Employment, economy, education and skills topic paper

This topic addresses: Jobs, knowledge-based jobs, jobs for unskilled residents, apprenticeships.

SA Objective:

11. To achieve sustainable inclusive **economic growth**, including the development and expansion of a diverse and knowledge-based economy and the culture/leisure/ visitor sector

SEA Theme: Population and material assets.

Introduction

This topic paper focuses on Oxford's economy, employment and the importance of research and development, education and skills. Oxford is recognised as a globally known brand. It has major assets which include two leading universities, and cutting-edge research in areas including bio-tech, data science, quantum technology and robotics. The city is home to diverse international enterprises including BMW Mini, Oxford University Press, Unipart, Centrica, Amey, Nielsen and TripAdvisor among numerous others. The city's economy plays a key role within both a wider regional and national context. Despite this, Oxford's level of unemployment is higher than the national average. Although it is a city renowned for education, disparities in education levels do exist and there are examples of areas where there are a deprivation of skills.

This topic paper provides a brief summary of the relevant national and local plans, policies and programmes that currently exist and will influence change in the future. There is a section on Oxford's economy and its importance to the national economy, which includes some key headlines that help to define the economy of the city, its job growth, key sectors and possible emerging sectors. There is a section on Oxford's existing education facilities which includes some key headlines identifying the importance of these to both the city and county. As part of an assessment of the current situation some of the key challenges and future trends that impact on the local economy are identified. The next section explores what would happen without a new plan and the potential difficulties that the city would face. The final section puts forward some ideas for discussion to suggest what the Plan could do to in terms of objectives to meet the plans, policies and programmes.

Plans, policies and programmes

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF makes it clear that *the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development*. The economy has a key role to play in achieving ‘sustainable development’. Paragraph 20 states that:

*Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for: a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;…. c) community facilities (such as health, **education** and cultural infrastructure).*

The main focus of the policy approach towards the economy should seek to ‘**build a strong, competitive economy**’ and create the conditions in which businesses ‘**can invest, expand and adapt**’. Economic growth and productivity should be supported. Local areas are encouraged to build on its strengths particularly where Britain is a global leader (paragraph 80). This will requiring ensuring that ‘***sufficient land** of the right type*’ is available (paragraph 8).

The policies need to be set within a ‘**clear economic vision and strategy**’ for the local area, which positively promotes sustainable economic growth and is aligned with any Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). Strategic sites should be identified for future investment and potential barriers to growth highlighted and addressed. A flexible approach is required to meeting future needs and respond to change (paragraph 81).

The policy framework is required to ‘**recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors**.’ Provision needs to be made for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries. Storage and distribution uses should be sited in accessible locations (paragraph 82).

Chapter 8 of the NPPF focuses on healthy and safe communities, suggesting that ‘it is important that a sufficient choice of school spaces is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in **education**. They should: a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with schools promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.’ (paragraph 94).

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

In relation specifically to the economy and employment the PPG advises that a **Housing and Economic Needs Assessment** should be undertaken. The Economic needs assessment should consider the type of employment land needed; future employment trend forecasts and its location within its functional economic market. Within the context of a Local Industrial Strategy an assessment should be made of the stock of employment land together with its loss over recent years and future supply. This should be informed by forecasts of future employment and land requirements and their relationship to the locational needs of key sectors / businesses and emerging sectors.

Proposed Changes to the Planning System

In late 2020 the government published a set of proposed wide-ranging reforms to the planning system, which were put out to consultation in the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper[1]. With the publication of the new Planning Bill due soon there is a degree of uncertainty as to which parts of the White Paper will be taken forward. As such the precise details of the proposed changes set out in the White Paper are at present not yet finalised.

Pillar 1 of the White Paper proposes measures to simplify and increase the level of certainty of outcomes within the planning system. One of the proposed reforms (Proposal 1) is the consolidation of existing routes to planning permission, including the establishment of simplified planning zones – namely 'Growth' areas, 'Renewal' areas and 'Protected' areas – each of which have implications on the nature of development that would be allowed within them. Areas designated as Growth areas particularly are deemed to be suitable for 'substantial development' and could become the focus of growth oriented economic activities, with sites in such areas being granted outline permission in principle. The level of implementation of these proposed changes will have impacts to existing employment areas such as Science and Business Parks, employment sites, town and district centres, and high streets. There are also questions on the possibility of sub areas within growth zones to achieve very specific types of development as well as whether all uses within a zone actually can come forward.

Build Back Better: our plan for growth (HM Treasury, 2021)[2]

This sets out how the Government wishes to build back the economy following the impacts of Covid-19. It sets out 3 pillars for growth, which are infrastructure, skills and innovation. The document emphasises the importance the Government places on collaboration between industry, science and government, noting that it believes investment from the government in science and technology coupled with a 'dynamic enterprise economy that embraces the instincts and know-how of the private sector' has been central to our success.

[1] 'Planning for the Future' (MHCLG)
[2] 'Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth' (HM Treasury, 2021)

Local strategies and programmes

Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (OLIS)

The Local Industrial Strategy[3] was produced by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). It describes Oxfordshire as a global centre of research and innovation, home to a number of world-leading science and technology companies that are located across business clusters and hubs, forming a hive of knowledge-intensive economic activity. It describes how cutting-edge products and services are solving challenges in healthcare, mobility, energy and communications, meaning Oxfordshire's success is critical to the UK. The OLIS is underpinned by three guiding principles: Invest in Oxfordshire, deliver for the UK; Oxfordshire – the UK's 'innovation engine'; and Global Oxfordshire, Global Britain. The key sectors and technologies that Oxfordshire excel in have 'global reach', meaning we are a critical driver for UK economic growth post-Brexit. A primary aim of the strategy is to build a global innovation ecosystem in Oxfordshire by 2040. Existing and proposed developments in Oxford are central to this, including the West End.

Oxfordshire Plan 2050

The Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities (including Oxford City Council), working together through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, are working towards the development of a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP), known as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which will set out strategic policies for the county to 2050. An initial consultation was launched on the Plan in February 2019 and a further consultation is being launched in the summer of 2021. The summer 2021 consultation will show how the Oxfordshire Plan will align with the Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy, so will have an approach to build on the key strengths in the county, and to ensure 'good growth'.

Inclusive economic Strategy & city centre strategy (publication pending)

The Council has identified that Oxford needs a more inclusive economy in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all residents can share the benefits of growth. To help to achieve this the City Council will implement a new inclusive Economic Strategy to increase the opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a fair share in the city's economy and reduce its impact on the environment, while also setting out a plan for delivering the types of different employment space needed to support a more diverse economy. The Council will also seek to build closer partnerships with the universities to boost productivity in the city's economy and extend economic opportunities to a wider range of Oxford's citizens. A city centre strategy, current under development, will also be implemented to support independent retailers, enhance the covered market, widen the cultural offer, support more temporary uses of empty properties and encourage longer stays by tourists.

[3] OxLEP: Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (2019)

Oxford Local Plan 2036

The policy approach to Oxford's economy seeks to build on Oxford's strengths and ensure the delivery of prosperity and opportunities for all. Oxford is home to many jobs with particular concentrations in the higher education, research and science sectors. The economic performance of the city is however influenced by wider sub-regional and national plans. These comprise Oxfordshire's Strategic Economic Plan and more recently the Local Industrial Strategy together with the Oxford/Cambridge Arc/Growth Corridor of the Housing and Growth Deal.

The policy for employment sites categorises existing sites according to their importance to the national and local economy. The nationally important sites (Category 1) include those which are key to the knowledge economy or significant employers or sectors. Category 2 sites provide local services and facilities, whilst Category 3 are generally smaller, less well-performing sites. Modernisation and intensification of all employment sites is supported in principle where it can be shown that the new development makes efficient use of land and does not result in adverse environmental issues. Generally the approach taken is to resist the loss of employment floorspace but it in the case of local employment sites a criteria-based approach is taken which, if satisfied, may allow the release of some or all of the sites to other uses such as residential.

The policy approach to education is to support the sustainable growth of the city's two universities, The University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University, to maximise the related economic, social and cultural benefits they both bring to the city. Oxford is also a major centre for teaching hospitals and home to a number of acute and specialist medical research organisations. These medical research organisations link closely with healthcare research undertaken at the universities. Research and development and teaching uses associated with the health / hospitals is supported in principle given their role as one of Oxford's key sectors. Proposals for new educational, teaching and academic institutions need to show how they support the objectives and wider policies in the Plan.

Employment and Skills Plans: A requirement for employment and skills plans was deleted from the Local Plan 2036 through the Examination process, with the Inspector noting in their report that this was an undue burden on businesses, and contrary to the NPPF, although also noting: "there is of course merit in encouraging links between the business community and the local authority in the area of skills development….." The Oxford Local Plan 2036 therefore encourages their use to mitigate the impact of development - seeking opportunities to ensure that local people can access job opportunities arising from development at both construction and end phase of development.

Development opportunities: There is still some limited employment space on the Science Park and the Business Park to help meet the needs of the city. In the future however there will be development opportunities at Oxford North, which will be the subject of significant investment. The main scope for future development is on the re-development of brownfield sites, particularly those within the West End area of the city, which include Oxpens, the 'island site', Oxford Station and the regeneration of Osney Mead.

Current situation

Importance of Oxford to the national economy

The City of Oxford is home to around **4,935 active** businesses[4], collectively employing approximately **121,000** people[5] . In addition, self-employment and the armed forces account for another **7,900[6] and 60** jobs[7] respectively, bringing the total number of jobs in the local economy to **128,960** jobs. 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)[8]. In 2017 it was estimated that Oxford contributes £7.34bn to the national economy annually[9].

The University of Oxford generates more spin-outs than any other university in the country. In 2019 there were 149 active spin-outs and start-ups from the university[10]. One third of the 160 spin-out companies Oxford University Innovation has created over its 30-year history have been formed since 2015, highlighting the growing importance of science and technology.

Research and development (R&D) is one of the current growth sectors in Oxford linked directly to the Universities and hospitals. Given the recent Covid-19 Pandemic and the ground-breaking research on vaccines with the development of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, this has helped to highlight Oxford's importance on the world stage and reinforce its contribution to the national and local economy, and in particular it has shown how important its cutting edge solutions are to meeting the challenges we face. The strong links between healthcare in practice and research are critical.

Recent research[11] by the Centre of Cities highlights the importance of fast-growing cities, such as Oxford and the need to build on their respective strengths as a crucial means of achieving future growth. Innovation systems, such as those established within the city comprise business dynamics, skilled labour and innovative outputs such as patents which together provide the platform for delivering economic growth. This study confirms that innovative places are likely to be the first places to benefit from the ongoing change in the economy. This is either because they *'are directly involved in the development of solutions (such as Cambridge's life sciences cluster and Oxford's lead in the development of a Covid vaccine as well as the development of 'track and trace' apps) or have the right dynamics to quickly adapt their business models'.*

Oxford is therefore well placed to help to drive forward national economic growth through the ground-breaking research and development undertaken within the city, which benefits from its

[4] Source: NOMIS - UK Business Counts (2020)
[5] Source: NOMIS – Employee jobs

[6] Source: NOMIS – Labour Supply – Oxford (2020)

[7] ONS - Location of UK regular service and civilian personnel annual statistics: 2020

[8] Source: NOMIS – Labour Demand
[9] Centre for Cities, 2017, using ONS Productivity Data
[10] OxLEP: Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (July 2019)
[11] Fast Growth Cities – 2021 & beyond, Centre for Cities (March 2021)

strong links between the University of Oxford and the hospitals together with key related commercial firms that are established in the city.

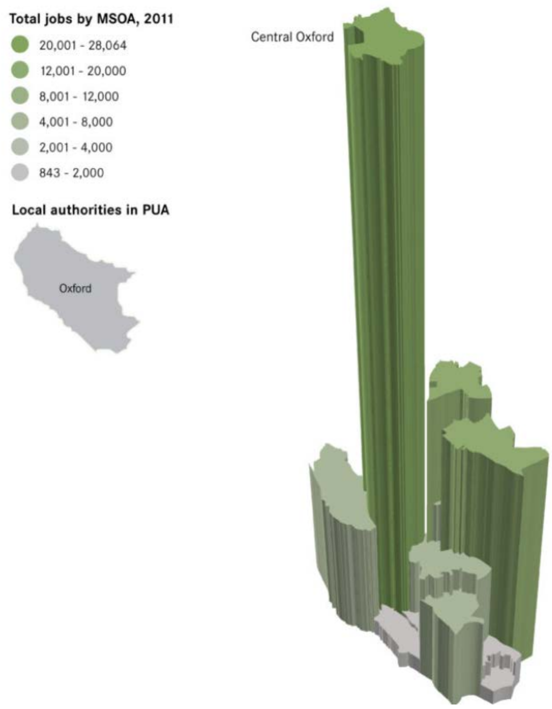
Amongst the fast-growing cities, Oxford has seen a *'strong increase in its employment rate by more than seven percentage points'* between 2014 and 2018. This is acknowledged to be *'almost double the increase seen in other places in Great Britain and puts* Oxford *in the top spot as the city with the highest employment rate'.* In addition Oxford is among the 10 cities with the highest growth in private sector jobs and the highest wages in the UK.

Oxford's Gross Value Added per worker is the 17th highest of UK cities, having dropped from 7th in 2016. The city also attracts significant numbers of foreign direct investments projects compared to larger cities. With the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 Pandemic, together with the impact of Brexit, Oxford's science and technology potential, and its contribution to the national economy, is regarded as vital.

Employment by type

The city has a large number of people employed in Education (36,000) and in human health and social work (22,000), which is twice as many as in the next largest sector, which is wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (11,000), and professional, scientific and technical activities (10,000)[12]. Figure 1 below shows the concentration of job numbers across Oxford in diagrammatic form[13]. The greatest numbers are in the centre, with further concentrations in Headington and the south east of the city.

Figure 1: Jobs concentration across Oxford (Oxford Centre for Cities)



[12] Source: NOMIS – Employee jobs
[13] Oxford Centre for Cities factsheet

Employment levels

Despite employing around 121,000 people, Oxford has an unemployment rate that is above the national average of 4.6%, with the most recent estimate indicating this at 4.9% for the period (January 2020 to December 2020)[14]. In addition; the number of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants plus those who claim Universal Credit (UC) who are out of work is currently 5,080 or 4.8% of workers as of March 2021[15]. This compares to 2,100 and 2.0% of workers as of last March.

Education and skills

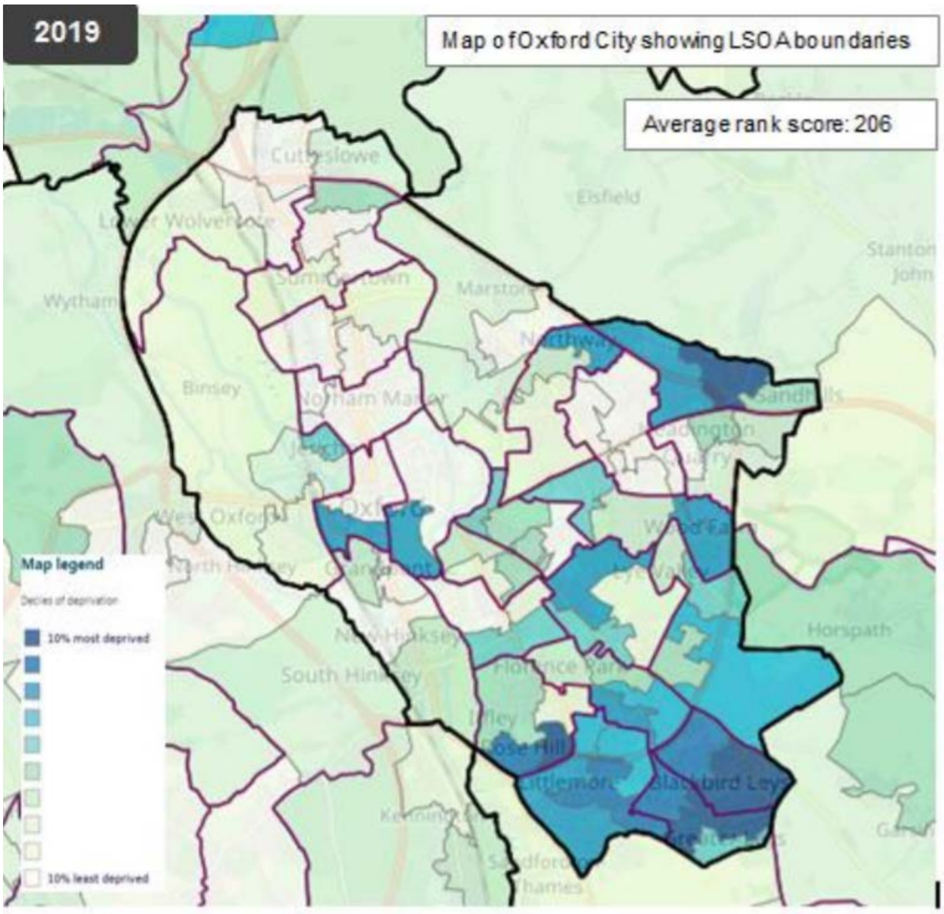
Oxford can be described as a well-educated city, with a high number of jobs in knowledge-intensive industries attracting workers with higher levels of qualifications. In 2020, 62% of Oxford's residents between the ages of 16-64 had degree level qualifications or above. This is much higher than the average for Britain of 43.1%. Conversely, 6.6% had no qualifications, which is closer to the UK average of 6.4%, but higher than that of the South East (4.9%)[16].

In recent years children and young people's attainment has been improving and Oxford has become relatively less deprived. The city is, however, the most deprived of the five Oxfordshire Districts and has one Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) within the 10% most deprived areas nationally[17]. There are 9 areas in total within the city that fall within the 20 per cent most deprived areas nationally. A further 9 areas within the city fall within the 20 per cent least deprived areas nationally. This inequality affects parts of the city more than others.

DCLG's Indices of Multiple Deprivation can be broken down into various categories of deprivation. Regarding Educational Skills and Training Deprivation, which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population, the average score ranking for Oxford was 206 in 2019 compared to 171 in 2015 (the last time the Indices of Deprivation were prepared), it shows that Oxford is relatively less deprived for Educational Skills and Training and that it improved between 2015 and 2019. However, there are still significant disparities across the city and 8 LSOA are within the 10% most deprived nationally. State schools across Oxford, and particularly in deprived areas, generally under-perform compared to regional and national averages[18] too.

[14] Source: NOMIS – Labour Supply– Oxford (2020)
[15] Ibid.
[16] Source: NOMIS – Qualifications – Oxford (2020)
[17] Indices of Deprivation 2019 – Oxford Report
[18] https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20125/education_and_skills/455/education_and_skills_in_oxford

Figure 2: Levels of education and skills deprivation in Lower Super Output Areas of Oxford19- – higher deprivation is marked by darker blue, lower deprivation in light green.



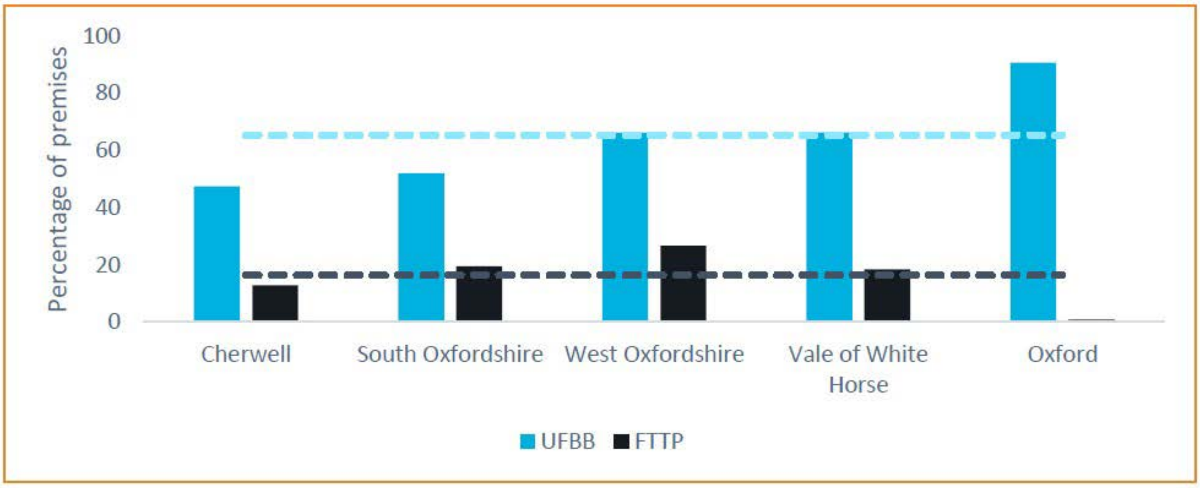
Furthermore, the analysis for Educational Skills and Training deprivation (Figure 2) can be broken down into two sub domains. These two sub-domains are designed to reflect the ‘flow’ and ‘stock’ of educational disadvantage within an area respectively. That is, the ‘children and young people’ sub-domain measures the attainment of qualifications and associated measures (‘flow’), while the ‘skills’ sub-domain measures the lack of qualifications in the resident working-age adult population (‘stock’). There are 11 areas in the most deprived 10% nationally for Children and Young People educational attainment compared to only 4 for Adult Skills. Conversely, there are 36 areas that fall within the 10 per cent least deprived nationally for Adult Skills in Oxford compared to 16 for educational attainment for Children and Young People[20].

Availability of broadband

Good broadband connections are essential for many highly-skilled jobs. Figure 3 shows that Oxford is well-covered by ultrafast broadband connections.

[19] Ibid.:p16
[20] Ibid.

Figure 3: percentage of premises with Ultrafast (UFBB) and Fibre Broadband (FTTP) – dashed lines are UK Average[21]



What would happen without our plan?

Balance between space for economic uses, housing and supporting infrastructure

To sustain employment requires housing and effective infrastructure. Striking a balance between housing and employment land is a key strategic issue. It is well documented that there is a shortage of land in Oxford and a strong demand for housing. It is important to support sustainable employment growth and to protect existing key employment sites for either their existing use or redevelopment and modernisation. It is also essential that we make the most efficient use of employment land. However if key employment sites and existing businesses are not protected this would harm the city's future economic growth, and would not meet the challenge set out in the NPPF to ensure sufficient sites are available to support growth, innovation and enhanced productivity. At the same time, growth must also be appropriately located to take advantage of the city's strengths, in order to provide a sustainable distribution of business premises and employment land, to help maintain a range of potential job opportunities throughout the city. Oxford's contribution to the national economy and importance to research and development, in particular in the health centre, makes its economy particularly important to protect in this time of Brexit and Covid-19.

It may be necessary to safeguard and protect land to deliver sufficient school places; and to control where educational institutions build more student residences, which could result in a loss of land to other non-residential uses.

[21] Ibid: p32

Covid-19 impacts

The Local Plan 2036 did not anticipate Covid-19 and does not have relevant policies in place. The pandemic has affected people's health, well-being and safety. The closure of schools and Universities during national lockdown has impacted on children and young people's learning and there will be a lot of catching up required. The cancellation of testing and examinations (e.g. GCSE's and A-levels) has also impacted on available data which can be used as a tool to help analyse the existing situation.

By necessity, the pandemic, has required people working in Oxford to change their working practises and work from home where possible. This has been a positive benefit with a reduced need to travel and had a positive effect on climate change. Some of these changes may continue in some form in the future. For many other businesses and industries, however, where working at home has not been possible, there have been temporary closures, with people furloughed and requiring financial support and some businesses have closed permanently. The recovery from the economic side-effects of the pandemic is crucial.

There is a recognition that the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic has adversely impacted on Oxford's economy, as recently highlighted by the Centre for Cities report. Centre for Cities Chief Executive Andrew Carter noted that:

"*Oxford has seen several years of economic growth which have benefited people living in the city and the whole UK through its growing contribution to the Treasury. However, it would be a mistake to think that it has escaped the economic damage done by COVID-19 and will need support to bounce back.*

"In the short-term, practical measures to help Oxford's businesses reopen will be necessary, but in the long-term, more substantive changes to skills and training are needed to protect people's jobs from economic crashes."

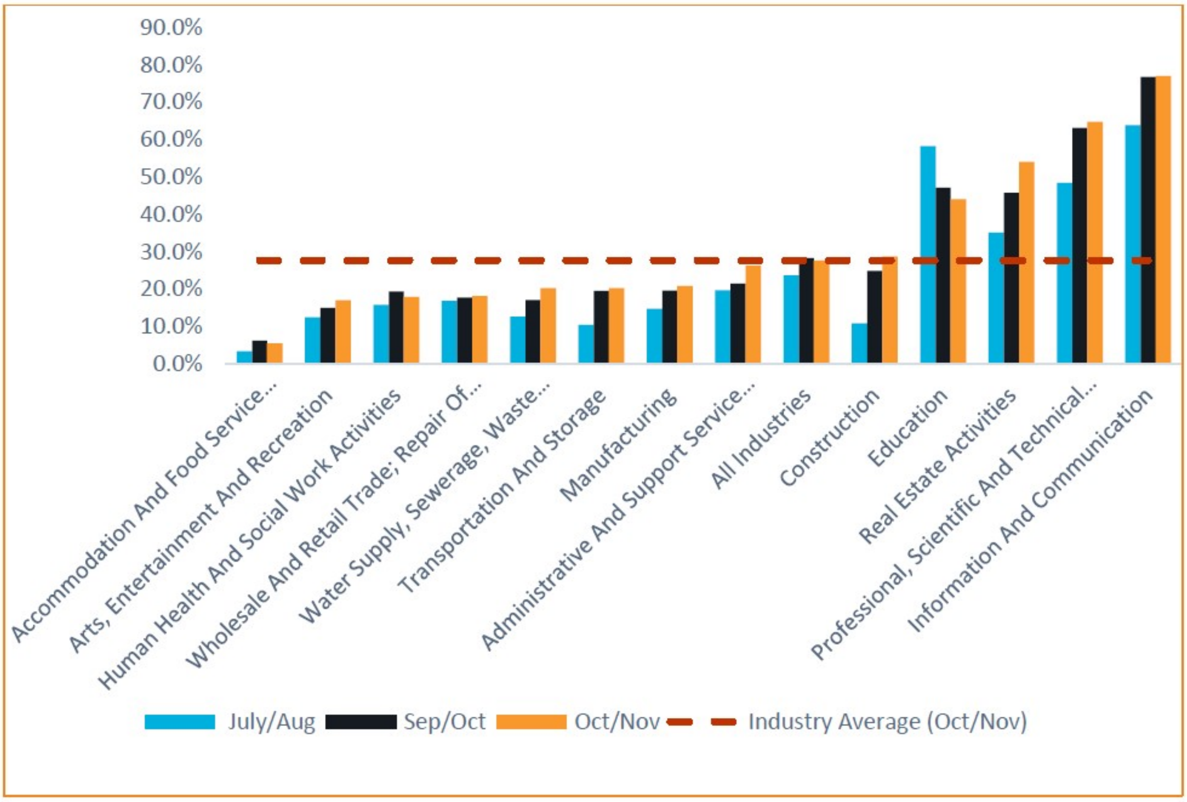
Future role of the city centre, office space and home-based working

Whilst the city centre and district centres will continue to play an important role in Oxford's economy, it will be necessary to plan for a greater mix of uses to attract people to them and ensure that their vitality and viability is secured. Residential development and student accommodation may have the potential to revitalise and bring activity back into these centres.

Pressure on city's office stock remains driven by accelerated growth in science and technology employment. This sector typically takes up more floor space than other sectors – but evidence to suggest that science can adapt to all types of property. Industrial units often provide a 'more flexible and cost-effective solution for an easier fit out'.

More broadly, the factor that needs to be taken into consideration in assessing future uses is the demonstrable shifts, accelerated by the COVID pandemic, in attitudes and behaviours associated with the ways people work and use space, which can potentially make the future of work look very different. Figure 4 shows that home working in Oxford rose rapidly in 2020, particularly in the knowledge industries. There have been observed reductions in the tendency for daily commuting for work purposes and the use of centralised office spaces as hubs for work. There is the notable shift to online working for students and employees, which also requires the acquisition of relevant skills as well as demonstrating the necessity for a suitably robust digital infrastructure that would make this feasible. Allied to this is the shift towards a different model for where work is done, such as home working for many but also localised working hubs and similar spaces which do not rely on a centralised office. This opens possibilities for the use of sites with lower costs as well as jobs to be made available closer to where people live, removing a key constraint to them being taken[22].

Figure 4: Percentage of staff working from home by broad industry in Oxfordshire (BICS data, 2020)



Some sectors require physical office/working spaces as a matter of course, often those that associated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), manufacturing, or those that are lab/workshop based. There is an increasing demand for R&D spaces in particular, with some sectors such as Life Sciences being boosted due to the pressures from Covid[23]. This demand may broaden the scope for where such facilities may be located beyond the norm, e.g. science parks, out of town business parks and the like. There may be potential for repurposing vacant spaces within town and district centres, with the dual purpose of bringing activity back to such spaces as well as driving innovation and economic growth.

[22] Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan: Economic Baseline Assessment (2020): pp56-58
[23] Ibid: p61

For Oxford this approach may be of some relevance to vacant spaces within the city and town/district centres. In the city centre surveys are regularly undertaken of the vacant units. The latest data from the council's city centre management team shows that there were 81 vacant units as at 15th March 2021 (13.8% of the 587 total ground floor units). The figure in September 2020 was 74 (12.6%). In March 15th 2020 it was 57 (9.8%), in September 2019 it was 65 (11.2%), and in March 2019 it was 72 (12.4%). At the time of the most recent audit, a number of businesses remain closed as a result of Covid-19 impacts. Some of these may turn to vacant units in time. For this audit, units were only included in the vacant list where the relevant company, landlord or agent had clearly indicated that the business would not reopen in that location.

Retention and recruitment of staff

Oxford's challenge is that, as the economy is growing, the availability of affordable housing has become increasingly constrained. The conundrum this presents, is that the growing economy feeds job growth and the influx of people to fill them, placing pressure on the availability of housing and services. The mismatch of homes to jobs has resulted in Oxford having the highest net inflow of commuting workers in the Oxfordshire region, up significantly from previous figures from previous census. The majority of inbound commuters to Oxford arrive by car (66.8%) and there has been a 10% increase in the number of inbound drivers over the last census period (2001 to 2011). At the 2011 Census over 88,000 workers had their main job in Oxford, 46,000 of whom commuted from outside the city, mostly by car or bus. Besides the obvious environmental pressures, commuting generates its own costs which can be significant particularly when they involve long journeys. These are often borne directly by the employee, particularly if they are on temporary or agency based contracts[24].

Recruitment and retention problems due to affordability and housing issues are some of the most consistently raised concerns of businesses in Oxford. During the scoping stage of the previous local plan, the largest employers in key sectors of the local economy were consulted for early input to the development of an employer led housing policy[25]. Several of the respondents reiterated their continued struggles with recruitment and retention as direct outcomes of affordability issues in the city.

Finding a way to assist employers with recruitment and retention problems supports the Local Plan objectives in three ways: economically (productivity of the employer and local investment); through housing (provision of affordable housing); and sustainability (opportunity to live closer to place for work, increased energy efficiency and reduced emissions).

[24] Oxfordshire Insight: Commuting patterns in Oxfordshire (2011)
[25] Oxford Local Plan 2036 Background Paper: Employer linked affordable housing (BGP.8)

What could our plan do to meet the objectives of plans, policies, and programmes?

Oxford's buoyant economy presents challenges and we need to ensure that there is an adequate supply of labour, housing and infrastructure to keep pace with employment growth over the longer term. The city council is required to meet anticipated employment need over the plan period. The Local Plan can help to shape the local economy so that the benefits of it for people are realised. To do this, it would need to consider the key factors outlined below.

Balancing the needs of different sectors

The city has key strengths in sectors such as health, education and publishing. It is important to understand what their future requirements are, such as land and premises, to help them to continue to plan for growth. Otherwise Oxford's economy would suffer with businesses and companies choosing to move elsewhere. There is a need to plan for the needs of existing businesses to ensure they can continue to operate successfully in the city and contribute to Oxford's economy, the national economy and research and development of wide benefit. The new local plan will have to find a balance between competing land uses, in particular for housing and employment space. This is a particularly important balance because successful research, development, businesses, institutions, retail and leisure services and so on all rely on there being attractive and affordable housing to attract and retain staff. In addition, infrastructure is needed, such as schools, healthcare, transport and communications infrastructure.

This balance will have to be struck in the context of a great deal of uncertainty about the kinds and amounts of space that many types of employment use will require and what employment need will look like as we emerge from the pandemic, rebuild the economy and in a post Brexit environment. Technological changes and the necessity of lockdown has led to a shift from office-based working to home based working, although this does not affect many employers in the city, such as the hospitals and much research and development. Employers may be able to intensify or rationalise their sites, as a result of changes/ advances in technology for example. There may be changes in the way that offices, in particular, are used. However, at the current time there is no evidence that there is a significant reduction in demand for employment spaces. If sites with no strong protection face development pressures for other uses, it creates a significant risk that reasonable portfolio of different types of site can be maintained in the future.

Resilience

The Plan will set out a series of initiatives to help build in 'resilience' within the economy to ensure that the city and its inhabitants prosper. To address inequalities, build resilience and maintain Oxford's competitiveness, it is important to provide employment opportunities and training for local residents and wider local workforce, and to upskill the local populations' labour force. This will help ensure a more flexible and productive workforce which in turn is a key driver of productivity improvements. Training, skills and apprenticeships will be important in addressing the inequalities that currently existing within different parts of the city. They can also bring wider benefits in terms of income equality and potential reductions in child poverty and social exclusion by reducing the potential for economic and social disparity. In addition to this they may help to reduce commuter trips into the city and encourage more people to travel to work using active and sustainable travel modes thus reducing the number of trips into and out of the city by car. In the absence of a plan it will be more difficult to upskill the labour force.

Conclusion

Growth is likely to continue in the key sectors of Oxford's economy – e.g. education, research and development and healthcare, but some of the corporate objectives in terms of building an 'inclusive economy' would not be achieved and the prosperity could not be shared with local residents to help reduce inequalities and poverty. The jobs that could potentially arise from this growth may be inaccessible to many local people if the training and skills gap is not addressed.

Sustainability/Plan issues

- Employment in Oxford is high and likely to continue growing, but is constrained by the availability of appropriate housing. Ensuring the right balance of employment and housing growth is fundamental to ensuring Oxford's growth.
- State schools across Oxford, and particularly in deprived areas, generally under-perform compared to regional and national averages.
- Employment growth in Oxford is most likely to continue to be in the key sectors of healthcare and STEM, especially those involving R&D. Without appropriate skills & training, those jobs will not be accessible to local people.
- Ensuring expanded and robust digital infrastructure is available in as many settings as possible in order to align with the expectations of flexibility to work and study anywhere.
- Expanded ability to work remotely could put work and educational opportunities in closer reach to a wider range of people overcoming locational constraints and financial/environmental costs associated with travel.
- It is unlikely that significant new sites will be identified for employment. The focus will more likely be on redevelopment and renewal of existing sites.
- Dramatic changes, accelerated by the pandemic, are likely to the makeup of city and district centres, shifting from retail dominated to other uses. Employment and education uses may have opportunities to fill in gaps in the form of co-working spaces, R&D spaces and other forms.
- Small scale brownfield development across the city is more likely to put pressure on existing school places, and will not in itself provide new school sites.