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'Towards the Core Strategy' by Tony Joyce, Chairman

Current Consultation

Completion of the current stage of consultation on preferred options for the city's **Core Strategy Document** marks another step towards the new planning regime, in which a group of documents, constituting the **Local Development Framework**, will supplement and eventually replace the Local Plan in controlling future development.

For example, the **West End Area Action Plan** has just been submitted to the Secretary of State, and will be subject to examination in January 2008. A series of Supplementary Planning Documents on such topics as affordable housing, parking standards, telecommunications and developers' contributions are being added.

The demand for new housing

At the same time, the **South East Plan**, which will supersede the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, has now completed its examination in public and is expected to receive government approval in 2008. Whilst many of the plan's policies are already accepted, a critical outcome for Oxford and the surrounding area will be the decisions on the numbers and distribution of housing in the region. The demand for housing in the South East is clear, as is the need for affordable housing, particularly for key workers. For Oxford, the argument lies between those favouring an expansion of the city boundary into the surrounding Green Belt and those supporting the county's policy of expansion of the country towns, with enhancement of

the necessary infrastructure there. Whatever the outcome, the pressure for more housing within the existing city will remain, and the control of this, whilst retaining the city's unique character, is a major theme of the Core Strategy.

The Local Plan

The **Local Plan 2001-2016** identified 91 development sites within the city, and specified the acceptable range of uses for each – housing, student accommodation, university or hospital, business and others. It also confirmed three areas of safeguarded land (i.e. land reserved for possible future development) at Summertown (despite our objection), at Peartree and at Barton. To revise and supplement this list, the city has now produced a draft **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**. This attempts to assess the capacity of all the land within the city that *might* be available to meet whatever housing targets the approved South East Plan finally imposes. Consultation on the draft SHLAA has naturally raised anxiety, as it is at least possible that the supply of brownfield land coming forward will be insufficient, and some difficult decisions will have to be taken on where development on green space will have the least detrimental effects.

Windfall sites

The other unknown factor in this calculation is the number of so-called "windfall sites" – those which emerge unexpectedly without being counted in the original predictions.

Windfall sites have always figured largely in Oxford's housing provision, and have been a major factor in the city's consistent achievement of higher housing completions than the targets set.

Conflicting demands

Housing and student accommodation are not the only factors exerting pressure on scarce space. **The Core Strategy** must also deal with the demand from other development. How much room remains in the city for its traditional activities and wealth generators to be allowed to expand, and how will new jobs, without matching accommodation close at hand, exacerbate the already acute problems of commuter travel?

Sustainability and innovation

Against this background, and the requirements of a more sustainable future, the Strategy must try to decide what sort of city we want to maintain, and how this is to be achieved.

It stresses innovation to tackle climate change, minimising the use of natural resources, conserving and enhancing the city's outstanding heritage and its most prized green spaces. It supports carefully managed growth and innovation in areas where Oxford already excels: education, healthcare, scientific research and manufacturing. At last we see acknowledgement that tourism needs to be *managed* to maximise its benefits to the city. It aims to enhance the character and role of neighbourhood and district centres and to focus special treatment on regeneration areas at Barton, Blackbird Leys, Northway, Rose Hill and Wood Farm. And it supports innovative ways to reduce the impact of traffic.

Is there any good news?

In some areas the prospects are encouraging. In the autumn, the two universities will each present to the city council their master plans: for the development of the **Radcliffe Infirmary** and **Science Area** sites; and for **Brookes Headington** and **Wheatley** campuses. Oxford and Cherwell Valley College is producing major plans for its **Oxpens** site,

in accordance with the West End Area Action Plan.

On the housing front, the city is developing a Supplementary Planning Document on the **Balance of Dwellings** to address the problem (of which we have constantly warned!) of the conversion of modest family houses into smaller units, with nearly all new build being 1 or 2 bed flats. It seems likely that policies will be developed to discourage further conversions in the worst affected areas and to influence the balance of unit sizes in new developments, to improve the proportion of family housing.

Barton

The safeguarded site at Barton could offer some interesting possibilities, since it would require a link bridge over the ring road which might be combined with the badly needed link from the Northern Bypass to the JR Hospital. A mix of housing and other uses here could provide accommodation for hospital staff and some regeneration opportunities for the rest of Barton – perhaps also another bus route linking Barton to the city centre, easing bus pressure on the London Road.

In conclusion

Overall, the plans already on the table constitute a huge volume of new work for the construction industry, whose capacity will be sorely strained. John Ashdown entitled one of his previous reviews of new building in the city "*What a lot of Cranes!*" One can only respond: "*You ain't seen nothing yet!*"

Notes:

- (1) The city's website has full details of all of the documents referred to above – please visit www.oxford.gov.uk
- (2) Details of the county's **Headington Road & London Road Transport Improvements** can be viewed at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/londonroad A decision on the final design will be taken by the county's Transport Decisions Committee on 6 September and implemented in 2 sections, each of approx 24 weeks' duration. **Pullens Lane to Sandfield Road** will be completed in 2008 and **Sandfield Road to Wharton Road** in 2009, each starting in springtime. Very detailed planning of the roadworks will be required to keep disruption to a minimum.

Report from the Planning Sub-Committee

Update on applications mentioned in the March 2007 Newsletter report: Decisions are still awaited on plans to convert **The Old School, First Turn, Wolvercote**. A better proposal for **1 Lucerne Road**, to retain the original house and erect one new one alongside it, has been *permitted*. **Warneford Hospital**, the **Park Hospital** and **Warneford Meadow** will now go to a Public Inquiry Appeal in the New Year. At **45 Davenant Road** a modified application to demolish and build flats has not been determined. A proposal to build 2 houses to the rear of **109 and 110 St Mary's Road** was *permitted* in June, a previous one for 4 flats having been refused. Another, to demolish **29 Charlbury Road** to make way for houses and flats, has been withdrawn.

Many of the 34 applications to which we objected between *March and June* have not yet been decided, it seems.

In *March* an application was made to demolish **118 and 120 Old Road, Headington** and replace them by four 4-bed houses: this was *permitted* in April despite objections about the extra congestion which would be caused. It was proposed to demolish **10 and 12 Stephen Road, Headington**, and build a terrace of five 3-bed houses, but without access to the rear of three of the houses for cycles and bins: this was *refused* in May. A new **Bodleian Library Depository** for book storage was proposed on **Osney Mead**; its bulk and height, and the flood risks to that particular site, cause much concern – the application may be decided very soon. We questioned an application at **78 Marlborough Road** for its bizarre room arrangement, with a bathroom accessed from the kitchen, but surprisingly in May this was *permitted*.

April brought plans for **17 Bradmore Road**, revised somewhat from those presented three months earlier (but then withdrawn) for a semi-basement swimming-pool, alterations to bay windows, and much else including many internal alterations, to restore a decrepit house to family use: this was *permitted* in May. At **25 Valencia Road, Headington**, ac-

commodation was to be increased by adding a large box dormer along with side and rear extensions, and then converted to three flats. Two new student blocks, proposed at Brookes University's **Morrell Hall, John Garne Way**, by enlarging and upgrading existing student accommodation and adding an extra storey, which might prove obtrusive in the green backdrop, were nevertheless *permitted* in June.

In *May*, *permission* was given only a month after an application was made for land to the rear of **98 Crescent Road, Cowley Marsh**, to be used for a 3-storey building for five 1-bed flats with parking for six cars. **1 Godstow Road, Wolvercote** was the subject of proposed demolition and redevelopment. The railway line runs close along one side of this fairly large site and restricts the space available for the proposed five 5-bed houses with 10 parking spaces. **Oxford Brookes University** featured in another application, this time for six flagpoles carrying banners announcing the new use of the buildings of ex-Milham Ford School, Marston Road, now the **School of Health and Social Care**; some of the banners were given *permission* in June.

June's applications ranged widely. One was for a mast near the **Seacourt Park-&-Ride, Botley Road**, to carry apparatus to monitor wind-speeds for two years, assessing suitability for a wind turbine. Another was for a four-storey extension containing seven 1-bed flats to be attached to a small building, **42 St Clements Street**. There was a proposal to convert a 3-bed house, **37 Phipps Road**, to 3 flats – made difficult because the side passage had already been infilled, so preventing access between front and back for cycles and bins. Also **127 Banbury Road** returned with repeat proposals for extensions.

*Gillian Argyle, Mark Barrington-Ward,
Kate Joyce, Chris Rayson, David Townsend.*

STOP PRESS: Jericho Community Association held an open meeting on 26 June to consider latest proposals for the **old boatyard canalside site**. The 150 attendees were unanimously opposed on several counts: the loss of existing views and mature trees from the towpath, and the lack of provision for boaters to work on their craft both on and out of the water being just some of the overall concerns. *Editor*

Transport Notes

Whilst there are plenty of people travelling south from Oxford by train, mainly to London, far fewer go in the opposite direction to local destinations. So First Great Western has decided to encourage more trips to **Banbury and Bicester** by reducing fares. The Cheap Day Return between Oxford and Bicester is reduced from £4.50 to £2 and, with a Group-save ticket enabling 3 or 4 passengers to travel for the price of 2, 4 people can go for just £1 return. Cheaper than the bus and much quicker! Unfortunately, the benefits are somewhat reduced by the lack of off-peak trains on Mondays to Fridays (and no trains at all on Sundays) so only Saturdays offer the cheapest price although standard fares are also reduced. However, for anyone wanting to visit Bicester Village shops there is a direct footpath from Bicester town station.

There is also a new Sunday stopping service between **Oxford and Banbury** during the summer, until 9 September. This is designed to make it possible to walk sections of the Oxford Canal and access the boat hire business at Lower Heyford. Tackley and Kings Sutton stations are also adjacent to the canal. A £3 ticket allows unlimited travel between Oxford and Banbury for the day (on FGW trains only). This service is the result of co-operation between FGW, Oxfordshire Narrowboats, British Waterways, the Ramblers' Association and local councils.

Although at the time of writing it is difficult to imagine anyone wanting to swim at **Hinksey** in the current unseasonable weather, those wanting to reach the parks and pools can use the Redbridge – Peartree P & R service 300 which now stops additionally at Lake Street between between 10 am and 3.30 pm Mondays – Fridays, all day on Saturdays and Sundays, until 30 September.

I refer readers to Paul Cullen's article on **Streets for People** (page 5) for details of free bus travel with OBC, Stagecoach and Thames Travel bus companies for accompanied under 16 year-olds on Saturday 22 September.

David Townsend, Transport Secretary

The Environment Group, at work ..

Since its formation in October 2006, this Sub-Committee has been identifying a range of priorities and gathering like-minded people together to work on them, as follows:

(1) The Travel Behaviour Group reports:

Improving Cities: Cutting Traffic was the theme of a recent conference attended by an OCS delegate. Renowned architect and urban designer Sir Terry Farrell launched the day with a presentation on 'Urban renaissance – key principles in not allowing the car to dominate'. Subsequent speakers discussed the wide-ranging pros and cons for inner city areas when the frequently damaging effects of car dominance are restricted. There were papers on Sharing Space (see the following article); the economic case for Urban Design (including factors such as health, well-being and satisfaction); the impact of urban design in reducing car use in Copenhagen; and the reduction of car traffic in Freiburg. Other speakers described best practice in Speed Management; how a local authority might adopt a Sustainable Supplementary Planning Document; community involvement in tackling car dominance; and how to create Car Clubs, which reduce car dependency.

From this, the Society has gained a useful set of background papers to help us develop further the dialogue on how to improve accessibility within the city while enhancing the role of the city's streets as spaces for everyone.

Shared space – Hamilton-Baillie Associates have been commissioned by Oxford University Estates Directorate to produce a proposal for the re-design of the junction between Parks Road and South Parks Road in Oxford. The Directorate invited OCS to a recent presentation of this proposal by *Ben Hamilton-Baillie*¹ and *Paola Spivach*². (Readers should visit http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/estates/travel/ox_parksrd.pdf for their report.)

Ben Hamilton-Baillie advocated a return to the principles of space sharing that existed before our streets became divided into territories that restrict access to certain groups of users.

Proposals to achieve this end involve a reduction of the speed limit to 20 miles per hour in the vicinity of the junction (the slower drivers go, the wider their perspective on their surroundings); and the elimination of kerbs so as to create a space in which people on foot make choices about their movements in the expectation that drivers and cyclists will respond to their presence in the space.

Those who have tried to cross the street on foot in the vicinity of the junction will appreciate the difficulties experienced there at present. *Shared Space* principles depend for their success on the right 'mix' of different users, and groups representing people with sight and mobility difficulties urge caution. There are already shared spaces in Oxford, eg the Cowley Road shopping area and Queen Street. The Society believes the principle could be particularly relevant to London Road, the High, Norfolk & Castle Streets amongst others.

¹ **Ben Hamilton-Baillie** is one of the three advisory experts on "Shared Space" for five European countries developing a range of practical projects to explore innovative street design. He is also consultant to English Heritage and an enabler for CABE* Space (**Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment*).

² **Paola Spivach** was educated in Italy and the USA. Her ten years of professional experience span best practice in European urban design relating to transport planning, traffic calming and road safety.

Streets for People – the growing popularity of Car Free Day (held on 22 September each year) has led to a new approach this year, when it falls on a Saturday. Now called **Streets for People Day**, it will be celebrated in central Oxford with a series of events in the Broad, and other supporting events elsewhere in the city: Oxford's three main bus companies have promised free travel throughout the day for under-16's travelling with adults.

Why not enjoy the wide range of events taking place in Broad Street – but do come into the city by bus (bringing the children for free, of course), or on foot or by bike.

To find out more about this year's event, for suggestions about what you can do to celebrate it as well as how to make a personal pledge in support of it, please visit the City

Council's website at www.oxford.gov.uk and search for 'Streets for People'.

Paul Cullen, Convenor, Travel Behaviour Group

(2) 'Cleaner, Greener, Kinder Oxford' advise: Trees at Said Business School: at our highly successful "A Cleaner Oxford – Lessons from Eden" event in May, many people asked about the lovely trees with outstanding purple blossom in the Said School's courtyard. Native to China, these are *Foxglove Trees* so named because of the resemblance of the flowers to our native foxglove, although they are not related. The official name is *Paulownia tormentosa* in the family *Scrophulariaceae*. The fruit is especially interesting in that it is big and hard and yet when ripe releases many, many winged seeds. A search of the Internet for 'foxglove tree' will yield more information.

Forest of Oxford will take part in **Streets for People Day** (see Paul Cullen's previous article on this page) on Saturday, 22 September. Their stall in Broad Street will have information and leaflets, and will collect signatures for a petition for tree planting in Cornmarket and Broad Street. Please sign up.

Apple Day on Sunday 7 October between 2 and 5 pm, takes place in the Community Orchard next to *The Trout* pub in Wolvercote.

Marion Macleod, Convenor (pro tem) CGK Group

Spring clean Oxford, 2008: Inspired by the recent Eden Project talk, the CGK Group has been researching aspects of refuse management in Winchester and is about to visit Cambridge for the same purpose.

More recently, we arranged a meeting at the City Works office in Cowley Marsh with new Business Manager, *Colin Bailey*, and four senior staff: *Philip Dunsdon, Peter Dobson, Shaun Hutton* and *Dave Huddle*. We also met the new recycling officer, *Lili Briggs*, who will be working with the universities. In a lengthy and open discussion, we focussed on specific areas of concern to us including the general lack of decent, well-designed, emptied-when-needed, litter bins.

We learned that, amongst other initiatives, the City Council will be launching an anti-

chewing gum programme in September; also, there will shortly be one central telephone number to ring for all environmental matters with queries/messages/complaints passed to the correct department, including where necessary to the County Council, e.g. for highway matters. This will be called NEAT.

For the future, there was positive interest in our proposal for a new campaign – ‘*Spring Clean Oxford 2008*’ – in which City Works, and others, are keen to be involved. CGK Group will continue to develop plans for this.

Secondary Schools, Anti-litter campaign: I am particularly pleased to be writing that within just one year, all six of Oxford’s Secondary Schools have cleaner school grounds.

Cheney School has been the most litter free throughout, with plenty of well-placed, well-used litter bins, that are frequently emptied; they run a programme led by the teachers for the children to pick up litter regularly. The school has also cleaned up the ditch alongside Cheney Lane – this was not ‘school litter’ but old tyres and televisions. It is for all these reasons that on behalf of the Oxford Civic Society, *Hugo Brunner, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire*, will be presenting the shield (which he has kindly donated) to Cheney School on 16th July. The school plans to establish litter management amongst the pupils as a norm; pupils are already setting up their own scheme for recycling in the school.

Peers School has achieved a highly commendable improvement throughout the year, having started from a low level. In recognition of this, the Civic Society is awarding them a Certificate of Commendation.

A small team of us plan to expand the Campaign to Oxford’s 37 **Primary Schools** next year. We will keep you informed!

Rosanne Bostock, Convenor, Anti-litter Group

(3) Re-use, rather than recycle:

Much of what we throw away or take for recycling could still be in use, if only we could find someone who needs it. In the last month, I have successfully re-housed five fire extinguishers, a single bed, 4 unused rolls of wall-

paper and an old trunk by advertising them on *Freecycle* – an Internet service and nationwide scheme. (This is an entirely free service, no money must change hands.)

Search on www.freecycle.org for the Oxford Group – one of the most active, with around 100 ‘posts’ per day. Once registered, you can post notice of things you don’t want any more, or search for things you need – I am about to look for a second-hand garden shed for my allotment. *(Ros Weatherall)*

(4) Last, but by no means least, comes an urgent appeal for help:

Faced with the relocation away from Oxford of our present *Committee Secretary*, we need a new member for the Environment Group: someone to help by circulating agendas and papers, taking notes at our quarterly meetings, and liaising with the Society’s Hon Secretary. If you can spare some time for this vital role, please contact **Perilla Kinchin, 01865 510411** or **Ros Weatherall, 01865 426805**.

We are always looking for keen volunteers to join us. If you are interested in getting more involved in environmental issues within the Civic Society, please get in touch. Why not do so NOW, before you forget!

Ros Weatherall, Convenor, Environment Group – 01865 426805, ros_weath@ntlworld.com



New appointments in Oxford

City Council Chief Executive Mr Peter Sloman, aged 47, will take up his post on 20 August. He has worked for 7 years as CEO of High Peak Borough Council in Derbyshire. Oxford Civic Society officers very much look forward to meeting and working with him.

OX1 (City Centre Management Group) also has a **new CEO – Oliver O’Dell**, who moves to Oxford from Swindon where he has recently achieved Business Improvement District (BID) status for the town centre there. This appointment comes at a critically significant time for Oxford in which regard OCS looks forward to working closely with Oliver.

Colin Bailey joined Oxford City Council as "**Head of Operations – Streetscene**", in June 2007. Formerly Public Spaces Unit Manager at Ellesmere Port & Neston Borough Council in Cheshire, Colin's new responsibilities include Oxford's Street Cleansing, Refuse Collection and Recycling, Trade Waste, Fleet and Transport and Civil Engineering. You will have read that OCS is already working with Colin! (See 'Spring clean Oxford', page 5.)

Town Hall facilities

Since the Council opened the new gallery and café in 2006, both new spaces have become popular with local people and visitors, popping in to see the latest exhibition or to meet friends for a chat in the gallery café.

The Town Hall is now open at weekends allowing for closer co-ordination between the Town Hall and museum and an increase in visitors to both venues. Information about "What's On" is to be found on the city's website and is now published in a joint leaflet.

Later this year, it is hoped to have the new internal door link between the Museum and Town Hall, as well as the Civic Plate on display on the ground floor in new exhibition cases. A new digital guided tour of the Town Hall and Museum will be available for hire.

Jane Lubbock, Facilities Business Manager

New faces in OCS Committee



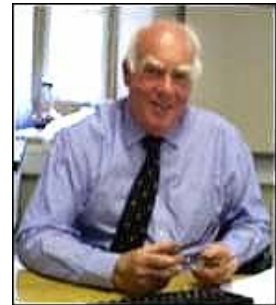
Our newly co-opted **Hon Secretary Vernon Porter** has been an Oxford resident for nearly 40 years and a member of OCS for over 30. Following a career in IT for the Motor Industry, he recently took early retirement, giving him more time for other things.

With so many major projects currently active, OCS has a significant contribution to make to the development of our city and Vernon will be helping us to concentrate our collective time and efforts to optimum effect. We are delighted to have him on board.

Stuart White is, like Vernon, also a recent and most welcome recruit to Committee.

Having lived in Oxford nearly all his life, Stuart has a well-established love of the city and its surrounds.

His career has been in the construction industry and it is in the course of this professional capacity that Stuart gained first-hand experience of the work of the long-standing OCS Planning Group and its regular meetings to vet and comment on the latest applications.



Stuart is keen to try to assist in safeguarding this truly magnificent city: "So much is to happen to Oxford in the next 15 years that I should like to participate in the decisions to be made."

Greetings card for 2007-8

In response to popular demand, the **Cards Group** has sourced a winter illustration for 2007-8: "Steps at Radcliffe Camera" is the work of local artist and photographer Rachel Harrison. The card is available for sale now (see enclosed sample for your use, with this year's Order Form). These packs make excellent gifts as well as Christmas, greetings cards or correspondence postcards for personal use. Prices are the same as for last year – a real bargain!

Note: Executive Committee is very appreciative of the Card Group's efforts throughout the year in locating appropriate artwork and in making it available to members by mail order and at our regular meetings. *Editor*

Membership Application Leaflet

We have enclosed a copy of our newly updated leaflet for you to please pass on to friends or neighbours who might like to join us. We aim to increase our total membership to 1,000 and, commensurately, our influence in shaping the future of Oxford. (Further leaflets are available from the Membership Secretary, or your local library.)

Liz Grosvenor, Membership Secretary

Letters Page

To contribute, please write to the Editor at the address below, or email ocsnewsletter@aol.com
Copy deadline for next issue is **Friday 9 November**

From **Professor James Stevens Curl**, 15 Torgrange, Hollywood, County Down, N Ireland, BT18 0NG, UK
jscurl@btinternet.com (tel & fax 02890 415141)

*I am grateful to Ann Spokes Symonds for her synopsis of the **Erosion of Oxford Day School** on 3 February in Rewley House (see lead article, March Newsletter no 106 – Editor).*

It was heart-warming to meet so many old friends as well as to make the acquaintance of new ones. In particular, I enjoyed Mark Barrington-Ward's masterly history of planning and architectural near-disasters, as well as my former colleague John Ashdown's hair-raising adventures as Conservation Officer. To listen to such professionally presented material, wittily and elegantly delivered, was a great pleasure.

*It was kind of my old friend, Professor Airs, to invite me to give the first paper. I was very surprised, as I had no idea my book** was still remembered at all, let alone regarded as 'influential'.*

However, thirty years has passed since it was published and if it changed anything for the better, I am glad. In those far-off times, the battles seemed to be excessively wearing and terribly time-consuming, and often aroused high emotions, even rage: the tragedy is that this should have been necessary in a just and civilised world.

As the first Chairman of The Civic Society, I wish it well: I am pleased to receive the Newsletter and to keep in touch. Oxford is still, in part, a beautiful place: bodies such as The Civic Society are in the forefront of efforts to keep it thus.

** **Note:** '**The Erosion of Oxford**' (1977), Curl, J.S., is available from local library services – Editor.

From **Roger Grosvenor**, 15 Lime Walk, OX3 7AB;
roger@thegrosvenors.net, (01865 765453)

Oxford City Cycle Map

Civic Society members who are also cyclists may be interested to learn that Cyclox, our local cycle campaigning group (www.cyclox.org) was recently commissioned by the County Council to check the accuracy of the City Cycle Map, which has been available at various outlets for several years. A fee was paid to Cyclox for this work.

Two volunteer project co-ordinators put together a team of 25 Cyclox members who spent a total of 180 hours surveying 15 designated areas of the city, as well as five circular routes and eight radial routes stretching as far as Witney. Errors and omissions were reported back by means of lists, charts and marked-up maps. A couple of bridges were found to be missing, as well as dozens of cycle routes.

Unfortunately, the resulting new map may not be published until next year due to financial constraints at the County Council, but the end result should be a much-improved product.

The information gathered on the adequacy of provision for cyclists, including photographs, is also being prepared for presentation to a Cycle Network Review with the Council.

Encouragingly, in the Headington and Marston areas alone, at least four further improvements to cycling provision have taken place since the survey was carried out in January this year

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