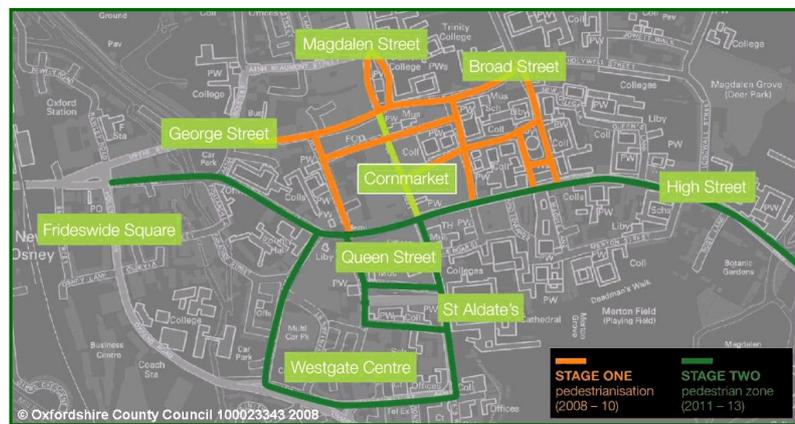


## **‘Transformation?’ by Tony Joyce, Chairman**

The publication by the County Council of **“Transform Oxford”**, outlining its aspirations for the improvement of the city centre, is the latest chapter in the long saga of attempts to resolve Oxford’s endemic transport problems and create a central environment more in keeping with our magnificent heritage.

Extending pedestrianisation and reducing the impact of buses are laudable objectives, and the County’s willingness to devote extensive resources to the city’s welfare is much to be welcomed. But to be effective, any proposals must be considered as part of the transport strategy for the city as a whole.



**Source: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transformoxford](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transformoxford)**

The Civic Society has been involved in these considerations since its inception in 1969: first in campaigning against an inner relief road through Christ Church meadow; then in championship of Park and Ride and the Oxford Transport Strategy; and now in our latest study of the shortcomings of local bus connectivity (available on [www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) see page 6).

Though critics of current conditions abound, it is worth assessing what has been achieved before considering where the next practicable steps lie. Against the rising tide of car ownership, and in contrast to many other busy cities, traffic conditions in the centre remain tolerable for much of the day, whilst other parts of the network are close to saturation and require urgent attention.

Park & Ride has continued to develop, with improvements in facilities at the Water Eaton, Thornhill and Redbridge terminals for which we have always campaigned. Seacourt and Peartree need the same treatment, with increases in capacity, particularly at Thornhill, and the development of other more remote sites. Since the proper enforcement of the bus gate restrictions, the general level of traffic in The High and St Aldates has dropped to remarkably low levels, permitting easy pedestrian circulation and appreciation of many fine views. Bus usage has continued to rise and cycling, though not well catered for, remains popular.

The starting point for any transport study has to be Oxford’s unique geography. The historic centre with its largely intact medieval street plan has always been confined within the junction of two rivers surrounded by extensive flood plains, which will continue to shape development. The few bridges and causeways established a pattern of radial routes linking outskirts with the centre in a way that has remained the dominant pattern for public transport. Comparison with other historic cities is rarely relevant.

The overwhelming proportion of the city's population now resides east of Magdalen Bridge and around half the city's workforce lives outside its boundaries. Their needs are vital to the life of the city.

Looking ahead: the city's emerging Core Strategy requires that the residents of new housing on the outskirts can reach their workplaces quickly and easily; the County's own transport policies promote sustainable means of travel to work and the reduction of pollution; the thrust of central government directives demands a very flexible and user-friendly bus network, greatly improved routes for cyclists and the highest quality conditions for pedestrians.

Judged against these criteria, the County's aspirations, when examined in the detail necessary for implementation, present a great many problems, as David Townsend explains in his *Transport Notes* (page 5). Yet some elements of the proposals look easier to achieve than others, and should be given greater priority:

- pedestrian schemes for some roads – New Inn Hall Street and St Michael's Street for example – would not have bus circulation implications;
- Broad Street has for too long waited to realise its potential as one of the truly great public spaces of Europe;
- Frideswide Square holds the key to many of the bus circulation proposals. A new solution here, enabling smoother traffic flow, is essential if any of the more radical bus routing proposals are to succeed.

All in all, there are some exciting possibilities. None of the solutions will be easy, and some will be very expensive.

What is needed is a genuinely joint working group of city and county representatives, with appropriate input from those who visit, live and work in the city, to try to translate this initiative into a better functioning and more enjoyable city.

## Executive Committee Reports:

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 16 March 2009 at 8.15 pm**

**66 St Giles – Stelios Ioannou School for Research in Classical & Byzantine Studies**

Nominations for the Executive Committee, with the consent of the nominee and name of seconder, and advance notice of any resolutions to be proposed, should be sent by Monday 2 March to:

**Hon Secretary, OCS, 67 Cunliffe Close,  
Oxford, OX2 7BJ  
e-mail – [info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)**

### Corporate Members

The Society is very appreciative of the ongoing support of its corporate members:

*Davidson Masonry Ltd; Knowles & Son; Rick Mather Architects; St Anne's College; St John's College; Summer Fields School; Wychwood School.*

With a core membership of nearly 1,000 the Society is in a position to make very effective representation – as can be seen from the contents of this newsletter. But in striving to influence the changes taking place across many aspects of city life, as featured within these pages, we seek the shared commitment of corporate members in actively furthering our aims.

In these difficult economic times, we warmly welcome those new corporate members who have recently joined OCS:

*Chris Lewis Fire & Security; Oxford Brookes University; Oxford Bus Company; Oxford & Cherwell Valley College; Symm Group.*

We continue to make new friends within the corporate sector and are always available to talk to anyone interested in exploring the mutual benefits of membership with us.

**Gordon Balme, Hon Treasurer (01865 511387)  
Stuart White, University Liaison (01865 247669)**

## Report from the Planning Sub-Committee

Update on applications mentioned in the July 2008 newsletter: Demolition of **9 Kirk Close** was again refused in July. At **1 to 4 Walton Lane** permission came for erection of two 4-bed semi-detached houses. There has been debate over the **Alexandra Tennis Courts, Middle Way**, but proposals for drastic change were withdrawn. Plans to alter windows of **Cantay House, 39 Park End Street** and to render walls have been permitted. Development of **29 Wellington Street, Jericho**, was refused in July but in October came another version not yet determined. Demolition of **26 Barton Village Road, Barton** was refused. In July extension to **16 Bradmore Road** was permitted, and also an application for a satellite TV dish on **3 Larkins Lane** was surprisingly permitted in the Conservation Area. A proposal for a second house behind **259 Woodstock Road** was refused in July.

New applications made in *July* included one for "Reborn Cottage", at **276 Woodstock Road**, a distinctive and prominent stone cottage which deserves more respectful treatment: it was refused in October. Still undecided is a proposal to demolish **16B Cherwell Street, St Clements** and instead to cram in five houses, with no amenity space. Plans for the 'Soft-bridge' **Library extension** to the **Middle Eastern Studies Centre** at **St Antony's College** were slightly amended, and despite contraventions of Conservation Area principles, permission for this was granted in September, conditioned only that a certain tree should not be injured. The colour of this fibreglass building also remains to be agreed.

In *August* came an application to demolish **Nos 59 to 63 Cowley Road** and erect a 4-storey building with basement and convert a workshop, to provide 2 ground floor retail units and five flats, with private terrace and communal garden, but all very cramped, and many rooms having opaque-glass windows: this was refused in August. Another cramped proposal was for **59 Kennett Road, Headington**, to divide the garden and build a pair of

1-bed semi-detached dwellings, causing overshadowing to the existing house: this too was refused in August. A proposal to demolish **56 James Street** and replace with a 3-storey building for 5 flats was unacceptable as this house, in charming Victorian Gothic style (as in Cowley Road and elsewhere), should be treasured: this also was refused in August.

Another refusal was for replacement of a telephone box at **27 Park End Street**, by a box for storage of parcels for delivery by Post Office vans. An application to raise the roof of **6 Bursill Close, Sandhills**, extend it to side and front, and then to convert it to four flats, was refused in October, since the accommodation would be cramped to an unacceptable degree. A proposal still undetermined is for addition of one and two storeys to the rear of **61 and 62 Juxon Street, Jericho**, making the building disproportionate with neighbours.

*September* brought a proposal from Oriel College for the **Bartlemas Nursery School** site, a significant element in the sensitive Bartlemas Conservation Area, to build 3-storey dwellings for either 34 students or 8 families of fellows. The **Linton Lodge Hotel, in Linton Road**, proposed to increase its footprint by over 50%, with adverse effect on neighbours. A proposal was made to build on land behind **21 Wolvercote Green**, (two similar former proposals having been refused). An extensive proposal was made to extend **Springfield, 121 Banbury Road**, for an arts facility and student accommodation, and to build a further block for 33 student rooms in the garden.

In *October* a third proposal came for **268, Woodstock Road, The Lemon Tree Restaurant**, for four tall houses, each with 4 to 5 bedrooms on 3 storeys, with basements and tiny probably sunless gardens. **10 to 12 Stephen Road, Headington** has returned for at least the third time, but still attempts to put too much on the site, resulting in cramped gardens for the four houses and little or no amenity space for the four flats proposed. A second proposal for **26 Lathbury Road** is to extend the house and divide it into two, to

build a semi-detached pair to the east and to open up the garden wall to accommodate car-parking at the front, all contributing to gross damage to character, and providing only tiny gardens for the three new houses. The appeal against the refusal to demolish **190 Iffley Road** and replace with a 5-storey block of accommodation for 50 students was *dismissed*, the Inspector finding that this arts and crafts house, though not listed, added variety and interest, thus making a positive contribution to the Conservation Area; and that the proposed replacement would be unduly prominent in the street scene.

Also in *October* good news came that at **Jericho Canalside**, by **St Barnabas Church**, the proposal to demolish a boatyard and build 54 flats in two blocks on 3 and 4 floors, was finally *dismissed* by the Inspector at Appeal.

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

### Chairman's Commentary

Since publication of the July Newsletter, there have been a number of very significant planning decisions and other developments:

**(1) University Library Depository** We welcome the Inspector's decision to dismiss the University's appeal against the City's refusal of permission to develop such a massive building on the Osney Mead site, and congratulate Oxford Preservation Trust on the important (and expensive) role they played at the inquiry. The Inspector's reasoning followed very much the line of our evidence, though we were surprised he was not more concerned with flooding risks. Notable quotations from the Decision:

- *"The city skyline is a fragile and compact composition of pinnacles, spires and domes at a relatively small scale."*
- *"The views are impressive and their significance increases with the knowledge that they encapsulate many of the historic buildings of one of the world's great universities at the heart of an historic city."*

- *"The need for a functional depository should not undermine the character of the city which is a fundamental asset to the University."*

And on the contravention of Local Plan Policy HE9, the so-called 'high buildings policy': *"To allow the roof to be higher than 18.2m would mock the intention of the Policy, which is to ensure that it is not."*

It seems that the Library will now reassess its storage needs and the service it offers to readers, so that the most frequently requested items remain rapidly available, whilst the search continues for a site outside Oxford where the remainder of the stock can be housed in new purpose-built accommodation.

**(2) Warneford Fields** The Inspector has recommended to the County Council, the registering authority, that the Warneford Fields in their entirety (including the orchard) should be registered as a Town Green, and the County Solicitor has drafted a concurring report which, subject to any representations received, should go to the County's Planning & Regulation Committee on 12 January 2009. If approved, there will then be a further period for objections before the future of the Fields is settled. A confirmed Town Green here would require an appropriate management regime. As well as being a valuable local amenity it would, as we argued at the Local Plan inquiry, provide an essential link in the chain of green spaces stretching from Southfield Golf Course through to South Park and thence to Mesopotamia and the Cherwell valley.

**(3) St Antony's College Middle Eastern Centre** We regard the approval of this building (by the narrowest of margins: the chairman's casting vote) to have been the wrong decision. The proposal contravenes many of the principles of the conservation area, and will not sit easily in the street scene or the college campus. The permission is hedged round with a number of conditions which may be hard to meet, but if it comes to be built, we shall be surprised if it is not soon regretted by both city and college.

**(4) Radcliffe Infirmary site** The University has now produced a revised Masterplan for the Radcliffe Infirmary site, which withdraws from prescribing a formal campus style layout. Instead it proposes general principles for the development of the site over perhaps 20 years, allowing more informal organic growth, in keeping with the earlier parts of the university. We are pleased to see that the outpatients building on Woodstock Road is now to be retained; that the main vehicle access will be at the north end of the site, simplifying the routes for the large number of cyclists expected; and that east-west pedestrian permeability through the site will be maintained. Anxieties about the heights of the new buildings, the setting of the listed buildings on and near the site and the preservation of views, particularly of the Observatory, will have to be resolved at the application stage for each constituent building as it comes forward.

**(5) Jericho Boatyard** Let us hope that the recent dismissal of the appeal by Spring Residential against refusal of their plans to redevelop the Jericho boatyard will open the way for a much more imaginative scheme. There is a great opportunity here for an inspirational addition to this lively part of the city, combining the waterside character of the site with the need for additional housing in a way that is truly in keeping with the spirit of Jericho and contributing positively to the setting of St Barnabas church.

**Tony Joyce, Chairman**

**Editor's note:** Some stock remains of this year's greetings cards, amongst them the popular correspondence card "*Oxford Canal*" (from the series *Vanishing Oxford* by local artist Michael Lester). Order by email [cards@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:cards@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk) or from Stuart White (01865 247669).

### Transport Notes

The somewhat over-euphoric welcome given by the local press to the County Council's *Transform Oxford* proposals requires a deeper analysis of the implications, as the Chairman's lead article suggests.

The removal of buses from Queen Street, a long-held objective, is catered for in the plans for the re-development of the Westgate Centre and would be funded by the developers. It could be considered a waste of money to introduce an interim scheme.

The closure of George Street poses enormous problems of capacity on the narrowest part of the city's network – Worcester Street north. Into the flow of general traffic would be added: the bus services from the west and the Railway Station to the north; the Redbridge to Peartree Park & Ride; services from Gloucester Green to the north and, possibly, the long-distance coaches.

The essential part of the Oxford Transport Strategy, which gave the bus operators a dedicated alternative to Cornmarket, would be lost. The restoration of direct buses from Summertown to the Westgate and the Railway Station would be made more difficult.

Moving the bus stops from Magdalen Street to St Giles would mean an even longer trek for north Oxford passengers; it would also entail crossing Beaumont Street. It is difficult to see how the main traffic flow between St Giles and Beaumont Street, turning buses, priority for buses into Beaumont Street, and increased and more frequent time for pedestrians to cross, could be accommodated without holding up all or some of these elements.

Perhaps the greatest problem will be The High. As well as being a beautiful street, lined with marvellous architecture, it is also Oxford's main artery. It will always have to cater for a significant amount of the bus traffic which carries more people into the city than any other mode of transport. Removing the London and airport coaches is possible, but even this would critically inconvenience a large number of passengers. Transferring local bus passengers on to shuttle buses at The Plain or elsewhere would seriously reduce the attractiveness of bus travel and further exacerbate the problems of connectivity identified in the Society's recent survey.

I am aware that all this will seem very negative but, although the “vision” is commendable the road layout of Oxford cannot be changed and I am afraid that no-one will be completely satisfied – whether bus user, pedestrian, or cyclist. An awful lot of money could be spent to no great avail – which would be a pity.

**David Townsend, Transport Secretary**

### Notes from Travel Behaviour Group

**Bus Connectivity Report** Your experiences of getting about by bus, combined with desk research (using the government website [www.transportdirect.org.uk](http://www.transportdirect.org.uk)) are now combined into a 20 page report, the Oxford Bus Connectivity Review. We have sent a copy to the main bus operators for initial reactions, and will then circulate it more widely, including City and County Councillors.

Oxford's bus provision is complicated, creating much confusion among users: the need to interchange (especially across the 'Cornmarket gap') makes journeys difficult for many; lack of information and multiple tickets add problems, and the role of Park & Ride buses is not clear to many people. A common perception is that the bus companies make changes without notice. Buses bunching and related gaps in service are a deterrent; some respondents commented that it was quicker to walk or cycle, but many bus users were happy with their journeys. We have an enviable bus service in Oxford but it could still be better.

We did not cover all aspects of bus travel in Oxford, but probably identified the important issues. We do not provide solutions. We hope the councils will take the report into consideration when they look at other transport issues in the city - the pedestrian priority zone in the city centre, the Westgate extension and the next Local Transport Plan.

*The full report is available from the home page of [www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)*

**A car club for east Oxford?** A car club was set up in North Oxford, in the late 90's, but was

withdrawn two or three years ago due to lack of interest. What is a 'car club'? It enables you to rent a car for short periods of time, and the cars are kept locally, so you don't have to trail out to an industrial estate to collect one. Many car journeys are very short, but not easily replaced by bicycle or bus - to go to the supermarket or garden centre, to collect a friend with luggage from the station.

At last, a car club is being actively considered in East Oxford, with the help of *Commonwheels*. See [www.oxcar.org.uk](http://www.oxcar.org.uk) for details. They will start with a Mini and an electric car, parked on the Cowley Road. At the same time, *Streetcar* (who already have 700+ cars across London) has given notice of the launch of 5 cars in central/north Oxford once it identifies parking spaces. Both planned to launch in November – and may have done so.

Car clubs should enable people to get rid of infrequently used cars (freeing parking spaces, perhaps). At the same time, they extend the benefits of cars to those who cannot afford car ownership. *Further information is available at [www.carplus.org.uk](http://www.carplus.org.uk)*

**“A More Walkable Oxford”** Oxford Pedestrians Association (OxPA) has produced an attractive thirty-page booklet, detailing the outdoor experience to be found in the streets and urban spaces of the city. The booklet is OxPA's review of the issues for which the County Council as Highway Authority, and the City Council as Planning Authority and as manager of the city's environment, are largely responsible.

*Copies are available from OxPA, 8 Richmond Road, OX1 2JJ (tel 01865 426805) – price £2 (£3 incl. mailing costs)*

**Richard Bradley, Paul Cullen, Ros Weatherall**

### OxClean at work

In the *July Newsletter* (issue 110) I wrote about the huge success of Spring Clean 2008, plans for Spring Clean 2009 (March 6 & 7) and about the development of three new preventative campaigns: **Eating & Drinking 'on-the-go'; Flytipping; Cigarette Butts.**

A major feature defining the development of each campaign has been the building of a working relationship with *John Copley*, Head of Environmental Development, Oxford City Council, and responsible for enforcement (ie instituting the fining of offenders). Together we are producing a **Voluntary Code of Conduct** for take-away businesses and others, and we are looking at how to reinforce the efforts of his enforcement officers (two for the city).

As you will see from your enclosures, we have produced a 115 mm roundel window sticker, 'Don't Drop It', for distribution to businesses, individuals, and to all groups participating in an OxClean Campaign. We are grateful to the *Oxford City Council's Small Grants Committee* for £750, which funded 6,000 of these.

*We would like OCS members to be amongst the first to display their window sticker wherever it will be readily seen and in this way to act as ambassadors for OxClean.*

*Oxford City Council* and *The Oxford Times* continue to be our staunch partners: City Works advise, support and guide us; The Oxford Times has given invaluable help in developing our new logo and a promotional poster. *Mid-Counties Co-op*, who will also be partners this year, will give free advertising on in-store plasma screens. We are seeking additional sponsorship from local businesses.

Our **Anti-Litter Schools' Campaign** is enhanced by approaches from a member seeking to improve littering behaviour in the Language Schools, initially on the Banbury Road.

We hope that everyone who took part in March will sign up again for **Spring Clean 2009** and that anyone who could not make it in 2008 will be available next time. We want to expand the event throughout the city and are doing all we can to heighten awareness – through publicity, talking at local meetings,

networking with local groups and 'influencers'. New links with *Oxford University* have yielded promises of involvement in Spring Clean 2009 from 10 colleges; *Brookes University* is on board again, as is *Oxford & Cherwell College*.

Administratively, we have been successful in recruiting some much-needed help from within the Society and are grateful for support at Area Meetings, with desk research, and hand deliveries. But there is a great deal to be done and we are appealing to the OCS membership as a whole to help in any way possible, large or small.

*We are always mindful that it is on your behalf that we do this work; that is why our enclosed appeal suggests various ways of helping and becoming involved, but these are not exhaustive, so do be in touch with us at [www.oxclean.org.uk](http://www.oxclean.org.uk) or tel 07505 756692.*

*Thank you.*

**Liz Storrar, Chair, OxClean Steering Group:**  
Rosanne Bostock, Liz Grosvenor, Ingrid Lunt,  
Pauline Martin, Vernon Porter,  
Christine Thompson, Ros Weatherall

### **Introducing City Works' Green Gator ..**

Members making their way through the city in the early mornings may already be familiar with City Works' *Green Gator*, on its rounds:



Taking a daily, circular route around 10 city centre streets, the vehicle is 100% environmentally friendly, being powered by electric batteries with no local emissions. As a support vehicle, it is able to service litterbins, collect cardboard and respond to any spillages.

Malcolm Hart, City Works Business Unit

## A new arrival at Magdalen College

As part of an August event, Civic Society members heard a fascinating address by Dr Robin Darwall-Smith, Archivist at Magdalen College, after which we were free to explore the college grounds, including Addisons Walk and the Fellows' Garden beyond.

Dr Darwall-Smith had alerted us to be on the lookout for a new arrival, recently planted – Magdalen College having commissioned a sculpture to celebrate its 550th Anniversary. The work is by the Turner-prize winning artist Mark Wallinger and is called Y.



Made of steel, it is 10 metres high and has the form of a tree. It stands among the willow trees in Bat Willow Meadow – lying between Addisons Walk

and the Fellows' Garden.

**Hugh Palmer, OCS member**

## Celebrating Oxford's heritage & history

The Museum of Oxford is delighted to be the host venue for the Civic Society's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in January.

Members will have an opportunity to tour the city's Museum after hours and catch our latest temporary exhibition, *Patterns, Prisons and Pleasures* featuring the work of Oxford artist, Marion Yorston. Marion mixes history

with humour to illustrate the many roles and faces of women in society. Her work launches our exhibition programme for 2009, which also includes the story of the Oxford Playhouse and a trip back in time to the 1970's.

The Museum of Oxford is the city's *community* museum, there to tell the many stories and diverse histories that make Oxford such a special place. As part of the anniversary celebrations, we hope members visiting us on **January 22** will become more involved with the Museum and play a part in shaping its future.

**Susie Scott, Curator, Museum of Oxford**

**Editor's Note:** Full details of the Museum's exhibitions and activities can be seen on their website [www.museumofoxford.org.uk](http://www.museumofoxford.org.uk)

## Getting ready for Christmas

OX1 will be supporting local traders and venues by encouraging families to do their shopping in Oxford on three consecutive Saturdays in December: 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.

A variety of on-street entertainment will feature angels on wheels, and Christmas puddings and baubles on skates, even a snow queen and ice elf on stilts. There will also be some Christmas ambassadors and the Town Crier on hand with some pocket-sized 'rough guides' outlining what's happening, where.

Balloon sculpture and story-telling will be on hand for the children, who will also have the chance to win their Christmas wish list.

**Alison Nicholson, OX1**

*Newsletter issued in March, July and November and published by*

**Oxford Civic Society, 67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ**

[www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)

[www.oxclean.org.uk](http://www.oxclean.org.uk)

[info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:info@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)

[info@oxclean.org.uk](mailto:info@oxclean.org.uk)

**Chairman:** Tony Joyce, 68 Blenheim Drive, OX2 8DQ (556050)

**Treasurer:** Gordon Balme, 336 Woodstock Road, OX2 7NS (511387)

**Hon Secretary:** Vernon Porter, 67 Cunliffe Close, OX2 7BJ (557660)

**Membership Secretary:** Liz Grosvenor, 15 Lime Walk, Headington, OX3 7AB (765453)

**Newsletter Editor:** Pauline Martin, 112 Bridge Street, Osney Island, OX2 0DH (250870)

**Planning Group Convenor:** Kate Joyce, 68 Blenheim Drive, OX2 8DQ (556050)

**Programme Group Convenor:** Sheila Glazebrook, 116 Woodstock Road, OX2 7NF (310488)