

Local Plan 2045 Health Impact Assessment Report Regulation 19

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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 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 2045 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 (17th March-28th 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. The screening report undertaken at the Regulation 18 stage identified the emerging policies which were most relevant to health and wellbeing. The draft policies were then tested at public consultation. At this stage (Regulation 19), the policies have been fully drafted by reflecting on our consultation and evidence base. This report builds on the Regulation 18 HIA, capturing a high-level narrative of how the new Local Plan addresses health and wellbeing.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Regulation 18 HIA screening report was 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 Regulation 19 report is different to the previous Regulation 18 screening report because the first draft policies have now been through public consultation and are now ready for submission to the Secretary of State. Therefore, this report responds to the consultation and incorporates amendments which have been made to the policies. The HIA process overall 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.

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 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 which is to demonstrate how the various policies address the seven topics within the assessment framework.
- Section 4 – outlines the conclusions for the assessment, 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 HIA 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 19 Draft Local Plan 2045 is supported by a 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 mismatch 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, including a part of Greater Leys and of Littlemore and Rose Hill, which are among the 10% most deprived nationally, although there have been improvements since 2019, with the 2025 data showing that Barton and Sandhills, Rose Hill and Iffley and parts of Blackbird Leys have moved out of the 20% most deprived category since 2019 ([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](#) (now part of the Department of Health and Social Care) state that there are stark inequalities in health outcomes for people living in different parts of Oxford with life expectancy being 13.8 years lower for men and 11.2 years

lower for women in the most deprived areas of Oxford compared with the least deprived areas (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).

- 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 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. 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.

This report presents the Regulation 19 Health Impact Assessment (HIA) undertaken by the City Council. It builds on the earlier Regulation 18 HIA, which comprised a high-level screening of the draft policy options. During Regulation 18, the Council undertook 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 of this report) and considered which aspects the Local Plan could feasibly have influence over. The council then received responses to the draft policies, including the HIA, during the consultation process which has been reflected upon to create this report. The HIA process supports policymakers in identifying the potential health implications of the Local Plan and, where appropriate, refining policies to maximise positive health and wellbeing outcomes within the scope of the Plan.

Given Oxford's context, the following topics will form the basis of the assessment framework for this Local Plan HIA:

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

To help ensure that these seven topics encompass the variety of potential issues that are of relevance to the local area, they have then been cross-referenced against the components of the [Oxfordshire County Council HIA toolkit](#) (Table 1).

	Housing	Physical Activity	Healthy food environments	Air quality	Noise	Traffic and Transport	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).

Having identified the overarching assessment framework for the Local Plan HIA, the second stage was to illustrate how the seven topics are being addressed through various policies. Given the overlapping nature of these topics, the following section is an indicative, not a substantive list of policies.

Ultimately, 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. However, when taken as a whole, it becomes clear that all of our identified health and wellbeing topics are addressed to varying degrees.

HIA Conclusions by Topic

Healthy Housing

Relevant context:

- Average house prices in Oxford are 17.3 times average earnings at over £500,000 (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Housing unaffordability means people potentially commute longer into Oxford and spend more on accommodation costs than other needs, which is detrimental to quality of life.
- Living in poorly accessible locations can exacerbate social isolation, leading to poor mental health.
- Poorly designed homes can be inaccessible for people with disabilities or additional needs (see the Updated Specialist Housing Needs Evidence 2025 for more context).
- Poorly insulated homes lead to increased heating costs, which many people are already struggling with due to price rises linked to the Ukraine war and other global factors.

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
H1 and H2	H1 will set a requirement for housing each year. The capacity will be calculated in accordance with the strategy and National Policy's	H1 ensures that Oxford's housing needs are accurately assessed and that sufficient housing supply is

	<p>Standard Method and will become the Housing Requirement for the plan period.</p> <p>H2 seeks that qualifying developments provide a proportion of the site as affordable housing and specifies that this should be provided onsite.</p>	<p>planned to meet the needs of current and future residents.</p> <p>The screening report highlights that Oxford is one of the most expensive places to live. The policy works to address the challenges associated with high housing costs by helping to reduce displacement and supporting residents to remain within the city. By doing so, it can lessen the need for long-distance commuting, promoting active travel, and help ensure that households retain more disposable income for other essential amenities.</p>
H3	<p>This policy seeks financial contributions towards delivering affordable housing off-site from developments of purpose-built student accommodation, employment development and self-contained older persons accommodation.</p>	<p>This policy support residents' health and wellbeing by increasing access to stable, affordable housing, helping prevent displacement, and enabling people to remain close to essential support networks. By promoting mixed and balanced communities, they contribute to stronger social cohesion and reduced isolation, while also limiting the need for long commutes that can increase stress and exposure to pollution.</p> <p>Additionally, by reducing the financial burden of housing, households retain more disposable income for nutritious food, heating, healthcare, and other necessities that contribute to better physical and mental health.</p>
H10, H11, H12, and H13	<p>The screening report highlights specialist housing types in policies H10-13, 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.</p>	<p>These policies support health and wellbeing by ensuring that specialist housing is available for groups with particular needs, including older people, disabled residents, travelling communities, and boat dwellers.</p> <p>Providing appropriate, accessible, and secure accommodation helps people maintain independence,</p>

		<p>reduces the risk of accidents or ill-health associated with unsuitable housing, and ensures residents can continue to live safely within their communities. For older and disabled people, well-designed housing improves mobility, reduces isolation, and supports access to essential care and services. For travelling communities and boat dwellers, the provision of suitable accommodation promotes stability, safety, and inclusion, all of which contribute to better physical and mental health outcomes.</p>
HD8, HD9, HD10	<p>The screening report highlighted that 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.</p>	<p>Ensuring that homes are designed to a high standard delivers significant health and wellbeing benefits. Adequate natural light, ventilation, privacy, and internal space support good mental and physical health by reducing overcrowding, improving sleep quality, and creating environments where people can feel safe, calm, and comfortable. Access to green space and outdoor amenity areas encourages physical activity, relaxation, and social interaction, all of which contribute to better long-term wellbeing. Thoughtful design that considers the changing climate - such as measures for overheating, flood resilience, and improved air quality - helps minimise both direct and indirect health risks, protecting residents from environmental stressors and creating healthier places to live now and in the future.</p>

Healthy Environment

Relevant context:

- The distribution of green space is relatively even across the city. There are over 90 green spaces of varying sizes including parks and nature reserves (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Analysis conducted as part of the [Green Infrastructure Study 2022](#) identifies that there are areas where access to particular typologies of space is poorer, for example less private gardens in East Oxford.
- The entire city has been designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). 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.
- Some areas are likely to be affected by land contamination, due to the history of industrial land uses.

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
G1	<p>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.</p>	<p>Protecting and enhancing green infrastructure helps mitigate a range of negative health and wellbeing impacts by creating healthier, more resilient environments. Green spaces such as parks, waterways, trees, and green corridors help improve air quality by filtering pollutants, reducing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular conditions. Vegetation and shaded areas also help to cool urban environments, reducing the urban heat island effect and lowering the health risks associated with heatwaves - particularly important for older people and vulnerable groups. Access to well-maintained natural spaces encourages physical activity, which helps prevent obesity, heart disease, and other chronic conditions, while also offering restorative environments that reduce stress, anxiety, and poor mental</p>

		<p>health. Additionally, attractive and accessible green spaces strengthen social connections and community cohesion, helping to counter loneliness and social isolation. In combination, these benefits reduce the likelihood of negative health outcomes while supporting overall wellbeing and resilience.</p>
G2	<p>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.</p>	<p>Policy G2 helps mitigate a wide range of health and wellbeing impacts by ensuring that green and blue infrastructure is fully integrated into new developments. By providing high-quality, inclusive, and accessible green spaces, the policy reduces the negative effects of urban living - such as poor air quality, heat stress, noise, and lack of physical activity. The presence of trees, vegetation, and water features helps filter pollutants and cool the environment, lowering the risk of respiratory illnesses and heat-related health problems. Encouraging everyday physical activity and active play through accessible outdoor spaces helps prevent chronic conditions such as obesity and cardiovascular disease, while contact with natural environments supports mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. The policy also fosters social interaction and community cohesion, mitigating loneliness and isolation. Additionally, the emphasis on climate resilience and opportunities for local food growing helps reduce vulnerability to climate-related health risks and improves access to nutritious food. Together, these measures significantly buffer residents from negative health impacts and promote</p>

		healthier, more resilient communities.
G3	<p>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.</p>	<p>The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by ensuring that new developments incorporate a minimum level of natural green surface cover, which directly addresses environmental conditions that can harm health. Increasing urban greening helps reduce the urban heat island effect, lowering the risk of heat-related illness, particularly for vulnerable groups. Additional vegetation improves air quality by filtering pollutants, thereby reducing respiratory and cardiovascular risks. Access to greenery has proven benefits for mental health, helping to reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing, while also encouraging physical activity by creating more appealing outdoor environments. By applying the Urban Greening Factor, the policy ensures these health benefits are delivered consistently across different developments, helping to address disparities in neighbourhoods that currently experience poorer environmental quality and associated health inequalities. In doing so, the policy supports equitable access to healthier, more resilient living environments.</p>
R4	<p>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,</p>	<p>The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by ensuring that developments actively assess, minimise, and manage exposure to air pollution - a major environmental risk factor linked to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. By requiring mitigation measures where air quality risks are identified, the policy helps</p>

	<p>and minimise exposure to air pollution, the policy directly supports public health protection and promotes healthier places to live, work, and learn.</p>	<p>prevent harmful exposure for vulnerable groups such as children, older adults, and people with existing health conditions. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of pollution-related illness, supports healthier living and working environments, and helps create places where residents can breathe cleaner air and experience better overall wellbeing.</p>
R8	<p>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.</p>	<p>The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by requiring developments to protect both existing residents and future occupants from environmental nuisances such as noise, vibration, and dust. By setting out clear standards for managing these impacts, the policy helps prevent health issues associated with prolonged exposure to environmental stressors - such as sleep disturbance, stress, respiratory problems, and reduced quality of life. Effective control of noise and vibration reduces the risk of cardiovascular strain and mental health impacts, while dust mitigation helps prevent respiratory irritation and exacerbation of conditions like asthma. Together, these measures ensure that new development does not create harmful living conditions and supports healthier, more comfortable environments for all residents.</p>

Movement and Accessibility

Relevant context:

- There is a strong correlation between deprivation and physical inactivity. Most deprived areas in Oxford have low physical activity rates and high rates of obesity which contributes to lower life expectancy. Areas in Barton, Blackbird Leys, Greater Leys, Littlemore and Rose Hill have the lowest proportion of active adults in the city (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- District and local centres in Oxford are expected to continue to attract people and meet their immediate needs within their local area. If people cannot walk or cycle, then public transport infrastructure across the city should be an efficient and affordable option. A key aim of the City Council and of the Oxfordshire County Council (as Highways Authority) is to promote a shift to sustainable modes of travel.
- 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 identifies that cycling conditions, provision and routes are often very poor.

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
C6	<p>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.</p>	<p>The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by ensuring that new developments are planned around safe, inclusive, and sustainable movement. By requiring Transport Assessments, Travel Plans, and Delivery/Service Management Plans, it helps reduce car dependency and the associated traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution that can harm physical and mental health. Prioritising walking, cycling, and accessible public transport supports regular physical activity, which reduces the risk of chronic diseases and improves mental wellbeing. Designing safe routes and crossings also lowers the risk of road traffic accidents, particularly for vulnerable users such as children, older adults, and people with reduced mobility. Additionally,</p>

		improving access to services and opportunities through inclusive travel options supports social participation and community cohesion, helping to reduce isolation and promote equitable health outcomes across all groups.
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.	The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by ensuring that secure, convenient, and inclusive cycle parking is provided in new developments, which removes barriers to active and low-emission travel. By making cycling a more practical and attractive option, the policy helps reduce reliance on cars, leading to lower traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution - environmental factors strongly linked to respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses. Encouraging everyday physical activity through cycling supports improved cardiovascular health, better weight management, and enhanced mental wellbeing through reduced stress and improved mood. Providing accessible facilities for disabled cyclists and e-bike users further promotes fair and inclusive mobility, helping reduce health inequalities by ensuring that more people can benefit from safe, independent, and active travel options. Together, these measures create healthier travel environments and support more sustainable, low-carbon lifestyles.
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	The policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts by supporting a shift from petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs), which produce zero tailpipe emissions. Reducing exhaust emissions directly lowers levels of nitrogen dioxide

<p>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.</p>	<p>(NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) - pollutants strongly associated with respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, asthma exacerbations, and premature mortality. By expanding accessible EV infrastructure, including provision for Blue Badge holders and car clubs, the policy ensures that cleaner transport options are available to a broader range of residents, helping reduce exposure to harmful air pollution equitably. Supporting EV uptake also contributes to quieter streets and a more pleasant urban environment, which can reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing. In combination with wider goals to enhance active travel environments, the policy helps to reduce the health burden associated with vehicle emissions and supports a more inclusive, sustainable, and health-promoting transport system.</p>
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Social Infrastructure

Relevant context:

- The council is focusing on improving access to communal resources in deprived neighbourhoods of South and East Oxford, particularly in areas such as Barton, Rose Hill, and Blackbird Leys (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Arts/cultural organisations and visitor attractions are mainly based in the city centre (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Community centres are concentrated in the city centre and East Oxford (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Communities in general are staying more local and discovering what's on their doorstep (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
C1-C4	<p>These policies support the creation of vibrant, accessible, and walkable neighbourhoods.</p> <p>C1 seeks to strengthen 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.</p> <p>C2 promotes high-density, mixed-use centres with a focus on active frontages, reduced car parking and integrated green spaces.</p> <p>C3 and C4 focus on making new developments accessible via active and sustainable transport. C3 is for new community facilities, whilst C4 is for new learning and non-residential institutions.</p>	<p>These outputs foster social interaction, support physical and mental wellbeing, and reduce air pollution, all of which are critical determinants of health.</p>
C5	<p>Promotes the development, improvement, and protection of cultural venues and visitor attractions that enhance the city's social and cultural life. It ensures new facilities are accessible via active and sustainable transport.</p>	<p>This policy helps maintain vital social spaces that foster community engagement, cultural participation, and social cohesion across Oxford.</p>
G2	<p>Identifies a network of green and blue infrastructure for protection and enhancement.</p>	<p>Various benefits, which are listed in the policy, include increased public access (positive for physical and mental wellbeing); facilitating recreation and play (including for younger people for which this is vital for development); enhancing biodiversity (positive for human health overall); mitigating climate change (limiting health risks such as overheating).</p>

S2 and HD1	Both policies relate to high-quality design. S2 provides criteria for high quality design, including public spaces, movement, identity and character, and nature and green infrastructure. HD1 outlines specific stages of planning which must be met to ensure a rigorous design.	High quality design is about more than just creating aesthetically pleasing buildings but about strengthening connection between people and place to promote a sense of identity and improve health and wellbeing.
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Economy and Jobs

Relevant 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).
- However, one in four of children lives below the poverty line (after housing costs), rising to 36% of children in Blackbird Leys (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).

The table below highlights the key emerging policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that could address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
E3-E4	Both policies align with the city's Inclusive Economy Strategy. E3 states that proposals of 50 or more dwellings should be supported by a community employment and procurement plan to help deliver greater job opportunities and skills for local people. Measures include providing construction jobs and training for local residents, paying the Oxford Living Wage and procuring construction materials locally. Smaller developments are also expected to provide a written statement regarding job opportunities and training to support an inclusive economy.	Both policies tackle economic disadvantage which is a key determinant of health. Policy E4 promotes social value by supporting businesses, social enterprises, or community organisations that might otherwise struggle to access space in Oxford due to high property costs. Local procurement (Policy E3) further strengthens community resilience and sustainability, fostering security and social connection for people living and working in Oxford.

	E4 promotes the creation of affordable workspaces. It lists sites which will be expected to provide an affordable workspace strategy.	
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Oxford's Inequalities

Relevant context:

- Oxford is the UK's second most unequal city (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- 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 (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- 8 out of Oxford's 83 neighbourhoods are amongst the 20% most deprived in England (this figure was recently updated as a result of the [English Indices of Deprivation 2025](#)).
- 22% of adults have no or low educational qualifications (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).
- Oxford has become more digitally competent since the COVID-19 pandemic yet digital exclusion, including the cost of data and devices, affects deprived areas in the southern neighbourhoods, especially older people (see: [Thriving Communities Strategy 2023-27](#)).

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
H10, H11, H12	These policies are relevant to new proposals for travelling communities (H10), boat dwellers (H11) and for older persons and those in supported accommodation (H12).	The policies outline that proposals for these types of accommodation should be located close-by to local services including public transport, shops and healthcare facilities. Additionally, Policies H11 and H12 recommend accessibility to education and employment as well as adequate access for the emergency services. These actions help promote better health outcomes

		for these potentially vulnerable communities.
HD7	Major development proposals must submit a Health Impact Assessment. A priority of this is to identify relevant population groups which could be affected by the development as well as details of proposed mitigations.	Mitigation measures should reduce negative impacts on impacted populations and thereby reduce health inequalities at a micro-level.
HD11	This policy ensures that all affordable dwellings and a percentage of general market dwellings are accessible and adaptable according to national policy.	Adaptable homes can help older people and those with chronic health conditions and other specialist housing needs remain in their homes, maintaining their independence and helping to alleviate pressure on health and social care.

Responding to Climate Change

In the Oxfordshire County Council's 2024 [Climate Risk Vulnerability Assessment](#), Oxford is highlighted throughout as being an area of the county with increased climate risk to hazards such as overheating and flooding, both now and in the future.

Relevant context:

- The city 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.
- Oxford is susceptible to the urban heat island affect. Warmer, drier summers and more intense/prolonged heat waves can exacerbate this with significant implications for overheating and heat stress.
- Risks of overheating are exacerbated further by the urban environment around us, including poorly designed buildings, such as those with insufficient ventilation and other cooling measures, and outdoor spaces that are lacking in green infrastructure and other forms of shading.
- Those living in higher deprivation have increased vulnerability to climate impacts as they are likely to be living in poorer quality accommodation with less resources (financial and material) to build their own resilience to impacts, like cooling

measures in the house, and to recover when impacted, such as fixing damage after flooding.

The table below highlights the key policy areas from the Local Plan 2045 that address and mitigate these health and wellbeing challenges.

Policy	Policy description and related health and wellbeing issues	How the policy mitigates negative health and wellbeing impacts
G1, G2 and G3	These 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.	<p>Prolonged heatwave events have been shown to pose particular risks to people with pre-existing health conditions, such as heart and lung disease, as well as to young and elderly populations. Extreme weather events, including flooding, can also cause ongoing stress, which may exacerbate mental health issues.</p> <p>Policies G1 and G3 focus on protecting and reinstating green infrastructure. This is important not only for managing surface water, by slowing and storing runoff, but also for mitigating high temperatures through the cooling benefits provided by green features such as trees, either through direct shading or evapotranspiration.</p> <p>Policy G2 specifies that efforts should be made to re-naturalise watercourses, which can improve water quality and lead to associated health benefits. The policies also incorporate ecological buffers to development, limiting community exposure to flooding. Finally, the public open space required under Policy G2 may be used for local food production, which could play a modest positive role in building local climate resilience.</p>
G7 and G8	Address the management of flood risk in the city in the context of climate change, and how new development needs to approach this as well as expectations for SuDS provision. G7 requires developers not increase flood risk off-site (which would worsen the city's climate resilience). G8 states that natural, green and blue SuDS are	<p>These policies will reduce the impact of new developments on flood risk, which is predicted to increase as a result of climate change, and are vital for limiting both mental and physical health and wellbeing impacts.</p>

	preferable to artificial components which are believed to be less effective.	
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. It 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.	This policy emphasises the importance of prioritising climate resilience in the design and maintenance of developments, particularly in relation to overheating, flooding and storm extremes. By mitigating these risks, Policy G9 will help to improve health and wellbeing for occupants, reduce the impacts of development, and protect supporting infrastructure over its lifetime.

4. Conclusion

This Regulation 19 Health Impact Assessment has evaluated the potential health and wellbeing implications of the proposed local plan policies, drawing on current evidence, local context, and policy objectives. Overall, the assessment demonstrates that the policies screened from the Regulation 18 report has the capacity to deliver meaningful health benefits for existing and future communities – particularly through improvements to the built environment, enhanced access to green space, active travel opportunities, and the provision of high-quality housing.

By applying the seven health and wellbeing topics across the Plan's policies, the HIA has identified that the Local Plan integrates health-promoting principles comprehensively and consistently. Policies relating to housing, design quality, green and blue infrastructure, movement and accessibility, social infrastructure, employment, and climate resilience all help address the wider determinants of health that are most relevant to Oxford's current and future communities. The Plan not only seeks to mitigate negative health impacts but also actively promotes opportunities for healthier lifestyles, supporting physical activity, social connection, environmental quality, and economic inclusion.

The assessment highlights that many of Oxford's entrenched health inequalities stem from long-standing spatial and socio-economic disparities. The policy framework presented in the Regulation 19 Local Plan strengthens the city's ability to respond to these, embedding requirements for high-quality, affordable, accessible, low-carbon and resilient development. In particular, the Plan supports vulnerable groups – such as older people, disabled residents, travelling communities, and those living in areas of deprivation – through targeted policies that enhance access to services, safe environments, and appropriate housing.

The HIA also complements and reinforces the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA). While the SA assesses the Plan's performance against wider social, environmental, and economic sustainability objectives, the HIA provides a more detailed and focused consideration of health outcomes and health equity. Taken together, the SA and HIA provide a robust, evidence-led understanding of how the Local Plan can positively shape the wellbeing of Oxford's communities over the plan period.

Overall, the Regulation 19 Local Plan 2045 is considered capable of delivering significant long-term health benefits, provided that its policies are implemented effectively through development management, partnership working, and continued monitoring. By embedding health firmly within the spatial planning framework, the Plan strengthens Oxford's ambition to create a healthier, more inclusive, and climate-resilient city, one where all residents have the opportunity to thrive.