapshot of health and well-being in Oxford

The Regulation 18 draft Local Plan is supported by a separate health and wellbeing background paper (Background Paper 010) which outlines the picture of health and wellbeing in the city at present in detail. The analysis set out in that paper indicates that the picture is clearly a mixed one. Whilst this document should be referred to for more detail, a summary of the key findings is touched upon below.

- Oxford is one of the least affordable cities, due to the mis-match between average house prices/rent levels and average salaries (the affordability ratio). In August 2024, the average house price in Oxford was £489,000 which is 12 times the average household earnings; making it one of the least affordable places in the country.
- Whilst Oxford has areas whose communities benefit from low levels of deprivation, there are also areas of the city that are classified as being some of the most deprived in the country (57% of neighbourhoods are classified as being in the top 20% most deprived in the country according to the [Indices of Multiple Deprivation](#)). These residents are less likely to have access to savings or the social networks to help them deal with and adapt to the crisis.
- [Public Health England](#) state that there are stark inequalities in health outcomes for people living in different parts of Oxford with life expectancy being 9.9 years lower for men and 6.3 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Oxford compared with the least deprived areas.
- In relation to child health, about 16.2% (3,925) children live in low-income families. In Year 6, 16.4% (217) of children are classified as obese, and whilst this is better than the average for England, it still means that a proportion of young people are starting their early lives on a trajectory that could put them at risk of further health concerns in future.
- According to Oxfordshire County Council's [Children and Young People's Mental Health Report](#), Oxfordshire has observed changes in the mental health and

wellbeing of its children and young people. Using national estimates, around 11,630 children and young people in Oxford experienced the burden of mental health problems in 2023. The report stated that this could be attributed to unemployment, poverty and deprivation.

- [Oxford's Economic Strategy](#) states that Oxford has a strong economy that is growing, the benefits of this are not shared equally. For example:
 - Around 10% of residents earn below the national real living wage (£9.50 p/h).
 - Families need around £16,000 per annum to avoid food poverty, and yet, one in ten are not achieving this.
 - Fuel poverty is a growing issue with rates higher than the rest of the Country, meaning households are being forced to greater amounts of their incomes on heating their homes over meeting other needs.
- Existing health challenges are likely to be compounded by the wider environment. For example,
 - The entire city is designated as an Air Quality Management Area due to issues of air pollution and there are known hotspots in parts of the city which have a wide variety of health impacts, particularly for those with existing health conditions as well as the young and elderly.
 - The city has varied levels of access to green spaces which can impact upon the ability to be active and take part in physical recreation as well as socialising more generally (which can be important for supporting mental health).
- [Oxfordshire County Council's Current and Future Climate Vulnerability of Oxfordshire Storymap](#) states that river flooding and surface flooding, heatwaves and increasing temperatures, high winds and storms, and drought are the most prominent climate issues facing Oxford.

2.2. Wider context – guidance and strategies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places (para 92). Yet, evidence suggests that health outcomes for people in England are no longer improving as they have been in previous decades, indeed life expectancy for women in the most deprived communities in the country has begun to drop; the time spent living in poor health throughout the country is now increasing for everyone; and health inequalities are growing. Marmot Places is another framework that assesses health and wellbeing and is a concept widely utilised by many local planning authorities. This concept highlights that health

inequalities are largely shaped by the social determinants of health and pursue such interventions are based on the 8 Marmot Principles, and there is a commitment by such places to improve health equity over the short, medium and long term by:

1. Developing and delivering approaches, interventions and policies to improve health equity.
2. Strengthening their health equity systems.
3. Involving communities in the identification of the drivers of poor health and in the design and implementation of actions to reduce them.
4. Broadening advocacy on health equity and engaging with other Marmot Places to share knowledge, roll out best practice alongside partners in local regions and nationally.

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that a healthy place is one which supports and promotes healthy behaviours and environments and a reduction in health inequalities for people of all ages. It will provide the community with opportunities to improve their physical and mental health, and support community engagement and wellbeing.

Marmot Place Study

The [Marmot Study](#) of 2010 stated that there must be a prioritisation of policies that both reduce health inequalities and mitigate climate change by improving active travel, the availability of good quality open and free spaces, the food environment in local areas and energy efficiency of housing across the social gradient. It is also suggested that planning, transport, housing, environmental and health systems should be fully integrated to address the social determinants of health in each locality.

An updated review, [published](#) in 2020, by the Institute of Health Equity, highlighted various negative observations on health equity across England. It highlighted that the original recommendations made in 2010 are still relevant, and increasingly so, in many cases.

Oxfordshire County Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) is a collaborative piece of research with contributions from various specialists from Oxfordshire's local authorities, NHS, Thames Valley Police, Healthwatch Oxfordshire and voluntary sector organisations. The JSNA provides information about Oxfordshire's population and the factors affecting health, wellbeing, and social care needs and covers a variety of topics.

Oxfordshire County Council Health Impact Assessment toolkit

Oxfordshire County Council have a Health Impact Assessment Toolkit. This toolkit identifies eleven determinants when assessing health and wellbeing. The toolkit promotes a practical approach used to judge the effects a proposed development may have on the health and wellbeing of different groups of people. The findings of HIAs are used to make recommendations to decision makers as to how any negative health impacts of a development can be reduced, and any positive health impacts maximised.

Oxford Local Plan 2036

The adopted Local Plan (2036) is in place at present and deals with health and wellbeing through various policies. Policy **RE5: Health, wellbeing, and Health Impact Assessments** seeks to promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities and reduce health inequalities. Proposals are supported which help to deliver these aims through the development of environments which encourage healthier day-to-day behaviours and are supported by local services and community networks to sustain health, social, and cultural wellbeing.

3. Methodology for undertaking this HIA

The HIA process has been adapted from some of the national/regional frameworks/guidance identified in section 2, which provide well-established and accepted criteria for evaluating potential health impacts. These frameworks guide the assessment by outlining key phenomena that may influence health outcomes, ensuring that the process aligns with broader public health objectives and best practices.

As touched upon earlier, this report details the first stage of the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) being conducted by the City Council, which serves as a high-level screening exercise, primarily due to the preliminary nature of the draft policy options currently under consideration. The report sets out, in this section, how the Council has come to define its assessment framework which will be used to review the proposals of the emerging Local Plan. The screening also helps to identify potential health implications of emerging areas of the Local Plan, enabling informed decisions that can guide further policy refinement and development.

Initially, we have undertaken a review of health and wellbeing context in the city (as was presented in the topic paper at the issues consultation and summarised in Section 2) and considered the various elements of health and wellbeing that the Local Plan could feasibly have influence over. Addressing the key factors/determinants of relevance to the city and

its population is essential for improving public health, enhancing quality of life, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The key context of Oxford identifies the main issues and challenges facing the city which can be grouped into a number of topics that will form the basis of the assessment framework for the Local Plan HIA, which are as follows:

- Healthy housing
- Healthy environment
- Movement and accessibility
- Social infrastructure
- Economy and jobs
- Oxford's inequalities
- Responding to climate change

To help ensure that the topics comprising the assessment framework for the Local Plan HIA encompass the variety of potential issues that are of relevance to the local area, these seven topics have then also been cross-referenced against the various components of the [Oxfordshire County Council HIA toolkit](#) (Table 1). The matrix below identifies via crosses how the County HIA components align with the broader topics proposed to form the basis of the Local Plan HIA assessment framework and helps to confirm that these issues can be addressed within them.

	Housing	Physical Activity	Healthy food environments	Air quality	Noise	Traffic and Transportation	Crime and anti-social behaviour	Economy and Employment	Education and Skills	Access to local natural environment and access to green spaces	Access to Services
Healthy Housing	X									X	
Healthy Environment	X	X	X	X			X			X	
Movement and accessibility		X				X		X	X	X	X
Social infrastructure	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	
Oxford's inequalities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Economy and jobs	X							X	X		
Responding to climate change	X			X		X				X	

Table 1: Oxfordshire County Council's health determinants (along the top of the matrix) compared to Oxford City's health determinants (which are listed down the left of the matrix).

Of course, the Local Plan can influence some of these determinants more than others, for example the City Council is not highways authority so has limited influence over traffic and transport. Some of the issues are also dependant on implementation of policies, or how sites come forward as they are designed and are more challenging to consider at the stage of an emerging Local Plan.

Having identified the overarching assessment framework for the Local Plan HIA, the second stage was to screen the emerging policy options sets against each of the seven topics within the assessment framework. We have tried to identify which sets of options presented in the consultation could directly contribute to, or influence, an element of health and wellbeing. The screening exercise has identified that some sets of options relate more directly to particular topics than others. However, the policies of the local plan need to be taken as a whole and it becomes clear that all of our identified health and wellbeing topics are addressed to varying degrees when the collection of options sets are taken in its entirety.

The third stage of work was to take each of the seven HIA topics and begin to think more fully about the how the screened in options sets could address health and wellbeing issues related to each topic. This exercise has flagged contextual issues that it will be important to consider in greater detail as we draft the policies for the full draft (Reg 19) Local Plan in 2023. Conclusions have been drawn out for each topic and are discussed in the next section.

4. HIA Conclusions by Topic

This section examines the emerging proposals within the Local Plan 2042 in the context of each topic of the HIA. It sets out some more specific contextual information in relation to each topic before proceeding to identify key policy areas which are of most direct relevance to the issues identified.

It should be noted that, in practice, many policies in the emerging Local Plan are likely to have relevance to a number of topics. Indeed, it is important to highlight that the Local Plan 2042 also proposes a couple of draft policies proposed which will be broadly applicable and relevant to all topics, as well as to the overall aims of the Local Plan. These include:

- **Draft policy HD10: Healthy Design/Health Impact Assessments (HIAs):** Which sets out requirements for applicants to prepare a HIA as part of their application to

help inform the design of their site including identifying relevant health issues, potential positive opportunities to improve health and potential negative impacts that may need to be mitigated through design.

- **Draft policy G9: Resilient Design and Construction:** Which focuses on ensuring new development is designed with consideration for current and future climate change hazards – such as flooding, overheating, and that design is adapted to build in resilience to these hazards.

For conciseness, these overarching policies are not generally referenced further in the sub-sections below, but they will naturally have influence over most topics.

4.1. Healthy Housing

The type of housing we live in is an important component of being able to live a healthy life. This means not only having a home to live in, and one that has enough space for all our daily needs (both indoors and outdoors) but also having access to housing that is affordable. Certain groups have specific housing needs, for example older persons, sheltered housing, or people with disabilities which require adaptations which we also need to consider in the design of new homes.

Specific Context:

- High cost of housing in Oxford compared with wages (known as housing affordability). City is one of the most expensive places to buy or rent a property in comparison with monthly earnings meaning many people are priced out of the market. Knock on impacts include:
 - People having to live further away from places of work, resulting in longer commutes which can impact quality of life;
 - People are forced to spend a greater proportion of their average monthly income on accommodation costs, leaving less money for other needs such as food or heating. These impacts fall particularly hard on those on lower incomes who are already faced with a variety of socio-economic challenges;
- Inappropriately designed housing can exacerbate negative impacts of life-limiting illnesses or mobility impairments which can disproportionately affect certain groups who are more vulnerable (e.g. elderly and disabled);
- Where housing is located in poorly accessible locations, issues around social isolation and loneliness can be exacerbated, which can in turn impact on mental health; and

- If homes are poorly designed or insulated then it can lead to increased heating costs, which many people are already struggling with since the rises in fuel costs in recent years linked to the war in Ukraine and other global factors.

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from poor housing conditions. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate housing-related health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft Policies	Rationale
H1	H1 is about setting requirement for housing each year. The capacity will be calculated in accordance with the strategy and will become the Housing Requirement. This will ensure the correct requirement is set and there is an understanding of exactly what Oxford needs and what pressures proceed.
H2	This policy seeks that qualifying developments provide a proportion of the site as affordable housing and specified that this should be provided onsite. This could increase the number of affordable houses available.
H3 & H4	These policies seek financial contributions towards delivering affordable housing off-site from developments of purpose-built student accommodation and self-contained older persons accommodation. This should help to deliver mixed and balanced communities; meeting needs of those on lower incomes who may not be able to afford full market housing.
H12, H13, H14, and H15	The Plan also addresses specialist housing types in policies H12-15, which can meet the needs of particular groups like the older persons and accessible housing for people with disabilities, as well as homes for travelling communities and boat dwellers.
HD11, HD12, HD13	Ensuring houses are designed in a healthy way to ensure people have better health and wellbeing – ensuring there is privacy, light, enough space, access to green space amenity. Thoughtful design minimises direct and indirect health risks associated with a changing climate.

4.2. Healthy Environment

Oxford's natural and built environment is an important determiner of health and wellbeing outcomes in the city. Having access to a network of green open spaces and areas of valuable ecology as well as open spaces like parks and pitches is important for enabling people to stay active and to socialise and supports physical and mental wellbeing. Being supported by an environment that is free from pollutants and contamination is also essential for avoiding harmful impacts on health.

Specific Context:

- The distribution of green space in the city is fairly even across the city, however, analysis conducted as part of the GI study identifies that there are areas where access to particular typologies of space is poorer (reference the Green Infrastructure Study 2022 for more details).
- There are areas in the east of the city particularly, where there are higher amounts of housing without access to private gardens that also fall within areas of reduced public open space.
- Quality of provision of existing facilities also varies across the city including some lower quality sites falling in areas of high deprivation too which could compound issues created by a lack of private open space where there is already a higher reliance on public provision.
- The entire city has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- because of poor air quality and there are particular hotspots around the city centre
- where levels of air pollutants exceed target. Any level of air pollution can be harmful for people, particularly those who suffer from existing respiratory or cardiovascular conditions and the city has set itself rigorous targets for improving the situation. Also, areas likely to be affected by land contamination, due to the history of land uses that have been situated in these locations over time, which can be harmful to health.
- Issues of flooding and overheating bring their own health risks, though these are discussed in the section 4.7.

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising in the wider environment. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
G1	Protecting and enhancing GI—including parks, waterways, trees, and green corridors—supports a range of positive health outcomes. These include improved air quality, reduced urban heat island effects, better opportunities for physical activity, enhanced mental health through access to nature, and stronger community cohesion.
G2	Policy G2 plays a vital role in promoting public health by ensuring that green and blue infrastructure is integrated into new developments. Access to high-quality green spaces supports physical activity, mental wellbeing, social connection,

	and child development, while also helping to reduce air pollution, noise, and urban heat—all key determinants of health. The policy’s emphasis on inclusive, multifunctional, and accessible spaces, as well as its focus on climate resilience and local food growing, makes it highly relevant for assessing health impacts.
G3	This policy addresses urban greening and has direct and measurable health benefits. By requiring a minimum level of natural green surface cover in new developments, the policy helps reduce urban heat, improve air quality, support mental wellbeing, and encourage physical activity—key determinants of public health. The use of the Urban Greening Factor ensures that these benefits are delivered consistently and equitably across different types of developments. Screening this policy into the HIA helps assess whether health gains are maximised and accessible to all, particularly in areas with existing environmental and health inequalities.
R4	Air quality is a core determinant of a healthy environment. Poor air quality is linked to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and disproportionately affects vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, and people with pre-existing conditions. By requiring developments to assess, mitigate, and minimise exposure to air pollution, the policy directly supports public health protection and promotes healthier places to live, work, and learn.
R8	Sets out various requirements which are intended to protect the amenity of existing residents as well as the occupants of new development from a range of potential impacts – such as noise, vibration, dust.

4.3. Movement and Accessibility

Being able to move across the city in an efficient and a sustainable manner is crucial to ensure that residents have all their daily needs met. The focus of the city is around district and local centres being a hub for the majority of people’s daily needs. Enabling people to take the option of travel in active ways such as walking and cycling is an important means of supporting them to stay healthy. If people cannot walk or cycle to their destination, the public transport infrastructure across the city should be an efficient and affordable option for people too so that they are not forced to rely upon private vehicles.

Specific Context:

- Current analysis indicates that the majority of the city falls within a walkable distance from a district/local centre, however, there are small gaps in access, where residents are not as close.
- The largest mode of transport in terms of commuting to work has been private cars or vans, though cycling and walking are the commuting option for just over a quarter.
- In terms of uptake of more active travel options, there are known barriers in the city, for example, the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) identifies that cycling conditions, provision and routes are often very poor.
- Many are also likely to live and work at distances that cannot be easily/safely walked or cycled.

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising in relation to movement and access. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate movement and accessibility-related health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
C6	This policy is essential for promoting a healthy environment through safe, inclusive, and sustainable movement and accessibility. By requiring Transport Assessments, Travel Plans, and Delivery/Service Management Plans, the policy helps to ensure that new developments support active travel (walking and cycling), reduce reliance on cars, and minimize traffic congestion and air pollution—key factors influencing physical and mental health. Prioritizing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, accessible public transport, and safe travel for people with reduced mobility directly supports equitable access to services and opportunities, enhances community cohesion, and lowers risks associated with road traffic accidents and poor air quality.
C7	This policy supports healthy, active, and accessible travel choices by ensuring secure, inclusive, and convenient cycle parking is integrated into new developments. By encouraging cycling and use of low-emission two-wheelers through adequate facilities, it helps reduce car dependency, lower traffic-related air pollution, and increase physical activity—contributing to improved cardiovascular health, mental wellbeing, and reduced health inequalities. Ensuring accessibility for disabled cyclists and e-bike users further promotes equitable mobility and inclusive transport environments.

C9	This policy promotes a healthier and cleaner transport environment by supporting the transition to electric vehicles, which produce zero tailpipe emissions and help reduce air pollution—a key contributor to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses. Ensuring EV infrastructure is accessible, including for Blue Badge holders and car clubs, also encourages more equitable and sustainable mobility options, aligning with goals of improving active travel environments and reducing the health burden from vehicle emissions.
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4.4. Social Infrastructure

The provision of high-quality social infrastructure across Oxford is crucial for the health and wellbeing of Oxford’s residents. Having access to a choice of food options, healthcare services, places of education and green spaces/recreational facilities allow people to have good levels of physical and mental health. A good network of public transport is a necessity in allowing people to get across and in out of the city to access the key services that they need.

Specific Context:

- The importance of identifying infrastructure need and methods for delivery ensuring that new development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure and community facilities.
- Alongside physical connections throughout the city, digital connectivity is of increasing importance to how we live, work and communicate with each other.
- Despite the increased shift to digital ways of connection, there are still communities who do not benefit from high quality digital connectivity, particularly those in more deprived areas of the city

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising from lack of quality social infrastructure. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
C1	This policy supports the creation of healthy, accessible, and walkable neighbourhoods by strengthening city, district, and local centres as hubs for everyday services, amenities, and employment. Locating key facilities such as healthcare, shops,

	leisure, and community services within these centres reduces the need for car travel, encourages walking and cycling, and helps ensure equitable access to essential services. This fosters social interaction, supports physical and mental wellbeing, and reduces air pollution—all of which are critical determinants of health.
C2	This policy promotes vibrant, high-density, mixed-use centres that are easily accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport. By supporting development that enhances connectivity, active travel infrastructure, and public realm, it encourages healthy and inclusive movement patterns. The focus on active frontages, reduced car parking, and integration of green spaces also fosters more sociable, attractive, and safe environments—contributing positively to both physical and mental wellbeing.
C3	This policy ensures that community facilities remain easily accessible via active and sustainable transport, supporting equitable access to essential services. Protecting and enhancing local facilities reduces the need to travel long distances, especially by car, promoting walkable neighbourhoods. This fosters social inclusion, encourages physical activity, and contributes to improved physical and mental health outcomes.
C4	This policy ensures that learning and non-residential institutions remain accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport, promoting active travel and reducing reliance on private vehicles. Maintaining and improving access supports equitable use of essential educational and community services, encourages physical activity, reduces traffic-related pollution and congestion, and fosters social inclusion - key factors that positively influence health and wellbeing.
C5	Draft Policy C5 supports social infrastructure by promoting the development, improvement, and protection of cultural venues and visitor attractions that enhance the city's social and cultural life. It ensures these facilities are accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport, making them inclusive and reachable for a wide range of residents. The policy also encourages increasing capacity and community use of existing sites while safeguarding them from loss unless suitable, accessible alternatives are provided. This helps maintain vital social spaces that foster community engagement, cultural participation, and social cohesion across Oxford.
G1	Policy option set G1 is the 'protection of the green infrastructure network and green features'. The aim of this policy setup is to identify a network of green and blue infrastructure for protection which will be informed by the green infrastructure study. This

	<p>policy will be effective as green networks that are crucial for people's physical and mental wellbeing will be protected and local resident's needs will be met. The city only has a finite amount of green space so it is crucial that this protected. Furthermore, Oxford's bespoke green spaces can be protected and enhanced via specific policies.</p>
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4.5. Economy and Jobs

Having access to a stable job and sufficient income to support daily needs such as paying for accommodation, healthy food and involvement in social activities makes an important contribution to health and wellbeing. Oxford is home to around 4,950 active businesses, collectively employing approximately 117,000 people in full-time work and has the highest employment rate in the county of 128,000 jobs. Yet there are individuals in the city who do not have access to stable employment or who are unable to work for various reasons such as having long term health conditions or not having sufficient qualifications to access the types of jobs on offer.

Specific Context:

- Oxford's importance as an employment location is clearly demonstrated by its job density ratio (jobs to residents aged 16-64) of 1.33 (2019), which is well above the South-East (0.90) and Great Britain (0.87).
- It is crucial that people have access to jobs in Oxford that are available to their particular skills and qualifications – a varied economy is important in supporting this as well as sufficient training and experience opportunities improve access to Employment.
- Instability in the national and local economy can lead to a reduction in the number of jobs available and uncertainty of job security which in turn cause people to have stress for their own job security or in many cases unemployment.
- High amounts of unemployment reduces people's quality of life and therefore health as families are forced to cut costs and in extreme cases be threatened with becoming Homeless.
- Growth of hybrid working patterns can be beneficial for supporting people to access employment, however, this style of working is not accessible to all work sectors – e.g. those who provide services such as in retail, building, manufacturing, social care

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising in relation to the economy and access to jobs. The table below

highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
E3	This policy has requirements have been introduced in order to support the creation of affordable workspaces which can help a broader range of businesses to remain and locate in the city who might otherwise not be able to afford typical rent spaces. The provision of such workspaces should bring more diversity to the city's employment offer and provides employment opportunities that would not be available in the city as well as help local people to start-up new businesses, support social enterprises and promote social value.
E4	In order to support the promotion of an 'inclusive economy', the Local Plan also includes requirements for community employment plans as set out in policy E4 which are intended to help deliver greater job opportunities and skills for local people. There are various requirements set out in the policy such as in the construction phase of a major development providing the opportunity for local people to work in the building industry (through apprenticeships / skills / training and making links to schools and colleges) and to secure commitments from a developer to procure materials and labour supply locally. Developers are also encouraged to pay employees the Oxford Living Wage and use contractors who pay this higher level than the national living wage. During the operational phase of developments, the applicants are encouraged to secure a proportion of the longer term workforce or supply chain locally or commitments to community education and outreach can ensure ongoing benefits.

4.6. Oxford's Inequalities

Oxford is a city characterised by distinct health inequalities across its populations. Certain areas within the city have very healthy life expectancy figures of just over 80 years for men and over 84 years for women. Both of these statistics are above than the national average; however such high levels of expectancy are only relevant to a small portion of the city. In other areas within the city life expectancy life expectancy for men is 67 and 75 for women. This is a difference of 13 years for men and 9 years for women which is a wide a gap, representative of stark inequalities within the city.

Inequalities, of course, are likely to have impacts which cross over with other topics covered earlier in the HIA – e.g. inequalities in relation to access to housing or jobs.

Specific Context:

- There are distinct contrasts in health profiles across the city resulting in differences in life expectancy, prominence of physical/mental illness and reduced outcomes in certain areas.
- Socio-economic deprivation is often correlated with poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation, 10 of Oxford's 83 neighbourhood areas ('Super Output Areas') are among the 20% most deprived areas in England.
- Wards with the highest levels of deprivation tend to be focused in central, eastern or southern areas of the city.
- Oxford ranks 182 out of 317 most deprived wards nationally in terms of average score for overall indices of multiple deprivation.
- Inequalities also exist in provision of natural features in the environment, e.g. access to open space.

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising from inequalities. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6	Seeking contributions from various types of development to support delivery of affordable housing which is a key element of inequality in the city (housing inequality)
E3 and E4	Both these policies are addressing elements of economic inequality. E3 is supporting skills provision amongst the local community through securing opportunities from new developments. E4 seeks to secure affordable workspaces that supports smaller and local businesses.

4.7. Responding to Climate Change

When considering health and wellbeing in relation to the topic of climate change, our focus in this assessment is resilience to the projected impacts of two key hazards, flooding and overheating which pose risk to health and wellbeing.

Oxfordshire County Council have produced a [climate risk vulnerability assessment](#) for the county which identifies how climate change could impact various sectors within Oxfordshire. The assessment flags that climate change can have a significant impact on health, healthcare facilities, communities and settlements, buildings and cultural

heritage, and that the current and future risks are not evenly distributed. For example, exposure to extreme heat is greatest in urban areas and communities in high rise or low-quality housing. Oxford is highlighted throughout the research as being a particular area of the county with increased climate risk to hazards such as overheating and flooding, both now and in the future.

Specific context of relevance:

- The city already has a history of flood events due to its proximity to a variety of sources of flooding, particularly from the rivers. Climate change is projected to bring about wetter winters and increased incidences of intense rainfall events which are likely to exacerbate these risks in the future.
- Ongoing stress that is caused by flooding events including the threat of flooding, can be taxing on the mental health of those living in close proximity to flood zones and this could exacerbate challenges faced by those already in poor mental health.
- As an urban area Oxford is already susceptible to urban heat island affect. Warmer, drier summers and more intense/prolonged heat waves can exacerbate this with significant implications for health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable including issues of overheating and heat stress.
- Risks of overheating are exacerbated further by the urban environment around us, including poorly designed buildings (e.g. those with insufficient ventilation and other cooling measures), and outdoor spaces that are lacking in green infrastructure and other forms of shading.
- Prolonged heat wave events have been shown to be particularly threatening for those with pre-existing health conditions such as heart and lung disease, as well as the young and the elderly.
- Climate risk is not equal across communities. Those living in higher deprivation have increased vulnerability to climate impacts, potentially living in poorer quality accommodation, less resources (financial and material) to build their own resilience to impacts (e.g. to afford cooling measures in the house) and to recover when impacted (e.g. to pay to fix damage after flooding).

This context highlights the potential health and wellbeing issues that may result from challenges arising from the changing climate and the increased risks arising from this now and in future. The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2042 that could influence these outcomes and help mitigate health and wellbeing challenges in Oxford.

Draft policy	Rationale
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G1, G2 and G3	These draft policies address the protection of a network of green and blue spaces across the city as well as provision of new green infrastructure in development. Green infrastructure is important for not only managing surface water (slowing and storing) but also for helping to mitigate against hot temperatures through the cooling benefits green features like trees can provide (either by direct shading or evapotranspiration).
G7 and G8	Address the management of flood risk in the city and how new development needs to approach this as well as expectations for SuDS provision as a way of managing surface water runoff.
G9	Focuses on ensuring new development is designed with consideration for current and future climate change hazards – such as flooding, overheating, and that design is adapted to build in resilience to these hazards. Ensures applicants inform their design with reference to current and future climate projections and then incorporate appropriate resilience measures to help address risks arising for occupants.

5. Conclusion and next steps

It is important to note that the Local Plan predominantly has influence over new development coming forward in the city and has less influence over the built environment that is already in existence, which is likely to be a driver of certain health and wellbeing issues noted in this screening. For example, there is already a significant amount of housing in the city of varying age and quality which can have an impact over the health and wellbeing of occupants, but unfortunately, the new Local Plan cannot force change on this until it comes forward for redevelopment through the planning process. Nevertheless, as new development comes forward, this can act as an important driver of change in the wider area and the new Local Plan's policies will play a crucial role in helping to influence the quality of this.

The Local Plan is still in development, with all background papers, evidence base, and supporting studies currently under review to incorporate the most up-to-date information. The primary aim of this Health Impact Assessment (HIA) has been to identify key health and wellbeing issues affecting Oxford to provide context for future assessment and to begin to identify how the draft policies within the Plan may influence, address, or help mitigate these challenges. Across the seven health and wellbeing themes set out in our assessment framework, the report identifies a range of policy options under consultation that have the potential to contribute positively.

As highlighted earlier in this report, the Sustainability Appraisal evaluates the Local Plan proposals for likely significant sustainability effects which includes considerations about

impacts of on issues of health and wellbeing including inequalities. Where relevant, this will also identify where potential need for mitigation may be needed because of particular proposals. This HIA is an additional element of assessment that seeks to look in further detail at the Local Plan's impacts in regard to this topic and supplement the work of the SA. The Regulation 19 HIA will revisit the screening to identify any changes and will then review the full Regulation 19 Draft Plan against the HIA framework.

Any feedback on this initial assessment is welcome through the current Regulation 18 consultation process.