



PREFERRED OPTIONS

30th June - 25th August 2017



Building a world-class city for everyone

**An online questionnaire is available at  
[www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/localplan)**

**If you have any questions please**

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**Please give us your comments by  
25th August 2017**

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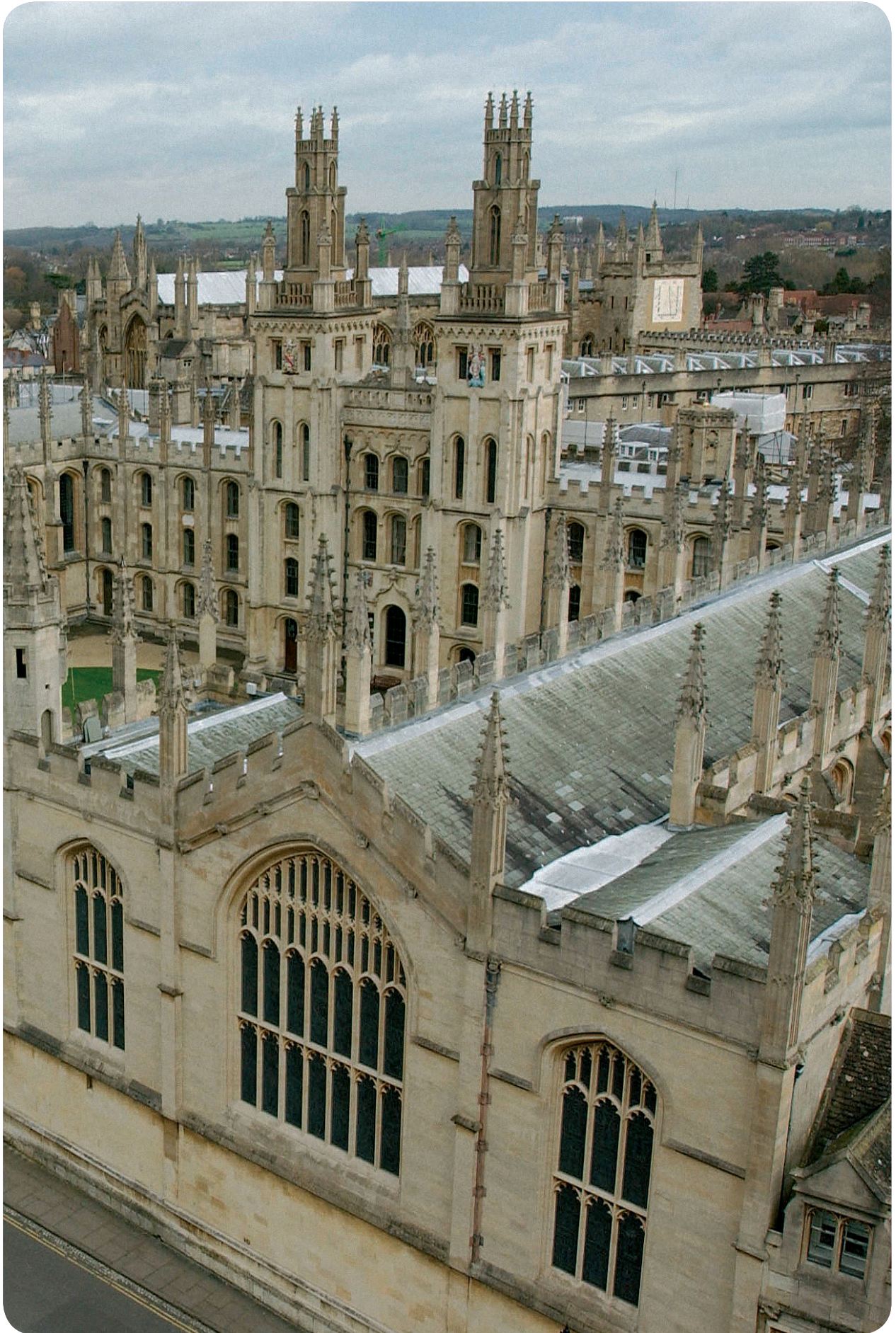
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# 1. Introduction

## The Oxford Local Plan 2036

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

## Preferred Options Stage – How it works

- 1.2 This *Preferred Options Document* contains a series of proposed policy approaches, or 'options' relating to various issues. All of the options worthy of consideration at this stage have been included. Options are either 'preferred', 'alternative' or 'rejected'. A short commentary next to each option describes the likely effects and positives and negatives of each approach. This document does not contain draft policies, and options do not contain all of the detail that will be included in a final policy – it is intended as the means by which we move onto the final policy stage next year. Not all sets of options are mutually exclusive, and the final policies could be a combination of more than one option, or take elements from individual options.
- 1.3 As well as containing options for policies relating to different topics, possible sites for development are shown. Sites are shown in the document as well as being summarised in the map in the Sites Section 9. Some sites identified during the process have been rejected following detailed appraisal. These are listed in the Sites Section 9. The methodology for identifying sites, appraising their suitability for development and deciding on appropriate uses is explained in the Sites Section 9.

## We want to know what you think

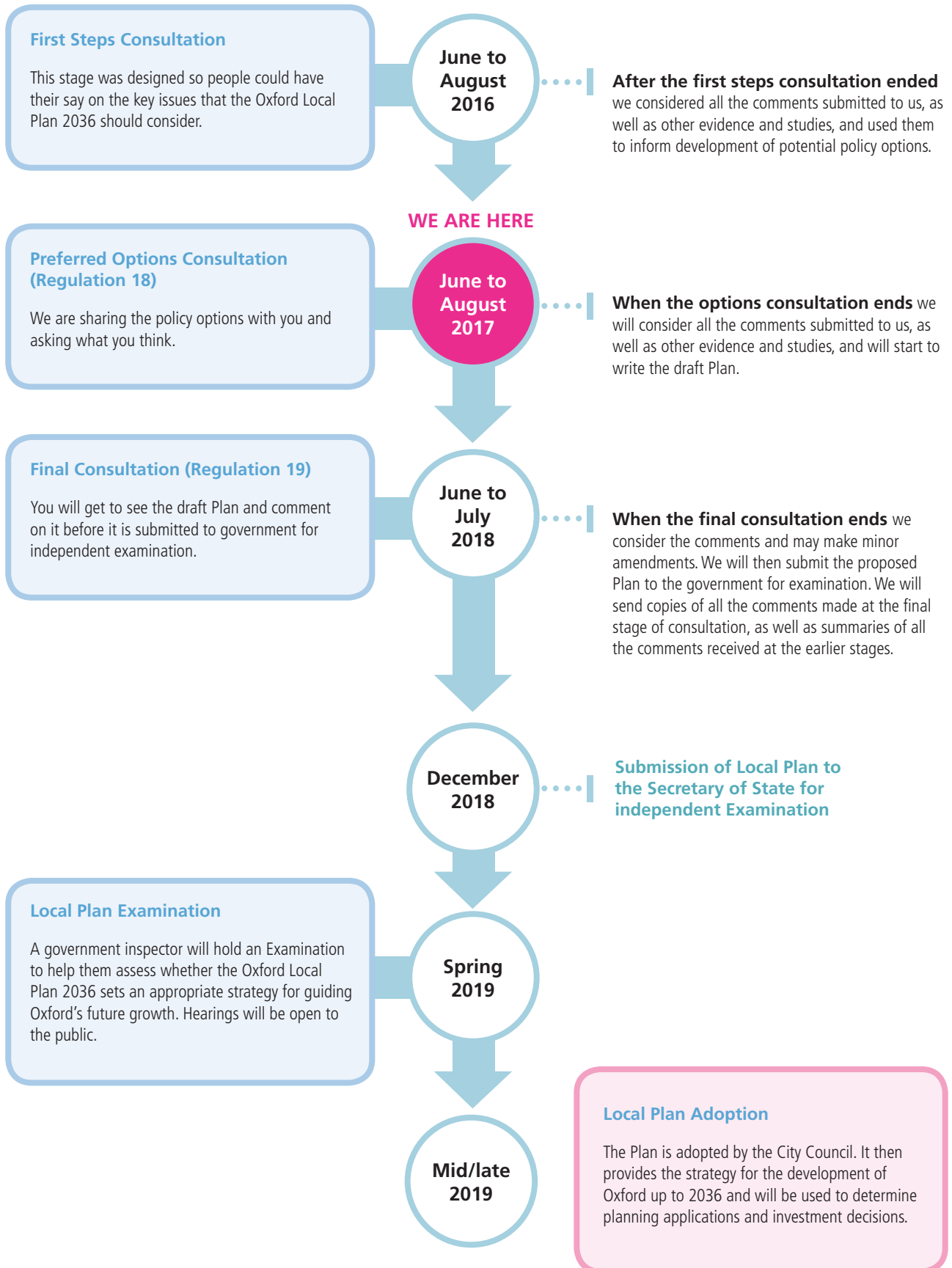
- 1.4 **We are seeking comments on this document for 8 weeks between Friday 30th June and Friday 25th August 2017.**
- 1.5 We are interested to know whether you agree with the Preferred Options we have identified. We have created a questionnaire to help you respond. We would also be pleased to hear any ideas you have for details to include in policies when we come to draft them.

**The Local Plan is important because it will shape how Oxford develops.**



## What happens next?

1.6 This is the second of three scheduled stages of public consultation as we develop a new local plan. The stages are as follows:





## Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

- 1.7 A *Sustainability Appraisal* is an appraisal of the economic, environmental, and social effects of a plan. The intention is that it is undertaken from the start of the preparation of a plan to help ensure decisions lead to sustainable development. In June 2016 we published a *Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report*. This identifies baseline information regarding, economic, social and environmental issues within Oxford and identifies other plans and guidance, to European level, that have a bearing on the formulation of plans within Oxford.
- 1.8 A draft *Sustainability Appraisal (SA)* has been published alongside this *Preferred Options Document*. The SA assesses the objectives of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (shown in the Strategy and Core Principles section below) against the *Sustainability Appraisal* objectives (set out in the *Scoping Report*) in order to confirm general consistencies between the two sets of objectives.



**The SA process has ensured all aspects of sustainability have been properly considered.**

- 1.9 As the Preferred Options for the Oxford Local Plan 2036 were developed, the draft SA assessed these options against the SA objectives to predict and evaluate their effects. The SA can also suggest how to make options more sustainable. The SA process has ensured all aspects of sustainability have been properly considered. The Preferred Options need not be the most sustainable, but it will be made clear where other considerations have led to selection of the option.
- 1.10 The Habitats Regulation Assessment requires an Appropriate Assessment on any plan which could alone, or in combination, have a significant effect on a site of international importance. We will undertake a screening process to determine whether or not the Plan will have a significant effect on the European designated Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (Port Meadow). This screening opinion will be submitted to Natural England. If it is likely to have a significant effect, we will undertake an Appropriate Assessment to inform the Draft Plan (Proposed Submission document).

# Strengths, challenges and vision for Oxford in 2036

Table 1: Oxford's strengths and role



## Economy knowledge and research

Oxford is in a fortunate and positive position, having a broad, diverse and active economy. The city has one of the highest concentrations of knowledge intensive businesses in the UK. Oxford's role in the regional and national economy is vital. It is the 'service centre' for the Oxfordshire economy, having the fastest growing and best educated workforce, and also being the main centre of research and spin-outs in the county. Positive indicators of the strength and success of Oxford's economy include the very low levels of unemployment, the good rate of new companies being set up, and that established employers are keen to move into the city.



## Retail and tourism

Oxford's high streets are full and active and the vacancy rates are low. The market is confident for the future with significant investment planned and being delivered, such as the new Westgate. Oxford is a major draw for visitors from overseas, domestic tourists and day visitors. It attracts approximately 7 million visitors per year, generating £780 million of income for local Oxford businesses.



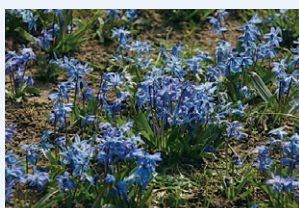
## Life, culture, health and well-being

Oxford offers the opportunity for a high quality of life for its residents. It is a desirable place to live. The population is diverse and youthful giving the city life and vibrancy. The range of amenities, facilities and services available in Oxford mean it punches well above its weight for a city of this size. Oxford has excellent museums and cultural opportunities and hospitals offering cutting edge research and treatments.



## History and urban environment

The wealth of historic and architectural assets in Oxford is a significant draw for investors, visitors and those looking to locate in the city. Beyond the world renowned historic core, Oxford is made up of a series of communities with clear and distinct identities and character that bind those that live there.



## Natural environment

Oxford is a city with a rich natural environment; the two rivers and their valleys and areas of real significance in terms of landscape and biodiversity are located in close proximity to large parts of the community. Areas for informal and formal recreation are easily accessible, and are important for people's health and wellbeing. They provide a vital green lung to the compact city, and provide space for formal and informal recreation.



## Travel

Oxford is a compact city with a well-established pattern of sustainable travel. Cycling rates are high, bus services are comprehensive and frequent, and rail services are expanding and being improved. Consequently the population of the city is less reliant on the private car than in most other British cities.

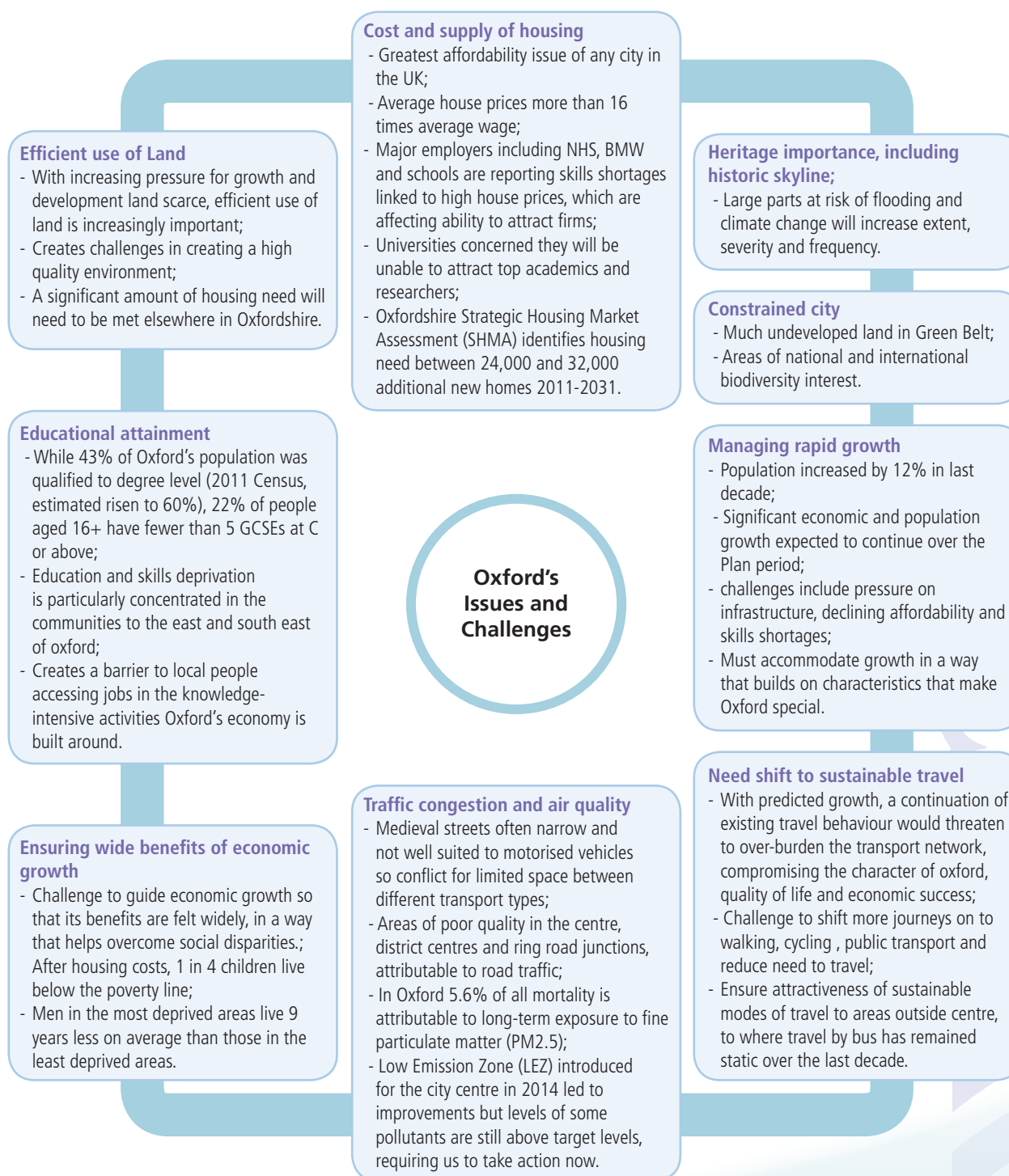


## Environmental responsibility

The City Council has pledged to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions within the second half of the century. It intends to maintain its position as a leading UK Local Authority in tackling climate change and intends that by 2050 it will use only 100% renewable energy.

## Issues and challenges


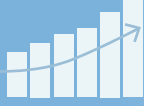




1.11 Oxford's success means that it is an attractive place to live, work and study. This results in a high demand for land, with knock-on consequences for prices and infrastructure provision. The pressures of success can be seen in the high house prices, congestion and poor air quality in certain areas. These are issues that are significant and this Plan will seek to influence them positively. At the time of writing the extent of the challenges associated with Brexit are unknown. What is clear however is the UK is entering a period of uncertainty.



## Vision - Oxford 2036

1.12 The Oxford Local Plan 2036 will look at least 20 years ahead and consider how it can best address these pressures and challenges. Oxford will continue to grow and develop. This growth will be associated with a liveable and sustainable environment that balances economic, social and environmental needs, ensuring that the city remains a highly desirable place to live, work and visit. Oxford will continue to have a strong economy, contributing to advancements in learning and innovation locally, nationally and globally. To achieve this, Oxford will need to be considered as the heart of the city region.

**Table 2: We want Oxford in 2036 to:**

<p><b>A centre for learning, knowledge and innovation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be at the forefront of research and innovation;</li> <li>• Be a global centre for research, education and healthcare;</li> <li>• Be home to high-tech firms and start-ups;</li> <li>• Have a well-educated workforce;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an appropriately skilled local workforce which provides a pool of talent to support businesses and institutions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A prosperous city with opportunities for all</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to have a diverse, globally competitive economy led by innovation;</li> <li>• Have low unemployment;</li> <li>• Have used training, skills, and apprenticeships to address the divide between the prosperous and the deprived parts of the city;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the benefits of being a high-performing, smart economy, such as a clean, well-designed city with quality infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>An environmentally sustainable city</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be an exemplar of low carbon development;</li> <li>• Have made progress towards the Council's commitment to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions in Oxford this century;</li> <li>• Have led the way in developing and adopting new technologies to help create a clean and green environment;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insist on high levels of energy efficiency;</li> <li>• Produce energy from local, renewable and low carbon sources;</li> <li>• Be resilient to the impacts of climate change;</li> <li>• Have reduced private car travel and a good network of safe and accessible cycling and walking routes;</li> <li>• Have greatly reduced vehicle emissions through the use of zero emission vehicles, including buses;</li> </ul>
<p><b>An enjoyable city to live in and visit</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit from high quality new architecture which integrates well with the existing historic environment, townscape and landscape character;</li> <li>• Access to high quality green spaces, cultural and community facilities;</li> <li>• Have a network of open spaces rich in biodiversity offering multiple benefits to health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<p>through their social, environmental and recreational value;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodate its visitors successfully, particularly in the city centre, having reduced conflicts between different users;</li> <li>• Inspire people to find joy in their surroundings and interaction from their environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A strong community</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have reduced inequalities;</li> <li>• Offer a range of housing types, sizes and tenures to suit the varied needs of our population;</li> <li>• Provide a wide range of facilities and services within easy access;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide spaces and opportunities for social interaction bringing people together;</li> <li>• Be made up of diverse yet cohesive communities;</li> <li>• Engender a sense of civic pride.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A healthy place</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer the opportunity for healthy lifestyles;</li> <li>• Provide homes offer good living standards;</li> <li>• Offer access to excellent healthcare;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support high participation in sport and recreation;</li> <li>• Provide healthy travel choices;</li> <li>• Benefit from significant improvements in air quality.</li> </ul>

## Local Plan objectives and strategy

### Building on Oxford's economic strengths and ensuring prosperity and opportunities for all

#### 1.13 *Objectives*

- To build on Oxford's economic strengths as a global centre for research, learning and health care
- To remain at the heart of the Oxfordshire economy and an important contributor to the national economy in its key strengths in the knowledge intensive businesses (such as education, health, science and technology, and as a leading environmentally sustainable city)
- To reduce inequalities across Oxford, particularly in employment, health and education
- To provide a diverse range of employment opportunities to meet the needs of the city's businesses and residents, allowing Oxford to grow and function sustainably, and with a skilled workforce ready to fill the employment opportunities that arise

#### Local plan strategy to achieve these objectives:

#### 1.14 *Ensuring sufficient economic sites*

To help support Oxford's role as a fast-growing city, generating economic growth for the local and national economy, it is vital that sufficient sites are protected and allocated for economic use. 'Employment sites' include offices, research and development, manufacturing plants and warehouses. The Oxford Employment Land Assessment 2016 found that demand for employment land is in excess of current supply. Oxford has a number of existing employment sites and one large new site allocated at Northern Gateway. Even if a more conservative 'mid-point' estimate of growth is used to predict demand, demand for B1 (office and research and development) floorspace in particular is well in excess of existing supply.

#### 1.15 *Redevelopment and mix of uses on employment sites*

In order to make the best use of sites and to accommodate some of the demand for new floorspace that has been identified, the potential for intensification and modernisation will be explored. Alongside B1 office uses, B2 industrial uses also make an important contribution to the economy of Oxford, ensuring a diverse employment base. These uses should also be protected. B8 warehousing can use large amounts of land while offering relatively few jobs. In a constrained city such as Oxford this is not necessarily the most suitable use of land. The suitability of these sites for other employment uses, or other uses altogether can be considered.

#### 1.16 *Location of employment sites*

The analysis in the ELA showed that the best performing areas for office uses were the city and district centres, together with Headington (at the hospital sites) and the south east (the Oxford Business Park and Science Park). The city and district centres are good locations for new employment space, especially B1, as long as it does not harm the retail offer or attractiveness of the centres for visitors.

#### 1.17 *Education and skills*

The Plan will need to ensure land is safeguarded and protected to deliver school places, through retaining space for existing schools to expand and if possible new sites. The nature of most housing growth in Oxford is through small scale sites, so there is rarely an opportunity for an entirely new school to be provided. Most school provision will need to be made by growing existing schools.

**...the  
potential for  
intensification  
and  
modernisation  
will be  
explored.**



## Creating a pleasant place to live, delivering housing with a mixed and balanced community

### 1.18 *Objectives*

- To deliver as much housing as possible whilst balancing other important needs of the city's residents and businesses
- To deliver affordable housing and ensure that it meets the requirements of those in need
- To plan for an appropriate mix of housing sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of existing and future residents as far as possible
- To ensure new homes are adaptable to the changing needs of the population and resulting from climate change, as well as being energy efficient to help reduce further climate change

### **Local plan strategy to achieve these objectives:**

#### 1.19 *Provision of new housing*

Oxford's very high need for new housing means that general market house prices are expensive for both buying and renting. Home ownership is unlikely to be a reality for most people wishing to live within Oxford. Difficulties accessing housing can mean that employers can struggle to find staff, affecting desirability of locating in Oxford and the running of important services such as schools and hospitals.

1.20 Addressing the housing issue is the number one priority of the City Council. The Council will make full use of the range of tools and mechanisms at its disposal to ensure housing is delivered to meet the needs of the city. In the Plan this will involve looking at the contribution that greenfield land, Green Belt and land currently in other uses can make; as well as considering densities, building heights and space standards for example.

1.21 There is not capacity within Oxford's administrative boundary to meet all housing need. As far as possible, need should be met within Oxford or very close to its boundaries, as this will enable new development to be connected to areas of employment and other facilities by sustainable modes of transport. Discussions with the other Oxfordshire districts regarding Oxford's unmet housing need are progressing positively; three of the neighbouring districts have agreed to accommodate an element of this need and are progressing with their own Local Plan reviews to facilitate this.

#### 1.22 *Mix of housing and affordable housing*

It is important that new housing helps to meet the variety of needs as well as possible. Providing a mixed and balanced range of housing types is a priority. Innovative approaches to housing provision will be required, to enable a broad range of supply. Affordable housing will come in many forms. Housing that is affordable in perpetuity, that is permanently affordable, is strongly supported. This can be positively linked to employment opportunities, with costs linked to wages. Social rented housing is vital to provide homes for those in particular housing need. Private rented housing is likely to be the most realistic option for many. Ways to deliver this affordably so that attractive housing can be found for workers needed to support the functioning of the city's economy, including the Universities and hospitals, will be important. Shared housing, including co-housing and HMOs will also be important ways to ensure delivery of new housing.

**Addressing the housing issue is the number one priority of the City Council.**

## Making wise use of our resources and securing a good quality local environment

### 1.23 *Objectives*

- To achieve improved air quality and high levels of energy efficiency, renewable energy provision and water conservation, maximising Oxford's potential in low carbon technologies
- To ensure efficient use of land by seeking opportunities for facilities to be multi-functional, and by maximising efficient use of scarce land
- To manage water flow and to help protect people and their property from the impacts of flooding
- To achieve significant progress towards its net zero greenhouse gas emissions aspiration across Oxford, with the City Council leading by example by continuing to reduce its own emissions and increase its use of renewable energy

### Local plan strategy to achieve these objectives:

#### 1.24 *Previously developed land*

The focus of new development will be on intensifying development on previously developed land. This consolidating approach to developing the city in future is not only best practice but essential in a constrained urban environment like Oxford. The Plan will seek to identify sites that are under used for example with low-rise buildings and unused spaces, or in a use that does not make most efficient use of land, such as large surface-level car parks. The redevelopment of such sites will help to accommodate the development needs of the city in a sustainable and efficient way; locating new development alongside existing uses, facilities and public transport connections.

#### 1.25 *Greenfield sites*

It will be important to protect the majority of green spaces because of the variety of benefits they bring, which are particularly important in a dense urban environment like Oxford, such as recreational and health, biodiversity provision, adaptation to climate change, improvements in air quality, benefits. Opportunities will be sought to improve the quality of green spaces, with a focus on increasing the potential for them to form part of a network and to offer a multi-functional role, for example increasing biodiversity in parks. If it can lead to improvements in quality and public access of other green spaces, consideration will be given to allocating green spaces for development in order to help meet the development needs of Oxford. This will only be where they are not well used and located, do not offer a variety of functions and where they have little potential for improvement, or where a limited amount of development could lead to significant improvements of green space and public access on or very close to the site, which it would not be possible to deliver otherwise.

- 1.26 Green Belt areas in Oxford will be appraised using the formal process and tests set out by the government. Green Belt areas that do not have important public access value, are not in flood plain or of biodiversity importance will be considered for development, if development on those sites could take place while the integrity and purpose of the wider Green Belt is maintained. The City Council considers that exceptional circumstances exist to justify a Green belt boundary review due to the need to support Oxford's economic success and its dependence on the delivery of additional housing to meet housing need.

**The focus of new development will be on intensifying development on previously developed land.**



1.27 **Intensification, density and height**

Land is a finite resource and Oxford is particularly constrained. To be successful in its aims and objectives, the Plan must ensure that efficient use is made of this land, so that growth can be accommodated and the city can continue to flourish. Due to the limited amount of development space, intensification of uses on sites will be an important way to accommodate growth. This will need to be delivered to a high quality and include consideration of density, indoor and outdoor space standards and heights.

1.28 **Mixed use and design standards**

When increasing heights and density, good design will be particularly important to ensure development fits well with its surroundings and offers good quality accommodation. The Plan will set the expectation for high quality in new development, using urban design principles and where necessary setting standards that will be required from proposals. Sites with mixed uses are characteristic of the urban environment, adding vibrancy and diversity to streets and neighbourhoods. A mix of uses and types of development will often be most successful and will be sought on larger sites.

1.29 **Balance housing and other uses**

The scale of housing need in Oxford is so large that even if every site came forward for housing, we would still not meet the target. A similar challenge exists for economic development. There are many and diverse needs and pressures on the city. A strong and healthy city is characterised by its ability to cater for the needs of its residents, workers and visitors. Given this it is important to allocate or protect sites for employment, retail, education, health, recreation and range of other uses alongside those for housing. It is very important to get the balance right between providing for these competing uses whilst making significant progress towards accommodating more homes.

**The Plan  
will set the  
expectation  
for high  
quality in new  
development...**



1.30 **Improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions**

Most air pollution in Oxford comes from diesel and petrol powered modes of transport. In addition to contributing to air pollution, transport also contributes to carbon emissions. The ability to reduce harmful emissions will depend on a variety of measures. These include reducing the need to travel, promoting development that can be accessed by sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling, measures that discourage car use, such as minimizing public and private parking and providing infrastructure to support low emission vehicles and sustainable modes of travel, such as bike parking and electric charging points. It is important in areas of poor air quality, that development is located and designed to minimize the potential negative impacts of air quality on its inhabitants in addition to ensuring the development itself does not contribute to air pollution.



## Protecting and enhancing Oxford's green setting, open spaces and waterways

### 1.31 *Objectives*

- To protect and enhance a network of multi-functional green spaces and ensure easy access to high quality green space
- Enhance green spaces so they deliver multiple benefits to health and wellbeing, are rich in biodiversity, and help the city adapt to climate change

### 1.32 *Network of multi-functional green spaces*

Green spaces are particularly valuable in a compact city such as Oxford, and will be increasingly important with the population increasing. They bring a multitude of benefits including environmental (biodiversity, water management and air quality) to social (wellbeing, heritage and sense of place) and economic (direct jobs, tourism and creating an attractive business environment). Many are highly valued by residents and visitors. Opportunities will be sought to improve the quality of green spaces, with a focus on increasing the potential for them to form part of a network and to offer a multi-functional role, for example increasing biodiversity in parks. The Plan will focus on ensuring that green spaces are as high-quality and as multi-functional as possible, with public access particularly valued, as well as ensuring a network of green spaces connecting wildlife corridors and green accessible routes.

### 1.33 *Biodiversity*

Development provides an opportunity to build in biodiversity provision and measures to improve biodiversity. Careful consideration of landscaping schemes, green roofs and walls provide multiple benefits and are one way in which biodiversity can be built into the scheme as an integrated part, not an add-on.

### 1.34 *Waterways*

Oxford's waterways are a fundamental part of Oxford's character, landscape and setting. Spaces along waterways are attractive areas for recreation and also popular routes for walking and cycling, as well as often having value as flood plain and wildlife corridors. Along all of Oxford's waterways, new development that preserves these functions and in particular that enhances the recreational value, transport value and setting of these areas is to be encouraged. In and near to the city centre particularly, there is great potential to enhance areas around the waterways in a way that boosts its attractiveness.

**Green spaces are particularly valuable in a compact city such as Oxford...**

## Enhancing Oxford's unique built environment and heritage and creating quality new development

### 1.35 *Objectives*

- To preserve and enhance Oxford's exceptional built form with its legacy of archaeology and monuments, historic buildings, modern architecture, important views and distinctive townscape characteristics
- Ensure that all new development delivers a high quality of urban design, place making, architecture and public realm, integrating the historic environment with modern needs

### 1.36 *Historic environment and character*

Oxford's long history is reflected in outstanding buildings and features. This vast number and wide range of historic assets is a real benefit and advantage to the city. It is important to deliver new development in a way that respects and compliments this rich history, the historic buildings, parks

and gardens; conservation areas, archaeology and areas of distinct local character and townscape. The emphasis of the plan will be on the positive management of change, reflecting the city's capacity to move forward while preserving its irreplaceable heritage.

1.37 **Views and setting of Oxford**

There are important views of Oxford's world famous and unique skyline from within the city and the surrounding meadows and hillsides. The views of the skyline of the historic centre are fundamentally important to Oxford and must be protected. Development of new higher buildings will be an important part of accommodating necessary growth but must take place in the right locations. New interventions in the historic skyline must make a positive contribution if they are to be supported alongside views of Oxford's 'dreaming spires'. Larger developments of a continuous height are unlikely to achieve this. The impact of new developments on the historic skyline must be objectively understood and explained.

1.38 **High standards of design**

As well as providing enjoyable places in which to spend time, good urban design can also create safer environments and help to create a strong sense of place and identity. New development in Oxford will be expected to be of a high design quality that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Developments should be easy to understand and move through, be capable of adaptation for alternative uses, and help create an attractive and expanded public realm. New development should be of a quality that upholds the city's international reputation and adds the next layer of Oxford's future heritage. High environmental standards, for example BREEAM or passivhaus standards will also help to ensure environmental benefits and benefits for the development in terms of whole life costings.

1.39 **Public realm**

The public's main experience of buildings is from streets and public spaces. New development makes a vital contribution to the quality of the public realm. New buildings should sit comfortably within their surroundings; the best way to achieve this is through high-quality design that creates attractive and pleasant spaces. The allocation of space within the public realm (for example between pedestrians, cyclists and motorised traffic) and the design and materials used, can combine to create spaces that are at best a pleasure to be in, or at worst, spaces that people try to avoid. It will be important in Oxford that the best use is made of every public space, particularly in the city centre and in the district centres. Opportunities to increase the capacity and use of public spaces and improve the public realm will be encouraged.

**New  
development  
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of the public  
realm.**

## Ensuring efficient movement into and around the city

1.40 **Objectives**

- To ensure growth in the proportion of people walking and cycling to access jobs and facilities
- To provide enhanced facilities for walking and cycling, ensuring they are the primary modes for travel around the city
- To ensure walking and cycling routes are complemented with well managed and attractive public transport routes, and that car use is minimised

1.42 **Reducing the need to travel**

The location of development and the pattern of land use determines the need for travel, which influences transport related emissions. New development should be close to established sustainable transport networks, in particular walking and cycling networks or have the ability to connect to

existing networks. New development that attracts large numbers of people should be located in district centres and the city centre where possible and employment development should be in well-connected locations, particularly the city and district centres and existing areas of employment. This is to help ensure these developments are easily reached by sustainable means of travel.

1.43 **Promoting more sustainable travel modes with new and improved routes**

Over the Plan period there are likely to be improvements to Oxford Rail Station, to the links with Oxford Parkway Station and the potential reopening of the Cowley branch line for passenger trains. The branch line would be extremely positive for sustainable travel in Oxford as it would serve areas with a large amount of housing and employment and offer a new travel option for existing and new residents and workers. The land needed for new stations at Oxford Business Park and Oxford Science Park should be safeguarded, along with any land needed for improvements to the line. The majority of public transport journeys in Oxford are made by bus, and so opportunities to improve bus routes or facilitate rapid transit options will be identified and explored particularly where they improve accessibility or have public realm benefits. Where new routes are identified in the transport strategy as having potential to improve the transport network, delivering more sustainable movement patterns, and where these routes have a potential delivery mechanism, they will be safeguarded. The Cambridge to Oxford expressway could be delivered during the Plan period. A key component of all major strategic transport infrastructure is consideration of 'first mile/last mile travel, and it will be particularly important in Oxford that there is infrastructure in place to enable connections by walking, cycling and public transport.

1.44 **Walking and cycling**

Walking is an essential component of almost all journeys. It has many advantages over other modes as it creates no emissions and does not contribute to congestion or damage the environment and is good for people's health and wellbeing. More people walking in an area can help deter crime and contribute to the building of social cohesion. Oxford's compact nature makes it a walkable city. The Plan will help encourage walking through the location of development and co-location of facilities, safeguarding of routes and connections through new developments and positive design of the pedestrian environment.

1.45 **The percentage of workers cycling to work in Oxford, at 17%, is the second highest in England and Wales.**

An established cycling culture, and the relatively compact and flat urban area, contribute to this. There are many dedicated cycle routes in Oxford as well as 20mph zones which are likely to encourage cycling but there are opportunities to encourage more cycling. This can be done by joining up 'quiet routes', segregating cycling infrastructure to create attractive routes, providing sufficient cycle parking and integration with bus, train and rapid transit. Many of the areas with low cycling rates to work are those located around the ring road and the potential to improve cycling routes to and from these areas will be important.

## Ensuring Oxford is a vibrant and enjoyable city to live in and visit and providing facilities and services

1.46 **Objectives**

- Promote district centres as the hubs for local community focus and identity, with transport interchange and activity and provide a range of social, leisure, sport and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities alongside housing and employment opportunities

**The percentage of workers cycling to work in Oxford, at 17%, is the second highest in England and Wales.**



- To ensure that development is supported by the appropriate infrastructure and community facilities
- Maintain the regional role of Oxford city centre as a primary focus for shopping, employment, leisure and cultural activities, with district centres playing an increased but complementary role
- To ensure the potential local benefits of Oxford's role as a major tourist destination are utilised

1.47 ***Protecting facilities and supporting new facilities for a range of activities***

A wide range of community, leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities appropriate to Oxford's diverse communities are supported. Existing facilities should be preserved, unless suitable and accessible alternatives are proposed. New development that actively supports and sustains community wellbeing is to be welcomed.

1.48 ***Multi-functional use of facilities***

It is important that the best use of facilities is made to provide for varied and changing demands and make efficient use of resources. Wherever possible a range of services and mix of uses should be provided at all local facilities. For example school halls often provide a useful resource for other community uses after school hours; community centres can be used for a wide range of activities and groups; and leisure centres can be used to host other activities as well as their traditional sporting function. One of the indicators of a strong and vibrant community is the number and range of community groups and activities available to residents. Every opportunity should be sought to accommodate such groups in existing community facilities in the locality.

1.49 ***Locating facilities in accessible locations***

New facilities should be in accessible locations or locations that can be made accessible. A community facility in an easily accessible location at the heart of community will be much more popular and have a more sustainable future. Where possible they should be located in district centres, helping to promote them as hubs for the local community, and where there is transport interchange. Such locations make it possible for visits to community facilities to be linked to trips for other purposes like shopping trips, visits to the doctor or school drop-off for example.

1.50 ***Oxford city centre***

The role of Oxford city centre as a primary focus for shopping, employment, leisure and cultural activities as well as a major tourist destination is vitally important to the overall success of Oxford. This varied role and mix of uses mean that it draws people in from all over the city, the county, and much further afield. It is performing very successfully against a range of measures, the range of services and amenities it offers is high, retail vacancies are low and visitor numbers are high. This success has however led to problems with congestion, air quality and over-crowding of the pavements and public realm. To address these problems and to accommodate some of the growth predicted it will be important to manage the competing interests in city centre. This may be possible through a review of the access and transport arrangements (for example by removing unnecessary trips/miles journeyed); providing opportunities to access "town centre uses" in alternative locations (for example providing for more facilities in district or local centres); and reviewing the role of specific streets/areas of the city centre to provide for different needs (for example a restaurant district or tourist focused area) and increasing the public realm and capacity of streets.